

Understanding the Gruesome Death of John the Baptist

Mark 6:14-29

July 28, 2024 Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Good morning, everyone. Before we begin the sermon time, I know several of you have asked about our candidating process as a family. We're praying and talking about the process here at Grace Fellowship Church, but some of you have asked on the personal level, how it's going for us. And you might have heard we are communicating candidating with a church in Meridian, Idaho, it's in the Boise area. It's called Meridian First Baptist Church; you can look it up online. We are going to be there. The one reason I'm mentioning this is because we're going to be there for the next two weeks. So while Jory is here, we will be there and meeting with them. I'll be preaching between the Sundays, a lot of meetings lined up, I also have an ordination process with them on Saturday. But they've had a pastor who's been with them faithfully preaching and ministering for 16 years. He was a former professor in Israel before that and done a wonderful job. And they were just looking for someone who was younger, but also had some ministry experience. And so I kind of sort of fit what they're looking for. And so you can be praying for us for that. But we're praying for you as well. Really excited for Jory coming, I've had a chance to listen to his sermons and look at his doctrinal statement, and philosophy of ministry and all that. He seems like a wonderful candidate and so I'm excited to hear how it's gonna go. I hate to miss it but looking forward to a full report when I get back. So he will be looking at my office, if anything is out of place, I will give him a call. Just kidding. So they're gonna take him to the office and different things to see. Let him know, sort of, some of the facilities we're using here at GFC.

So with that said, if you would, please take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of Mark. That is the book we're in today as we've been for the past six months or so. But please turn with me to the Gospel of Mark. And as you're turning there, many of you probably know that I'm a reader. I love to collect old books. And the other day, I found a good one at a thrift store here in Chilliwack, on the subject of the Roman Empire. And it's all about the tumultuous days of Mark Antony and how he made an enemy of a man named Cicero, who mocked him and openly ridiculed him until Mark Antony just had enough of it, so he ordered him to be executed. But that was not enough. He also ordered his tongue and hands to be cut off and displayed publicly in the forum. At which point his wife proceeded to remove her hair pins and stab them repeatedly until there was nothing left. Talk about holding a grudge. And in the words of the author I was reading they said Antony's approach to politics was simple. If you can't beat them, kill them. That'll make them be quiet when nothing else would.

I tell you that story because that's what our text is about this morning. In Mark 6, Mark is going to continue his account of Jesus alive by telling us how John the Baptist was killed in a similar fashion in order to make him be quiet. Because verse 18 says, "John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'" In other words, John was not mocking Herod and he's not openly ridiculing him the way Cicero did, he was telling him to leave his life of sin. And what did Herod do? Well, verse 17 says he had John arrested. In other words, he didn't apologize. He didn't say, "I'm sorry."

He didn't show remorse for what he was doing. He threw John in jail right before he went on to murder him as Kevin just read to us. All because he told him to repent. John said, "You can't live that way and be saved, Herod. You can't do whatever you want to and go to heaven. You have to cut it out." Which got him in trouble, to say the least.

But I will say that's nothing new; that kind of message has always gotten people in trouble. If you don't believe me, go to your coworker tomorrow and tell him to repent, just walk into his office, knock on the door and say, "It is not lawful for you to have someone else's wife." What's going to happen? Well, chances are he'll cut your head off too. It's always been dangerous to confront people this way. Which is why some people never do it, but not John the Baptist. He was way more bold. He told people, "You need to turn or burn." You ever heard that before? It's a southern expression, I think it's made its way across the border here. He didn't say, "You need to turn or burn unless you're the king. You need to turn or perish unless you're a leader. You need to turn, and do it or you will be judged unless you're high up in the government." He said the same thing to everybody.

And I don't know about you, but This really hits home with me because, as you know, we're in the middle of an election in the U.S. And I don't hear a lot of pastors telling the candidates to turn or burn right now. They go up on stage and pray for them. And they'll make their way up onto the platform on television to make speeches on their behalf. But as they do, you're not hearing the word "repent." Instead, they kind of leave it out almost to imply that nobody cares about their sin as long as they're running for office. Let me tell you something, friends. That's not true. There's someone who cares very much, and that's God. The only thing that matters to God is whether you obey the words that are found in the pages of this book. That's it.

And this story is a good reminder of that because in this story, in these verses, John does not make excuses for Herod's behavior. And he doesn't imply that nobody cares. Instead, he points his finger at him, and he says, "This is wrong King, and you need to cut it out." I think there's times for us to say that to our leaders, not out of spite and anger toward them, but out of love. You say that toward everybody. There's someone standing over the throne of our day, and that's the throne of heaven. One day, He'll hold everyone accountable for the wicked things that they do, whether they're king or not. The Puritans used to have a phrase to explain this, that went like this Lex Rex. And in Latin, that means the law is king, as opposed to Rex Lex, which means the king is law. See the difference? The point is that we do have a king in this country, or we have a prime minister U.S. has a president, but it's a king with a lowercase k. There's a king with a capital K, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have to proclaim that message, even when it gets us in trouble.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at several stages in Mark's portrayal of the death of John the Baptist. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. In Mark 6:14 and following you're going to see several stages in Mark's portrayal of the death of John the Baptist. I think

this is a familiar story for many of us. It's a gruesome one. It's something that you really wouldn't want to put on a movie. It's pretty intense.

But the first one is that the story begins with Herod's guilty conscience. So the first stage in Mark's portrayal of the death of John the Baptist is that the story begins with Herod's guilty conscience. In other words, it doesn't begin, get this, with Herod's indifferent conscience, or flippant conscience. It starts with his troubled one. John's death really did bother him.

If you look in verse 12, it says this, it says,

And they went out and preached that *people* are to repent. And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

And King Herod heard *about it*,

Now, we need to stop and say a few words about that for a moment because this is where the Bible may get confusing if you don't understand some background because there's several Herods that lived during the Bible times. There's five to be exact because the word Herod means hero. It was a nickname adopted by several kings who ruled back-to-back to show how great they were, how would you like calling yourself that? But if you put it on a timeline, there's Herod the great, Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Herod Agrippa, and Herod Agrippa the second.

And the one this is referring to is the third guy, Herod Antipas. He took over the throne of Israel after his father Herod the Great died, and he ruled from four BC to about 39 AD, all throughout the Gospels really. Except for a few things in the beginning. And to be honest, history doesn't say a lot about him other than the few details concerning his wife, Herodias. But the story goes that he met her on a trip to Rome and fell in love even though she was married to his brother Phillip, and he was married to a princess. He didn't care. He was so overcome with lust that he took her back home with him and kicked the princess out, which infuriated her family so much they declared war on him and almost won until Rome steps in to save him, which calmed him down for a second. Then he gets on the wrong side of Caesar later on, he's banished to the land of Gaul where he dies. But that's what this man's life was like. It was just tumultuous. He lived in sin; died in sin. And that's what you're finding here because verse 14 goes on to say,

And King Herod [Antipas] heard *about it*, for His name had become well known; and *people* were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." But others were saying, "He is Elijah." (based on a wrong understanding of Malachi 3:1. That verse and those prophecies don't apply to Jesus; they apply to John the Baptist.) And others were saying, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of

old." (based on a pretty good understanding of Deuteronomy 18:15). But when Herod heard *about it*, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"

That's who Jesus was to Herod; he thought He was John the Baptist come back from the dead in order to haunt him. And if you have a pen with you, you might want to take it out and circle the word "I" beheaded. See that phrase there in verse 16? Because what Herod is saying is, "I am the one to blame for John's death. It's my fault. No one else's. It's not my wife's fault." You're gonna find out in a moment, his wife really put him up to it, but he doesn't blame her. "It's not her daughter's fault." She put him up to it, too. "It's not the soldiers' fault" who took out the sword and killed him. "It's not Fate's fault and the stars' fault and all. It's mine and mine alone. I did this," he said. In fact, verse 16, says Herod felt so bad about this, that he kept saying it repeatedly, which is interesting, because from what we know Herod killed other people too. John's not the only one. He was constantly murdering individuals at this time, but none of it troubled him so much. Until he came to this man, there was something about John's death that was different, because it gave him a guilty conscience.

As I say that, let me ask you this. What is the conscience? You ever wondered that before? It's a word we talk about a lot so I'm sure you have. What's it referring to? Your conscience is the part of your soul that helps to identify right from wrong. It's like a moral compass God has given you to weigh your motives and make evaluation. So when you do what is right the conscience affirms and brings peace. And when you do what is wrong, your conscience does the opposite and brings guilt. God has set your life up in such a way it's like you have a smoke alarm living inside of you that doesn't do anything when there's no sin. But the moment there is it says, "Danger, danger, Warning, warning, you need to stop." And I might add, the conscience is not perfect. It makes mistakes, the Word of God is perfect. And when you read the Word of God, it trains your conscience to help you see things as God does.

Now, that's Herod's problem. He didn't do that. Even though he lived in land of Israel, and he had access to the Word of God, access to the priests and the temple and the sacrifices, he didn't take advantage. And as a result, what you're seeing here is that this man's conscience was a mess. To the point that sometimes he would murder someone and feel bad about it. Other times he wouldn't. Some days he would steal a man's wife and be troubled by it. Other days, he would just go on as if nothing ever happened.

And it's a good reminder to us just on the very front end here not to become this way. If you don't watch it, 1 Timothy 4:2 says you can sear your conscience. Just like you can scorch or sear the hide of an animal with a hot iron. You can scorch your soul until it doesn't feel anything anymore.

Let's be honest, how many of you know someone who is scorching their soul with sin right now? Anybody? We all do, right? Have you ever met anyone who doesn't feel it anymore? They lust and don't feel it. They lie and don't feel it. They covet and go on as if nothing's even happening. If you're wondering why they do that it's because they're making the mistake Herod did by giving into the sin for so long, they become calloused. It's a slow transition, until their heart becomes as tough as an animal. I

mean, make no mistake, Herod was troubled by the death of John the Baptist. As you can tell, just from these verses, it really troubled and upset him. But the problem was he wasn't bothered by his other sins. He became used to them.

And that brings us to another stage in Mark's portrayal of the death of John the Baptist and that is that the story continues as Mark goes back in time. So the second stage in the portrayal of the death of John the Baptist is that the story is now going to continue as Mark goes back in time to describe what happened.

Because verse 17, says, if you follow along in your Bible, "For Herod himself had sent for John." Now, if you notice, that's in the past tense to take you back in time and show you what Herod did in the past. This is reading like a flashback in the story. And that is that he arrested John and had him bound in prison. And the phrase "bound in prison," it may not be strong enough. There's really more to it than this because in reality, you could say Herod threw John into something like a dungeon in the desert.

Because that's where John used to live. If you want to write this verse down, John 1:28 says John the Baptist baptized people in a place called Bethany beyond the Jordan, which is so remote scholars today don't know where it was. But they all agree it was somewhere in the area near the Dead Sea, which was a body of water 20 miles east of Jerusalem that's called dead because it's 34% saltier than the ocean. And it's called dead because it's so hot. It's 95 degrees annually, Fahrenheit, hotter than the Sahara, making it almost unlivable. But interestingly enough, several of Herod's predecessors built fortresses in the area. If you pull out a Bible Atlas, you can see some of these. One is called Masada. It's almost a mile straight up off the ground. Another one is called Machaerus. If you want to spell that out, here it is. It's M A C H A E R U S. Machaerus was a stronghold made out of rock located in a mountain chain off the King's Highway. And according to the first century historian Josephus, that's where John was. Now, Josephus wasn't always accurate, but most guys I read said they thought this probably was an accurate detail. Because he tells us, Josephus says, after arresting John, Herod put him in a hole in the ground inside of this compound fortress and gave him food or water lower down by a rope, which would have been miserable for a man like this. Because John spent his whole life living out in the open, going wherever he wanted, enjoying his freedom. Now, just like that, it's over.

Because here's why he was arrested again, verse 18, says, "For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'" Now, that could mean he said it to Herod in person, but it probably means he was saying in his sermons. Because John was constantly preaching like that in his messages. When you do a survey of His ministry, you find John preached like this to the Pharisees. He preached like this to the Sadducees. He preached this way to the soldiers. They didn't scare him. He walked up to the tough guys, and he said, "Repent." And it only makes sense he would say the same thing to the king. This is what made Herod so angry with him, and that is that John did not give him a pass because he was king. He treated him the same way he did everyone else.

Verse 19, even says his words made Herodias, Herod's wife, so mad, she wanted to kill him; but she couldn't do so because Herod was afraid of John knowing he was a righteous and holy man. And I think as I was studying this this week, that was probably the strangest part of the story to me. Because it means while John was locked up in prison, Herod was scared of him, get that? And while he's stuck in this hole on the ground, where they have to lower food and water to him with a rope, he gave the king a *phobos* in Greek, a phobia, made him paranoid. And there's no way to explain that other than his conscience. Going back to the first point, Herod felt this way because of the inner voice inside of him, telling him right from wrong. He didn't feel that way because John could actually do something to him. What's John going to do?

I told you a little bit about that in the previous section. I want to say more now, but the previous section shows you how every man has a conscience like Herod, but it didn't tell you how strong it is. This one does. In this section, listen here, there are two men who are presented to you. One is in prison. The other is not. Which one's miserable? It's the one who's not. And there's two characters Mark is writing about at this point in the passage; there is a king, and there is a convict. Which one's paranoid? The king because of this. No matter where he goes, Herod cannot escape his conscience. It's strong enough to reach him anywhere. To the point he can't drink it away, sleep it away, party it away. Politicians do that, you know that? At every single turn, it comes back to bother him. In fact, the way this is worded makes it sound like Herod's conscience was bothering him morning, noon and night, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Every glance at John told him that Herod is wrong. And every step he makes in his direction around the fortress and the compound reminds him of the words. "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Have you ever heard a sermon and it burned in your brain?

To be honest, I don't think Herod's alone in this. We all know people who are bothered by their conscience this way. Why do you think people take so many drugs? Why do you think they get drunk all the time? Why do you think some men are workaholics? It's their conscience. And there's a reason conscience bothers people because this life is not a free-for-all. There is someone who will hold us accountable for the things we do in this world, and that's God. And in his grace and mercy, God has given us this precious tool to show us that; and you have to realize it. It's been said you have two allies in your fight against sin. You have the word of God, and you have conscience. And you got to listen to both.

And Herod's is not doing that here. The end of verse 20 says he's actually perplexed, because he enjoyed listening to John. He knew that what he said was right, but on the other hand, he still arrested him because he didn't like it. And he lived with that inner turmoil.

And I mention that because if some of you are doing that today, if you enjoy listening to our sermons here at Grace because we teach the Bible, because you know the Bible is right, but you live with an inner turmoil over it because you don't like it, do you know how to fix that? You need to repent. It's the word we keep going back to this morning. If you're perplexed by what you're hearing from the pulpit

here, or at another church, there's a way to stop it. And you need to follow your conscience and do this inside your heart; turn away from sin. Don't ignore the moral compass God has given you. Don't reach up and turn off the smoke detector. Run to Jesus. He loves to forgive sinners, but He only does it when they turn away from the wicked things they're doing.

By the way, that's why our preaching is hard on you at Grace. Hard preaching makes soft people. Soft preaching makes hard people. I don't know if you're new to us or not, but if you are, you might be wondering, "Why do they say so much about sin here? They're constantly talking about that." It's because you can't go to heaven with your sin. You have to let it go. And if we have to be tough on you to get the point across, we'll do it.

Rest assured Herod could have made all this stop if he would have let go of his sin. If he did that, the story would have a happy ending. The sorrow would end for him in verse 20. But it doesn't. As you know, verse 21 goes on to tell us that he does something dreadful.

And that brings us to a final stage in Marks portrayal of the death of John the Baptist, and that all is that of this ends with John's execution. So a final stage in Mark's portrayal of the death of John the Baptist is that this is going to end with John's execution. Because Herod is not going to stop at arresting him. He'll go on to commit a crime that he would regret for the rest of his life.

Verse 21 says this is how the crime occurs. "A strategic day came." You might say a strategic day came for Herod's wife, who wanted to kill John because he gave a banquet on his birthday for all the lords and commanders and leading men of Galilee, which would have been a shameful event. Because birthday parties were always, history tells us, debauched affairs in Herod's household where they would eat too much and drink too much and they would have slaves come in and dance provocatively. They weren't sitting around the table just enjoying peach cobbler. Except in this passage it's not the slaves who do all this dancing, it's a member of Herod's household. Verse 22 calls her the daughter of Herodias, someone who should have commanded respect at court because she was a princess and the daughter of a queen, but she doesn't. She makes herself into almost a laughingstock, an object of lust. Furthermore, down in verse 28, it says that she was a girl. Now, the significance to that is that that's the same term that was used to describe Jairus's daughter in Mark 5, who was 12 years old. Now, it doesn't imply that this girl was 12 years old; we don't know how old she was. It just implies that she was young, too young to go into a room full of drunken men and act like this, unless someone put her up to it. Which is what happened as you're going to see. Her mother is the one who concocted this whole scheme. She was so consumed with the thought of killing John the Baptist, she threw decency to the wind and put her daughter out there as bait.

Because verse 22 says

and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want, and I will give it to you.” And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give *it* to you, up to half of my kingdom.”

Now, as you read that that phrase is repeated twice to show you how emphatic Herod was about this. He is so smitten by the girl that he keeps saying it, which is just talk, because Herod didn't own his kingdom, Rome did. He couldn't give it away if he wanted to, but he's offering that. Verse 24 says the girl takes him up on it because she goes out and says to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” The reason she goes to Mom is because mom set it up. And without a hesitation or second glance, the mom says, “The head of John the Baptist.” And that's constructed in a way that sounds like her reply is premeditated. Herodias was expecting something like this. And so whenever Herod made this grand gesture, she just spat the word out. She doesn't want money. She doesn't want gold. She doesn't want land. She doesn't want prestige. She doesn't want titles, she wants revenge. And in order to carry out the wishes, verse 25 says,

Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

The girl embellished the platter, possibly because they're eating at the table.

And although the king was very sorry, because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded *him* to bring *back* his head. And he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

Now I want you to look at the next verse because it says there was loud weeping and wailing in the fortress over this, right? No. Instead it says there was a cry of outrage and shock because they couldn't believe Herod did this. He executed someone on a whim. It says there was a revolt among

the lords and commanders because he killed a prophet. And they said, “How dare you Herod” and they called for his resignation. You don't see that do you? What does it say? It says the party went on as if nothing happened, and his disciples came and buried him. Because Herod stifled his conscience. That's how he could do something so dreadful and go on with the party because he found a way to keep it quiet. His conscience still bothered him in these verses, right? You can see it in the fact that it says up above, he was sorry, and not just sorry, but very sorry to kill John. The English Standard Version says, “exceedingly sorry,” sorry, upon sorry, upon sorry. But he did it anyway because he found a way to reach up and shut it off.

And as we consider how that relates to our lives, I think it shows you that the conscience is a strong thing because wherever you go, it will find you. But that doesn't mean you can't ignore it for a season because you can. People do that. They come to church and hear a sermon, and what did they do? They ignore their conscience. They shut it off. They wake up in the morning and have their prayer time with God, and how do they respond afterwards, they go on as if nothing even happened. The conscience speaks to them. It says, "Warning, danger, you need to repent and turn away from certain sins." But instead of listening to it, they just put their fingers in their ears. And the principle here is you can't act that way.

Herod would live with this for the rest of his life. Even this wicked man, if you go back to verse 16, before the flashback starts, it says he was still thinking about it all the time later when Jesus showed up because he said, "I beheaded him." My fault, or not my wife's fault, not her daughter's fault, not the soldiers' fault, not the party's fault. I spent a lot of time thinking about that statement this week. It's really incredible.

It reminded me of something John MacArthur told us in seminary, that you don't fall into sin, you plan it. That's where Herod went wrong. All throughout this story, he's just planning sin. He commits adultery, because he plans it. He arrests John because he plans it. He murders him because he planned to put himself in a place where he never should have been at a party like that. We all need to take that to heart. When we sin, we have a tendency to say, "It's not my fault, right?" And when we get into temptation, we want to look at ourselves as victims. Let me tell you something, you are not a victim of your sin. Did you hear what I just said? You might be a victim of someone else's sin, but when it comes to your sin, you are 100% responsible. They may do something bad to you and that's not right. And God will hold them accountable. But what you choose to do when you lash out, that's on your shoulders because you thought about it ahead of time. Long before you sin, you planned it out in here. And that's what you have to realize in order to get victory. No one gets victory over sin by saying, "I'm a victim. My husband made me do it. My wife made me do it." You get victory when you say, "I made me do it. God, will you forgive me?"

That's something Herod never does in the story. Even though he's willing to admit some blame, he never goes to God and says, "Sorry, will you forgive me." And therefore, it ends on a tragic note. If you notice, this is how the passage comes to a close with Herod killing John and never repenting. After this Mark will talk about something else in order to show Herod dies a lost man.

This is the last time his name will appear in this book of the Bible, but for now, I don't want to end our time without giving you some more closing thoughts on him and his relationship to John. Because this is a powerful story, isn't it? It really grips you. So we need to reflect on it for a minute here. As you do, there's a few lessons that come out on the end.

Here's one. Here's the first lesson. Even lost people feel convicted over sin, don't they? Did you see that? Even an unsaved pagan like Herod can still feel broken up over it. Make no mistake, that's what Herod was. This guy was a pagan. He came from one of the most wicked families to ever walk the face of the earth, but what made him different from his family members is that it bothered him at times. In the passage, just go back over this. Look at how many times Herod is bothered by sin. Verse 20 says he's afraid of John even though he's locked up in prison. John gave him a phobia. I don't know if I've ever given someone a phobia before as a preacher, John did. He petrified people.

It says he also perplexed him. He enjoyed listening to John, but he didn't know what to do with it. Verse 26 says it made him sorry to kill him. He didn't enjoy killing John. It didn't make him happy like it did everybody else. He's distraught. But nevertheless, listen to this, it was not enough to save him. It takes more than that to save a man. Herod needed to repent.

The reason I mentioned this is because I think people get this backwards today, they see someone like Herod, who's convicted of sin, and say that person must be a Christian. And then look at a person who's feeling guilty over and they say, "Well, they gotta be saved." It's not true. It's got to go deeper. John the Baptist said, you have to do this inside your heart. Turn or burn. That goes for the king of Israel that goes for the queen of Israel, it goes for the rest of us too. Even during an election year, I might add. You hear a lot of politicians, at least maybe in the U.S., I don't know by Canada so much, claiming to be Christians right now. And they tell you they had an encounter with God. Okay, that's fine, but this is what it looks like to have an encounter with God. You run from sin, and no exceptions. It's not one way to go to God for a king and another way for the common folk. There's only one way to the Father and it is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen?

It brings to another lesson here and that is that even though some people can be that way, like Herod, it doesn't mean you shouldn't reach out to them. You should. Even though people can be convicted over sin and not repent, you need to give them every chance to be saved, like John did. John believed as long as there's breath in a man, there's hope. No one is too far gone for God in his eyes. For example, if you go back up to verse 20, I think another thing interesting point in the passage here, it says that Herod enjoyed listening to John and that probably means he enjoyed listening to John other places. But in the context, it also indicates he's enjoying listening to John in prison because that's where John is at that point. Meaning John keeps preaching to Herod in jail. Now, let that sink in. It means after being wrongfully accused, and thrown in jail, and placed into a hole in the ground, he's continuing to tell this man the Good News of the Gospel, because he still held out hope for him. Would you do that? Probably not. Would I? No. In my flesh I would probably say, "I'm not going to waste my time; you're too far gone." Not John. He understood no one ever will ever be saved if you think that way. I mean, like it is with Herod, we would all go to hell if someone said you were too far gone. If you think about your own testimony, many of us grew up in church, and we rejected Christ. We heard the gospel for years and said no to it all. And what did God do? He just kept sending people to help you. Not once or twice, hundreds of times. And there's no reason why you shouldn't do the same for others. You don't want to ever fall

into the trap of thinking some men can't be saved because they're a lost cause. The Bible doesn't say that. It says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved," whether they're a lost cause or not.

Gives you brings us to one more lesson here just to close this out and that is that if you're going to have this kind of approach toward people and continue to reach out, even when they're stubborn in their sin, you need to take one more cue from the life of John, and that is to expect some resistance. That's what John experienced here. When he reached out to Herod this way, it was not pretty. This is not a pretty story. He made Herod mad. In fact, John makes everyone mad in this story. He makes Herod mad. He makes the Queen mad. He makes the daughter mad. Because he told them they were wrong.

I like what one pastor said about John the Baptist in this manner because he mentioned this. He said, "John was a remarkable person because he preached hell is hot, heaven is sweet, sin is black or white, judgement is sure, and Jesus saves." And he preached like this. You can take it or leave it. You can take it or leave it Herod. You can take it or leave it Herodias, which is what got him in trouble. But I think it made him a good example for us to follow because he was faithful in the message. John the Baptist was not successful, but he was faithful. He was not effective in the sense that he got good results in the story, but he was obedient. And God put him here in the Bible to show us He was glorified in that. That's what He wants us to be. God doesn't want you to be people pleasers as a church. And He's not asking you to be the kind of church that gets tons of results. He just wants you to tell the truth. That's it.

Someone asked me this week, they said, "How do you know if you preach a good sermon, Pastor Jeremy?" And I was studying this passage, and I reflected on it. I said, "Well, I kind of ask myself the question, does it make Herodias want to cut my head off?" That's how you preach a good sermon. Does it make hell hot and heaven sweet to people? Does it tell them judgment is sure and Jesus saves, and you can take it or leave it. Does it give them the truth? That's what God's asking me to do. It's no different for all of us as a church. Sometimes we make it harder than that because we want to preach in such a way that wins people over with our winsome personality. Where's John's winsome personality in here? The guy ate locusts and wild honey and dressed in camel's hair. How was he seeker sensitive? He just told it like it is, and let the Spirit do His work.

By the way, John the Baptist, was a very special person in the Bible for lots of reasons. One is because he was Jesus' forerunner and the messenger who paved the way for Him. But another one is because he was the first one to lay his life down for Christ in the Gospels. He's the first Christian martyr in the strictest sense of the term. Now some say Stephen was in the book of Acts. And there's a debate among scholars over that. Personally, I think it was John. John put his faith in Christ, and he's killed here on behalf of His ministry. But either way, he's not the last. Many others are going to follow Him. When you read the book of Acts and the writings of church history, it's just a bloodbath after this. One death after another, but it all began when he stood up for the truth. May we go and do likewise. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we come to You this morning. just in awe of the life of John the Baptist. We talked primarily about his death this morning, and we said a lot about the wicked man who killed him because the passage says so much about that. But it does make us want to go back and just be mindful of the fact of how You used a humble, humble man, for Your purposes. He was born humble. He lived humble. And this is a humble, humble death. But Lord You were glorified in it, magnified; Christ's name was exalted.

Father, may we take courage and hope from that this morning? We live in a wicked world. We live in a place here in Canada, where there's so much sin among us, so much need for repentance, so many people that are shutting off their conscience daily. And yet to be bold in an environment like that, we need to learn these lessons from the life of John the Baptist. Help us to do that Father? May we be bold? May we not give up on people? When we see the sin, when we're driving home this morning, and we go through downtown and we see the rainbow flags on the windows or we see a man holding the hand of another man or a woman doing that and showing affection and just the evil that we see among us, may we not give up? This man did not give up to the bitter end. What a story. Lord, I pray that that spirit will be prevalent here at Grace Fellowship Church, for Christ's glory in His name. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.