

Sermon Outlines
Herod's Hardness Of Heart

Bible Reading:

Mark 6:14 - 30

This is a lesson on unintended consequences. You never know what will happen when you obey the Lord and go forth to preach the gospel. You may get the attention of a politician like Herod, or you may get your head chopped off, as happened to John the Baptist.

The responsibility to obey is ours; the consequences are the Lord's. On another occasion the Lord sent out his disciples with the advice that they were to be as wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. God's work requires a few street smarts. I learned of our minister in Liverpool England, Rev. Tom Laverty, that he has a gift for open air preaching. He will find a high building, or wall and preach toward it to create a clear sound effect. By this means he is always able to gather a crowd. John the Baptist had that gift too, for we are told, *"And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mk. 1:5).*

There are some solemn lessons to be learned from Herod that we should take to heart.

1) **In Herod's conclusions about Christ we find a commendation for John the Baptist (v. 14)**

- a) The ministry of the Lord Jesus was mistaken for the ministry of John the Baptist, whom Herod supposed was raised again from the dead. How could he get it so wrong? Think on the parallels:
 - i) Large crowds came to hear John the Baptist preaching. The Lord was also receiving notoriety and drawing large crowds of people to his ministry.
 - ii) John emphasized the message of repent or perish; so did the Lord Jesus. The whole ethos of their pleading with men breathed an attitude of the absolute necessity to renounce the world, or perish.
 - iii) Under John's ministry people were given power to change their lives which they publicly demonstrated by their baptism. The Lord changed lives by casting out devils, etc.
- b) Our ministry should emulate the life of Christ and the fruit of our efforts in the gospel should show the power of the Lord at work in changed lives. We cannot settle for less. Great numbers of unrepentant sinners arriving at the house of God without repentance from the world is no evidence of God's grace at work.
- c) No-one should have to ask if we be Christian? Never underestimate people's ability to perceive genuine Christianity at work, even when they themselves fail to apply the message to themselves. Everyone needs help to apply the gospel. Pray for the facts of the gospel to be made clear, but also pray that sinner's will see their responsibility to repent of the world and turn to the Lord for power to live a new life.

2) **The life of Herod gives us some insights into the entangling forces of evil (v. 17)**

- a) Herod was caught in a web of sin. He felt the rebukes of John's warning against his adultery (v. 18).
- b) Herod recognized the just character of John the Baptist (v. 20)
- c) Herod was greatly interested and moved by John the Baptist's ministry (v. 20). Something within him resonated to make him agree with John.

These are battles which sinners must fight. A web of sin, a conscience that screams "guilty" and intelligence that agrees with the truth of the gospel may all rage within a sinner's soul, yet there is an inability to obey the call of Christ.

Herod represents many who fight these battles each time they hear the gospel, or when alone truly think on the claims of the gospel.

When we pray for sinners to be saved from their sin, let us be mindful of the spiritual struggles that go on within their hearts.

- a) Pray for God's Spirit to break the web of sin and deceit.

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- b) Pray for truth to prevail and souls to be saved from their inability to cry out to God in their own strength.
- c) Pray for the Lord to arrest them, or else, like Herod, they will die as lost souls though they have heard the gospel and have been somewhat convinced of the power that is in Christ, but ultimately they perish in their sin and are lost for all eternity.

3) From Herod's life we are warned against accommodating sin

- a) Note the unguarded and fatal promise he made to Herodias' daughter (v. 22-23). The web was more sticky than Herod expected! We should know to be careful of what we ask for but we also need to be careful of what we promise.
- b) Note the steps that led to this compromise:
 - i) He married wrongly.
 - ii) He rejected John's rebuke and continued in the web of sin.
 - iii) He tolerated Herodias' evil spirit (v. 19).
 - iv) He procrastinated from repenting (v. 20). He "gladly" heard, while he should have sorrowfully repented.
 - v) He succumbed to the peer pressure of his position (v. 21, 26).

The web of sin is much too sticky for us to remain within it in safety. The only answer is to flee from it.

- a) We need to pray for one another that we do not take that first step that leads to our entrapment and then deterioration.
- b) Pray for youth who face so many big decisions of life that they be led in a right path.
- c) Pray for God's clear direction in each step lest you go astray and depart from the living God. Railway lines may converge at the station for a distance but soon they fan out in different directions, so little differences at first can become big differences later.

As a footnote, we should follow the example of the Lord's disciples on how to encourage ourselves in the Lord when faced with tribulation in this life (v. 29-30).

Just tell it all to Jesus. That is the life of trust.
Let the Lord know and trust Him to work things out.

. . . . Ian Goligher