

Mark 6:14-29

A Righteous Man Versus an Unrighteous Man

¹⁴ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷ For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." ²³ And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." ²⁵ And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Prayer:

Gracious heavenly Father, thank you that these real historical events were recorded and these things really happened. John the Baptist was a real man, a good man, and Herod was a real man, but an evil man. Lord, help us to learn to be more like John, and to shun being like Herod. Instruct in your Word today, for the glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen.

Structure of the Passage:

14-16 – Various opinions on Jesus' identity. ***Rumors about who Jesus was.***

17-20 – The reason for John's imprisonment. ***Why John was imprisoned.***

21-28 – The Birthday Banquet that proved fatal for John. ***The fatal Birthday Banquet/ Herodias' Revenge Realized***

29 - the burial of John

Background on these two men:

Luke 3:1ff

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and **Herod being tetrarch of Galilee**, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins

John's family background:

Luke 1:6 And they were both (Zechariah and Elizabeth) righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Herod's family background:

Father was Herod the Great;

Matt. 2 – “slaughter of the innocents”

John's growing up years

Luke 1:76-78

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people

in the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,

Prophet of God – speaks to people the Word of the Lord.

Luke 1:15ff

¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord

He never drank alcohol

He was continually filled with the Holy Spirit

Luke 1:80

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

John lived a life of separation from the world and dedication to God.

Herod grew up in king's palace – father was wicked

John's ministry: Mark 1

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

John's lifestyle was austere, simple, self-disciplined

Luke 7:24ff - ²⁴ When John's messengers had gone, Jesus[Ⓜ] began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out [Ⓜ]into the wilderness to see? [Ⓜ]A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. ²⁶ What then did you go out to see? [Ⓜ]A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is he of whom it is written,

[Ⓜ]"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

²⁸ I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Herod lived in King's palace

Herod Antipas, (born 21 BCE—died after 39 CE), son of Herod I the Great who became tetrarch (ruler of a minor principality in the Roman Empire) of Galilee, in northern Palestine, and Peraea, east of the Jordan River and Dead Sea, and ***ruled throughout Jesus of Nazareth's ministry***.

John's character:

Matthew 3:7-12

⁷ But when he saw many of [Ⓞ]the Pharisees and [Ⓞ]Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, [Ⓞ]“You brood of [Ⓞ]vipers! Who warned you to flee from [Ⓞ]the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit [Ⓞ]in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, [Ⓞ]‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from [Ⓞ]these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. [Ⓞ]Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **John was not afraid of men nor to confront their sins.**

Herod was manipulated by his wife and afraid of opinions of his birthday party guests.

¹¹ [Ⓞ]“I baptize you with water [Ⓞ]for repentance, but [Ⓞ]he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you [Ⓞ]with the Holy Spirit and [Ⓞ]fire. ¹² His [Ⓞ]winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and [Ⓞ]gather his wheat into the barn, [Ⓞ]but the chaff he will burn with [Ⓞ]unquenchable fire.” **John’s humility**

Matt. 3:13-15

¹³ [Ⓞ]Then Jesus came [Ⓞ]from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ [Ⓞ]John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.

John recognized his own need of Christ.

John 1:29-34 - ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, [Ⓞ]the Lamb of God, who [Ⓞ]takes away the sin [Ⓞ]of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, [Ⓞ]‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but [Ⓞ]for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John [Ⓞ]bore witness: [Ⓞ]“I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and [Ⓞ]it remained on him.” ³³ I myself did not know him, but [Ⓞ]he who sent me to baptize [Ⓞ]with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, [Ⓞ]this is he who baptizes [Ⓞ]with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son [Ⓞ]of God.”

John testified that Jesus

- a) **was the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, that he was the anointed one by the Spirit who was the Messiah, and he was the Son of God.**

Herod’s sins: (in order)

- Adultery** - had taken his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias

Lev. 18:16 - ¹⁶ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.

Lev. 20:21 - ²¹ If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity.[Ⓜ] He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

Compliance with his wife's evil desire to silence John the Baptist

Listening to John the Baptist for **entertainment** but not in personal commitment to God and to righteousness

Probably **lust** for Herodias' daughter

Probably **drunkenness**

Stupidity and foolishness in offering this girl up to half his kingdom just for dancing.

Pride (in front of his dinner guests) in not recanting his previous stupid offer

Murder in ordering the beheading of John Baptist

Herodias' sins:

Adultery

Hatred for John the Baptist because of his condemnation of her sin

Contriving the plan for John's beheading – evil scheming

Ordering her daughter to carry out this wicked plan

Herodias' daughter's sins:

Submission to the evil manipulations of her wicked mother

Compliance in fostering the death of John the Baptist

Josephus says her name was Salome.

John the Baptist's life:

His life & ministry was prophesied in the OT – Psa. 40

He was called by God to faith and ministry

He was a mighty preacher, a humble man, a teacher, a forerunner of the Messiah

He was faithful and righteous in condemning Herod's adultery

Even in prison he continued his faithful ministry:

Matt. 11:2-3 - ² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

Scriptural Evaluation of these events:

Rev. 12 – dragon at war with man-child

2 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman [Ⓜ] clothed with [Ⓜ] the sun, with [Ⓜ] the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant

and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

It should not surprise us too much when we see evil in the world – as Putin’s brutalization of Ukraine.

Acts 4:26-28 - The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

Luke 23:11-12 - ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

Applications

1. There are two kinds of people in the world:
The world is full of evil people consumed by their sins and acting out in behavior the evil in their hearts.

There are the Hitlers and Putin’s and there is a small group of people whose lives are consumed with love and gratitude to Jesus Christ for rescuing them from their sins and for bringing them into a living relationship with the Son of God.

2. The radical difference in the two men’s lives, Herod and John, was because the grace of God had come to John but by-passed Herod.
Herod was left in his sins.

John was saved from his sins (clarify).

3. If you are a Christian, it's only because of God's grace. Were it not for God's grace you would be a Herod, a man or woman, a boy or girl, consumed by sins and a persecutor of righteousness.

You are greater than the great man John the Baptist because Christ has been glorified and poured out the indwelling Spirit to abide permanently in the lives of his people.

4. We must shun sins and embrace righteousness.

Phi. 2 - ¹⁴ Do all things [Ⓜ]without grumbling or [Ⓜ]disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, [Ⓜ]children of God [Ⓜ]without blemish [Ⓜ]in the midst of Ⓜa crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine [Ⓜ]as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to [Ⓜ]the word of life,

We must not be governed by people's opinions but by Christ and his Word.

Heb. 1:9 – You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, [Ⓜ]has anointed you with [Ⓜ]the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

5. We must expect persecution for righteousness.

Matt. 5: 11-12

¹¹ [Ⓜ]“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely [Ⓜ]on my account. ¹² [Ⓜ]Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for [Ⓜ]so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

6. If you have not aligned yourself with Christ and his righteous kingdom, why not do so? You have everything to gain – forgiveness of sins, eternal life, fellowship unending with Christ – and nothing to lose, except your sins and an eternity in hell, separated from Christ and his glory.

Christ said, “come to me andI will give you rest.”

Prayer. Father, thank you that you called and sent to the world John, who prepared the way for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for his faithfulness and courage, His loyalty to your kingdom. Help us be like him, not swayed by people's opinions but governed by your Word. Thank you that in your sovereign grace you call your people to yourself and equip us with the HS, the Word, and the fellowship of your church to undergird our Christian pilgrimage.

Help us, like John, to live, to make it our aim, to bring glory to Christ.

-by Jeff Gregory, pastor

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