

She Pleased Herod and His Guests; Mark 6:19-29

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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. But others said he is Elijah and others said he is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. But when Herod heard of it, he said, John, whom I beheaded has been raised for.

It was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herod's his brother, Philip's wife, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. And Herod's had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death, but she could not.

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. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday, gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. For when her radius'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. And he vowed to her, whatever you ask me, I will give, give you up to half my kingdom. And she went out and said to her mother, for what should I do? What should I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptist. 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.

And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. 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.

When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. So last week as we began the story, we really began on the foot of just a, a character exploration. We explored into the character of this man, Herod of Herod's somewhat, and, and looking at these character studies, these character traits of these individuals.

From so long ago, we saw, of course, so many parallels with character traits of people today. People whom we know today. We saw in this man Herod, a man who was divided. If anyone is a divided man, Herod is a divided man. He's divided with himself for, he cannot put John to death, but neither can he free John either.

He cannot believe and be converted under John's preaching, but neither can he ignore John either. He is a slave to John. He is a slave to himself. He's a slave to his own divided loyalties. He's a slave to his, his domineering wife. In fact, he and odious, and as we'll see in just a little bit the girl. They are the least free people in the story.

The, the freest person in the story is John the Baptizer. For John the Baptizer. Ironically, the one who is in prison and the one who will soon lose his head is slave to no one in the story fearing God being slave to God, only he's slave to no man yet Herod is not free in any way. He's a slave to his own divided self.

He is a pitcher of what Jesus told in the parable back in chapter three of the kingdom that is divided against oneself cannot stand. So he indeed is the pitcher of a kingdom divided against himself. But his wife Herod is the very opposite. Isn't it interesting how. They are the most opposite that they could be.

Herod, who is divided and unfocused and because of his division, this will be his downfall. His wife, nonetheless, is anything but divided. She's focused and she is singular in her motives and she is the type of person that impresses us right away that she will get what she wants. She may wait for a long time, but she has the patience and she'll be patient as long as she needs, but she will get what she wants.

She's the type of person whom just knowing the little that we know about her from Y from last Sunday and today, she's the type of person that you do not want to get in her way because she will get what she wants no matter who she has to step on, no matter who she has to use. And the passage we'll see, even if it means she has to use her own daughter, she'll get what she wants.

And so such opposites just stand out as a stark contrast for us. But here, this man, Herod, whom we saw last week. Has this hang-up in his character that he wants so badly to be known as king. We saw last week this title of King was denied him, not by one Caesar, but by two first Augustus, Augustus, and then Gaius.

Both, both Caesars have denied him the title of King, and this will be his downfall. And so the one who would want more than anything else to be king is not the king. And Mark pokes fun at him by calling him the king. Nowhere else in all of scripture, nowhere else in all of secular history is he ever called a king, because he wasn't yet.

Mark pokes fun at him because this is what he wanted more than anything was to be known as king. And yet juxtaposed beside him is the true king because Jesus is the true king. And we see this so plainly as this man Herod wants so desperately to be called king, and yet he has no kingdom. He will promise a kingdom a little bit later in the story, but he has no kingdom to give.

Meanwhile, Jesus the true king. Has such great authority that he vests his servants with his own authority and just the preceding story, and they go out with the same authority as Jesus doing the same thing that Jesus did. That story immediately precedes this story, the story of the one who would be king but cannot.

And so these two things are juxtaposed together. The story of one who is slave juxtaposed to the one who is free, the one who is enslaved to his own sinful desires, juxtaposed against the one who is slave to no man, only God and God alone. The one who would be king juxtaposed next to the one who would be king more than anything, but cannot be king.

And so this leads us all into all these parallels that the story presents for us. And as we're on the topic of parallels, I put together in your notes here just some interesting parallels that jump out at

us from the story This, this story of these three characters that parallels so closely for us. The story of Elijah, I'm sure you've noticed this as well.

In the intervening days between last Sunday, several have mentioned to me some parallels that they have noticed. So I'm sure that you've noticed these parallels, but it's stunning to me just how much of a parallel the story of John the Baptizer is with the story of Elijah. So I'm going to harken you back for just a moment, way back into the story of Elijah.

Remember some maybe about a year and a half ago that we studied the story of Elijah from one Kings and into two kings? And back from that story, we noticed some things about those characters. And just think now of just how many parallels exist between, for example, Herod and, and his counterpart who was Ahab.

So, Herod and Ahab Bay are both descendant from a long line of wicked rulers, but also Herod and ah, and Ahab both hold the distinction of their father was being, was known as the one who was the most violent and the most wicked ruler to date. Both of them were married to a wicked and strong, strong-willed wife who was the real one who was effectually in charge.

Both of them listened to the man of God, and both of them, we are told specifically in both stories, feared the man of God. Now, think about the parallels between odious and Jezebel. The strong connection between odious and Jezebel. Both of them displayed a deep hatred and a resentment for the man of God.

Both of them had reputations for open sinlessness or sinless sinfulness or in debauchery. Both of them were foreigners, who by way of marriage ruled God's people, though they hated God's people. Both of them were known for the manipulation of their husband, who was also the ruler, the open manipulation of their husband, who was also the ruler.

Also. Also, both of them had a life that ended in disgrace. And then lastly, notice the parallels between John and Elijah. Both of them were people who were known for their strange manner of dress. Both of them had strong associations with the wilderness. Both of them had bold and, and brave declarations against the sinfulness of the ruler.

Both of them suffered this momentary loss of faith, this momentary loss of confidence in God, that that immediately followed the greatest spiritual triumph of their ministry. We remember in Elijah how that episode on the Carmel, after the Carmel and the slaughtering of the, the prophets of Baal Jezebel declares that she will have Elijah's life.

And from that moment, he lost his faith and he ran, he lost his confidence in God, and he ran likewise, John the Baptizer, his entire mission. He was raised up to be this one who pointed to Jesus to say, this is Messiah. Messiah is coming. I'm here to prepare his way. John does this, and when Messiah steps on the scene, Then we find John the Baptizer in prison, losing his confidence.

Are you really the one that we were waiting for? Is this really who I are you really who we thought you were? So both of them have this crisis of faith, so to speak, that immediately follows their greatest spiritual triumph. But in both instances, the second person of the Trinity personally encourages them.

Remember the story of Elijah when Elijah is on the mountain and three times the second person of the Trinity, the son of God, comes to Elijah and appears to Elijah to encourage him. One time he makes him the breakfast. Likewise, the son of man, the son of God, the second person of the Trinity also encourages John the Baptizer.

When the message comes to Jesus, are you really the one that we're waiting for? And Jesus says, go and tell him what you're seeing. You're seeing blind men. See, you're seeing deaf men here. You're seeing lame people walk. You're seeing prisoners set free and then turning to the crowd so that the messengers continue to hear this.

Jesus says this of of men, no one has risen. No profit is greater than this one. So personal encouragement from the second person of the Trinity. So the parallels, the connections between Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah to Herod, Herod's, and John are startling. But now as we're on the topic of parallels, and this is the end of John's earthly life, it's also fitting just to recognize some parallels between Jesus and John.

John, the Baptizer and Jesus of Nazareth. Both of them had a supernatural conception. Both of them were consecrated from the womb. Both of them preached messages of repentance. Both of them had bold declarations. John declared the sinfulness of the religious elite. Jesus declared the hypocrisy of the religious or elite.

Both of them had a tremendous response, John, to his preaching and his baptism. Jesus, to his teaching and his mighty works. Both of them were feared by the one who put them to death. John was feared, were specifically told that he was feared by the tetra who put him to death. Jesus were told, was feared by Pilate who put him to death.

Both of them were executed as a result of a manipulative person. John was executed by the, as the result of a manipulative wife, Jesus, as the result of manipulative religious leaders. Both of them were executed in humiliating manners, particularly humiliating manners, as we'll see in the passage today, how humiliating to have one's head lopped off and put onto a platter and brought in as the final course of a party.

It. Jesus likewise was executed in a physically humiliating way. And then lastly, after their death, each of their disciples came and retrieved their body at their own risk and cared for the body and buried the body. So the parallels between Jesus and John the Baptizer are also. Amazing to see as well.

But having seen that, let's just investigate a little closer as we look more closely into the character of this man Herod, as we look more closely into Herod's. And then also today we'll be introduced to the third of the characters of the story, the daughter of Herod's. So from verse 18, for John had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

So last week we noted just why it is that John is so focused on this message of the Unlawfulness of Herod's wife. It's not just that it's an adulterous affair, it's not just that it was a, a relationship began in, in fornication. It's not just that it's a, a relationship in which both people put aside their lawful spouses, but instead, this is also a relationship that is filled with incest.

It was incestuous from the beginning as this woman Herod's first married her. Half Uncle Philip left him, put him away to marry her other half Uncle Herod. So this as we said last week, all of this,

this Herod family, they are mites. Edomites were the people that were descended from the incestuous relationship between Lot and his wife centuries ago.

And this is something that just seems to show us over and over that the apple just doesn't seem to fall very far from the tree. And this family, as we're going to see even today, is more deeply ingrained into incestuous relationships. Even that seems apparent on the surface. So John's message is over and over.

You may not have this woman. It is unlawful for you to have your brother's wife. Verse 19. And Herod's had a grudge against him. She had it in for him. Literally that idiom that we use had it in for somebody ever used that, that idiom. She's just got it in for me here. He's just got it in for me. It's the same in the Greek.

It's the preposition in, put together with the verb to have or to hold or to retain. So literally her or Herod's headed in for him, had a grudge against him, headed in for John and wanted him put to death. Now that's a grudge. That is, that is indeed having it in for someone. Not that you just want bad things to happen to them, but her desire is that he be put to death.

But notice this, she could not, and here's the reason. Verse 20 for Herod feared John, why did he fear John? Knowing that he was a righteous and holy man? So knowing he was righteous and holy, he feared him and fearing him. He therefore kept him safe. So here we see once again a commendable aspect of Herod, of, of Herod's behavior as we saw last time, as inconsistency of Herod's life, the inconsistency of his morality.

He's capable of great acts of moral good on the one hand, and then on the other hand, he's capable of acts of such heinous debauchery. So how is this? It's because of his tortured conscience, because his conscience has been enlightened, and yet he's still a slave to sin. So here we see this great act where he keeps it safe.

He uses his position to maintain the safety of this man, John the Baptizer. Perhaps that's why he is in prison. Perhaps Herod saw that the safest place for John was in prison, and perhaps that's why he is in prison to start with, or perhaps he's in prison and remains in prison for his own safety. But either way, when he heard him, speaking of Herod, when he heard John, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

So from last week, we noticed how Herod is the pitcher of the shallow soil, the rocky soil. He hears the word and he hears it with joy. He hears it gladly, and he receives it in a way and in a sense even springs to some type of a life. But it's not true life. It's life that quickly fades away because there's no depth of soil.

The root of the seed cannot get to the heart. Verse 21. But an opportunity came. An opportunity came when Herod on his birthday, gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. So here comes the opportunity, and the opportunity we are told is a birthday party. So, by the way, just as sort of a side note, this is one of only two times that the Bible ever mentions birthdays.

So birthdays are one of those things that's deeply ingrained in our culture. The annual celebration of birthdays and that sort of thing. Many Christians will take exception to the Christian celebration. Of the holidays of Christmas and Easter. And the reason that some Christians take

exception to that is because of some, should we say, supposed links or connection between those two Christian holidays and some pagan or origins of those two holidays.

And so for a long, long time, for, for many, many decades, for longer than that, There has been this connection or the supposed connection between the pagan origins of Christmas and Easter now scholarly work today, just by way of your information, there is a growing body of scholarly research that is beginning to show a clear picture that calls into question those supposed pagan roots or pagan origins of both Christmas and Easter.

That's just sort of an aside note for your information that grow. There's a growing body of evidence that scholars are putting together that are really showing that that connection, the origins, the pagan origins of Christmas and Easter, those two holidays are really nowhere near as solid as we have been told that they were.

However, the connection between the celebration of birthdays and pagan origins is absolutely undisputed. It is an inter, it is interesting, just something that you may have never heard of, that the Jews refused to celebrate birthdays because they saw that clearly as a pagan celebration and the early church for centuries did not celebrate birthdays because they too saw it as a having a distinct pagan connection.

There's two times in scripture that a birthday celebration is mentioned. That's in Genesis 40 when the Pharaoh is celebrating the birthday and he brings the Bakker out of prison, and then right here is the only two birthday celebrations. Now, I'm not saying that Christians should not celebrate birthdays.

I'm just saying that there is a strong pagan connection to the celebration of one's birthday and pagan origins of that holiday, much stronger than what some people think are stronger connections between Easter and Christmas and those pagan origins. I'm not saying anything about what, whether we should or shouldn't celebrate birthdays.

I'm just pointing out to you that the early church for several centuries, Did not celebrate birthdays because they saw a clear pagan connection between the two. So here we see this Pagan king celebrating this birthday celebration. And the birthday celebration is what we're told is the opportunity that Herod's has been waiting for.

She's patient, she's been biting her time, she's been waiting for the opportunity, and here the opportunity arises. And we notice in this something about the nature of of how sin works. Sin is a factor in your life. It is a force in your life that will await for an opportunity and it will find an opportunity.

This is what we're taught is the nature of sin. We see this from the very beginning, from Genesis chapter four. We're in the very first one. Cain has slain his brother Abel, and God is pronouncing the curse upon him. And God says to him, sin is crouching at the door. You see it there. This picture of sin awaiting an opportunity.

It's awaiting this moment. We see it from the story of Jesus in his temptation. As he goes into the wilderness, he comes out of the wilderness. In Luke chapter four, we're told that Satan departed to wait for a more opportune moment. Paul says to the Ephesians in chapter four in verse 27, give no opportunity to the devil.

So we see this again and again. And what this is showing us is that the sinfulness in your heart is awaiting a proper opportunity. And you know what those opportunities are. You know what your pet sins are. You know what those sins are, that are the ones that are particularly besetting to you. And if you give just a little bit of thought, you can.

Two, you two can put together the connection between the opportunity in which that sin comes at you with greatest force. And the moment at which you are most likely to, to surrender or to yield. If, for example, let's just make up a crazy example. If your besetting sin is chocolate cake, if when you see a chocolate cake, you are just tempted to eat the whole cake, then guess what the moment of opportunity is.

It's when you look in the cabinet and you see the chocolate cake mix, and you see the icing right there, and you say to yourself, why don't I just make a chocolate cake? That's the opportunity. If that's your besetting sin, don't make the cake. Now, let's bring this a little bit more into realities. Should we, let's say your particular sin is looking at things on a screen, things that, that no one should see.

Things that introduce into your mind and into your heart, heart thoughts that never should take place. Then the opportunity for that sin is late at night when everyone is else is gone to bed and there's the computer. You see? I mean, it's as simple as that. That's the opportunity, and oftentimes sin waits for that opportunity, that moment to pounce.

Let's say your besetting sin is the sin of fantasizing That, that you have a life that's different from your life, that your spouse is someone different than your spouse, and you sinfully fantasize about that. Then the moment of opportunity for you is when you see that book on the shelf. That book that's about somebody else's life that you wish was yours or that movie that's about somebody else's life that you knew that you wish was yours.

That's the opportunity. And all of us live in a world and which the sin that resides in our heart is seeking opportunity, opportunity to come with us with the strongest force. Now, the scriptures tell us exactly what to do about this, and it's something that Paul says to Timothy and the most spiritual and the holiest manner possible.

He simply says, run from it. Run from it. If that's your besetting sin. If that's the moment of, of temptation, flee from it says Paul, just simply get out of there. Just don't make the cake. Don't turn on the computer, don't buy the book, don't rent the movie. Don't give the opportunity to the sin, which will find that moment to be the greatest of all.

Alright, so the opportunity comes, and the opportunity that comes is this birthday bashed, this birthday banquet, verse 22, for when Herod's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guest. So here we're introduced to the third character in the story, and the third character is hero's daughter.

Now, we're never told her name. In fact, none of the gospel writers mentioned her name. Josephus tells us her name was Salome. So Josephus also writes of the same event, the beheading of John the Baptizer, and he records her name as being Salome S-A-L-O-M-E is a name that only shows up just uh, in one person in the, in the scriptures.

At the end of Mark's gospel, chapter 15 and chapter 16, Salome is one of the ladies who tends to the body of Jesus after his crucifixion. So that's the only Salome that we're told of in scripture. But here Josephus tells us that her name was Salome, and she is described as Herod's, her hero's daughter. So this meant that she was the daughter of Philip.

She was Philip's daughter, Philip was her dad. Herod's was her mom, and here she is, Herod's daughter who comes in and dances for the, for the guests and pleases Herod. And as we know, the story goes, she pleases him so much that he makes this foolish vow. And the result of the vow was the beheading of John.

So the dancing that she comes into the party and dances for them. None of us here in the room really need to use a whole lot of imagination to understand what sort of dancing this was. We're not told the, the Bible is modest enough to leave that sort of detail out, but we can easily imagine what sort of dance this was.

I mean, she's not clogging, she's not doing the hokey pokey like we used to do in, in kindergarten. She's not showing a tap dance routine. We know what sort of dancing this is. This is, this is seductive dancing in which she is using body movements to, to produce feelings of lusts and thoughts of lust. And those who are watching her now, we don't have to just guess at this.

We know this because 100% of the research that has been done by those who have researched both the royal parties of the Herod family, the royal parties of the Romans, 100% of the research is unanimous to tell us that this is what took place. What took place was something very much like what took place way back in Esther chapter one.

If you remember the story of Esther and Esther, chapter one, king Ahasuerus was having the party, and the party was a full, was a, a party of only men, a stag party like this one. And he called for his wife, Vashti. Remember that story? He called for Vashti because she was beautiful to look at and he wanted her to come in so that all the men in the party could look at her and she refused to come.

And that was the, the impetus for the story. So this is the same type of, of gathering, the same type of environment. It was an environment with lots of drinking, lots of partying, lots of who knows what other sort of immorality is taking place. And as, as we're told, it was a party in which there was only men present we're told of who was present.

We were told that they are the chief leaders of the, the leading men of the city, the military rulers, and the nobles. All three of those groups of people are males only in this culture. So it's a group of males only. And we're also told that Herod's is or Herod's herself, the mother of the daughter is not there because when the daughter, when Salome wants to ask a question of Herod's, she has to leave to ask the question.

So that means that her mom's not there. Here is a daughter that's putting on a show for all the men that, that are in the room, and no other women are in the room, including her mother. So who's she putting the show on for while she's putting on the show for Herod and his guests? Remember, Herod is her stepdad.

And not only is Herod her stepdad, he's her, he is her stepdad. Two generations older than her. So Herod became tetra in four BC. Right now we're in the year 28, 29, 30 BC I mean, AD. So Herod

is at least in his sixties, maybe more, we don't know about the other men there at the party. We would imagine probably there's some young ones, there's some older, but they're all leading men, leaders of the city, military leaders.

So they're probably mostly on the older side. So we can imagine this is a room full of old men and this girl salami who comes in now, if you've ever seen the artwork, there's so much artwork, particularly medieval artwork that was painted and sculpted with as salami being the centerpiece. And all of it is artwork and, and paintings and whatnot.

That are depicting a licentious environment, a woman of licentiousness, a woman with sexual allure. Now all, every, all of the paintings and everything that I've seen depict Salome as a fully developed woman. Lots of curves fully developed, lots of sexual appeal, that sort of thing. However, let's notice that the word that Mark uses to describe her she came in and then verse 22, he said to the girl, and then two, two more times, we're going to see that same word, the girl, that word, that's actually the word it, it's the diminutive form.

We've talked about the diminutive recently. It's the diminutive form of the word that we get our proper name Kora from. It's the word Korasion. And this word is a word that specifically means a female who is no longer a child, but not of marriageable age. It's the identical word used in chapter five to describe Jairus' daughter.

And it specifically means a female who is beyond the age of child, but not yet of marrying age. Now in this culture, marrying age was sometimes as young as 12, 13, 14, something like that. We're told that Je Iris's daughter was 12 and she's called the same word girl by the same world.

So we put those together and we're given a picture not of a young woman in the prime of her physical life, not in a woman who has reached her, her physical development. We're talking about someone probably 12 or 13 years of age dancing, most likely clothed with minimal clothing, or quite often with none, with her mother out of the room dancing seductively for a room full of old men, primarily her stepfather, who's in his sixties.

Folks, we didn't invent this with Jerry Epstein, Roman Pawlowski, we, we didn't invent this in the 20th and 21st century. This has been the depth of the human depraved heart for centuries and centuries and centuries. The disgusting, the morally disgusting practice of old men looking at young teenage girls for the purpose of lusting for their bodies.

Do you remember last week how we said as we started out, that this story is just going to make you go, oh, this is a D morally disgusting story, but the Bible is so real to life. Is it not? It is so true to life, and it just looks this square in the face and says, this is what was going on. This is the type of sin that was taking place in that room.

The type of sin in which a mother sends her 11 or 12 or 13 year old daughter into a room of men wearing. Maybe very little or maybe nothing for the purpose of moving her body in such ways to cause those men to have thoughts that are too shameful for me to even mention. This was the type of family that the Ian family was this.

This was the upbringing of this poor pitiable young girl named Salome. Now, this episode that's taking place, one of the things that this shows us is ugly as this is one of the things that this shows

us is something else about the nature of sin. Have you ever noticed how sin seems to be particularly interested in the downfall of the very young?

You ever noticed that? Have you ever noticed how pointed the temptations to sin are? Specifically towards those of very, very young age. It's as though the world around us and the sinfulness of man wants, most of all to get ahold of young children. To see this, all you have to do is just go a few blocks down the road to the Elk and public library and go into the children's section and just start looking through books.

It'll take you less than 10 books before you start seeing messaging, and once you rec, once you learn how to recognize the messaging, you'll see that that messaging is prominent. And there are, I don't have to describe to you all the ways that our society is invested in injecting sinfulness into the very young, all of the agendas that take place in public education that are disguised under sexual education and all these different sorts of programs.

And they're just a thin veil for the sinful attempt to introduce sin to the younger and the younger and the younger. This is what's happening here as we have a girl who should be playing with dolls, or at most should be helping learning or learning how to help her mother and the things that her mother does or whatnot.

And instead she's flaunting her semi naked or fully naked body in front of a, in a room full of men, one of whom calls himself her father.

Lord, help us. It makes you want to just echo the, the call of John the apostle. At the end of the revelation when he says, come Lord, quickly come because this, I wish we could say that this was new. Wouldn't it be nice to, to at least be able to say, we in the age of technology have invented such sins as this, but we haven't.

This has always been the depth of the human heart. This has always been the blackness of the human heart. It's on full display here with this pitiable young girl who came in and danced, and danced apparently so skillfully that she pleased her father and the other men in the room to such a point that verse 20, verse 22.

And the king said to the girl, ask me whatever you wish and I will give it to you. And he vowed to her, whatever you ask me, I will give you up to half my kingdom. So perhaps that's some alcohol talking. Perhaps this is towards the end of the party and the effects of alcohol are beginning to take a prominent effect on his mind, and that has loosened his tongue and and softened up his judgment.

Perhaps that's part of it, but there is little doubt. That a big part of it was the show that Salome just put on, and the effect that that show has had upon Herod and has elicited from him such a response as this, which was precisely the response that Herodias planned on. So he makes this vow, this most foolish vow.

Ask anything you want, I'll give it to you up to half my kingdom. So here we see, ironically, here's the one who would be king, but he cannot. Here's the one who would promise a kingdom, but he has no kingdom to, to give set right against the story of the one who's the true king, who has returned to claim his kingdom.

And his authority is so secure and so supreme that he gives his authority to his servants. And they do the same things that he do. He does. So here's the one who would be king. He promises I'll give you up to half my kingdom, which was just an idiomatic expression of the day. We find it in Esther. We find it in One Kings other places.

It was an idiomatic expression. He's not literally saying, I'll make you co ruler with me. It's a way of saying, I want to be as generous to you as I possibly can be. So ask what you will. I'll give it to you up to half my kingdom. He makes this most foolish of vows, and this foolishness of this vow presses him into another sin.

So one sin exposes him to another sin, which is the fear of man, as we're going to see a little bit later. He's so concerned about what people at the party are going to think of him, that he has to keep this foolish foul. So the one sin presses him into another sin. The opposite of grace delivering us from a sin is this one.

Sin presses him into another sin. He commits the sin of murder. As a result of the sin of the fear of man, which is a result of the sin of this foolish vow. So one sin leads to another. We see the progression here, but this foolishness of the vow Marx readers would've picked up on this right away, even being Romans.

They were still Christians. And Christians have always had a long history of understanding the holiness, the sacredness of a vow. The Old Testament people of God have, they had a long-standing understanding of how vows and oaths they viewed them as, as Yahweh, as the keeper of all vows. And so when we make a vow and we break it, or we make an oath and we break it, then we are disgracing the name of God.

We are violating the commandment of taking the Lord's name in vain. So the Old Testament people of God took taking, took the practice of taking vows very seriously. In fact, what we find in the Old Testament scriptures, Is something that happens with great frequency, something that we as Bible students should be careful to recognize and careful to see.

Many, a student of the Bible, many a person who is a person of God's people, have fallen and mistaken their understanding of the scriptures in this way. And what I mean is we must be careful to differentiate the descriptive from the prescriptive. And many people have studied the Bible failing to understand the difference between the descriptive and the prescriptive.

And what I mean by that is that the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, we'll spend a great deal of time in the descriptive, in other words, describing what God's people have done, describing some of the things that have happened to God's people and how they've acted. It'll also spend a great deal of time prescribing how God's people should act.

We must be careful to understand the difference because every time the Bible describes what God's people have done, it is by no means prescribing what God's people should do. And if you make that mistake, if you fail to differentiate, differentiate the two of those things, that has led to some really wacky theology.

But just to take as an example, for example, the fact that the Bible describes Jacob Israel, the father of Israel, Jacob as having 12 uh 12 children by four different women, all of whom live under his roof. The fact that the Bible describes that does not in any way mean that the Bible is

prescribing that because all the way back in Genesis chapter two, God said, A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife singular.

So God has prescribed one way. God's people are acting another way That's contrary. Nevertheless, the Bible still describes that's what's happening. So oftentimes the scriptures will describe God's people taking foolish vows. And here's the point that I'm driving at sinfully, keeping foolish or sinful vows.

You've seen this happen in the Old Testament scriptures many times. Think for example of Joshua Chapter nine. Remember in the story of Joshua where God has told his people do not make any covenants with the people of the land. And then there's these Gibeonites, remember the story, the Gibeonites, they see that the Israelites are defeating everybody in sight.

And so they disguise themselves. They get these old worn out wine skins and these worn out shoes and everything, old moldy bread. And they make the short journey over and they say, woo, we came from a long way away because we heard about you, and we want to come and meet you and make a covenant with you. So make a covenant with you, with us because we live so far away.

So we're told that they don't consult God and being fooled by their trickery. They make a covenant with them. What do they do then do after learning that they just lived just around the corner. They keep the covenant because they see it as sinful to break that covenant. Or likewise, probably the saddest story of of such a type in the Bible was the story of Jha.

Remember Jephthah in Judges chapter 11? Jephthah was sort of an outsider. He was a mercenary. And the Israelites come and they hired Jephthah to lead their army and to defeat their enemies. And so Jephthah says, okay, I'll do this. And he makes this vow to God. He's going to go up and fight the Ammonites. And he says to God, God, if you give the Ammonites into my hand when I come home, victoriously the first thing out of my door.

I'll sacrifice to you. And then Jeff the comes home thinking, probably it's going to be his dog or something that runs out to meet him or his pet pig or whatever. Well, he is a Jew. He wouldn't have a pet pig but his pet, something would come out and meet him. And lo and behold, the first thing out the door was his only daughter.

And what does Jeff do? He sinfully keeps his sinful vow and we see other things. For example the, the blessing by Isaac, not the proper blessing to Esau, but to Jacob in other, other instances that we see this and what this is a result of, it's a result of God's people making a foolish vow or a foolish oath.

And then once they realize that the vow was foolish, they go on and keep the foolish vow instead of doing what God had said to do. In Leviticus chapter five, when God says if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, or any sort of rash oath that people swear. And it's hidden from him when he comes to know it.

When he realizes his guilt, then he confesses it and brings a sacrifice for forgiveness. In other words, what Herod should have done upon making such a foolish vow is this, and realizing what this foolish vow really was. What he should have done was to say, I'm sorry, I'm not keeping such a vow as that. I know I said I'd do it.

I know I said, ask me of anything, but I'm not giving you that because that would be sinful. That's what he should have done. Now, why do we go through all this? We go through all of this because I feel like it's probably a, a fair statement to say that all the Christians in the room, you have probably found yourself at one point or another in a similar position in which you have given your word to do something.

You've told somebody, you'll do something, you've told somebody. You'll uh maybe play on a certain sports team. Only to find out later that that sports team is going to play a lot of games on Sunday mornings. Or you've given your word to go with a friend to a certain party, only to find out that the party is a bachelor party, at which there's going to be a lot of activities taking place that you should not be at.

And you've found yourself in that position where you've given someone your word only to find out later that keeping your word will require of you more sin. And we've all sort of found ourself in that quandary. And the quandary is, what do you do? Because we know that God says to us that we are to be people of our word.

Would it be people of truth? Because God is a God of his word. However, the scriptures teach us that when we find ourself having taken a vow, foolishly, having sworn to something, having given our word to something, and then maybe we didn't think it through properly, or maybe we find out something that we didn't know upfront.

And that changes the picture. And now to keep our word will be something unwise or perhaps even sinful. Then the Bible says, to the glory of God, break your word to the glory of God. Break your word. Do not let your oath or your vow require of you yet another sin, as does Herod to the glory of God. Say to that person, look, I'm sorry.

I know I gave you my word. I know I said I would play on this team, but I didn't know that you, you guys are going to require me Your, your schedule's going to require me to miss a lot of the gatherings of God's people. I can't do that. Or I know I told you I would do this thing for you, or I know I told you I would buy you this thing or give you this gift, or whatever it may be.

But now I've thought about it or God has shown me this, or now I've learned that, and so to the glory of God, I'm going to violate my word. I'm going to break my word and I ask you to forgive me of that, but I'm not going to sin again. That's what the Christian should do. Do we really think? Do you really have such a picture of God in our mind?

That we would think that God would look down upon one of his children who made a foolish vow that required them to sin, and then learning of that they go ahead and commit the sin so that they don't break their word. Do we really think that God's going to look down upon that and say, boy, they just make me so proud.

They just kept their word now. Now I know that they sinned in this other way, but they kept their word. Do we really think that God thinks like that? Of course not. So this is an illustration for us that shows us something that's actually quite practical, because all of us will find ourself in those situations in which we have told someone something and then we have learned more about it or thought more about it.

Or maybe God has shown us something in which we now say, that would really be unwise. That might even be sinful for me. And so God provides the way of escape because you know, God will never place any of his children into a situation in which you have to sin. You know that God will never allow any of his children to be in a situation where you say, I've got no way out of this except to sin.

I either sin on the right hand or I sin on the left hand, but I have to sin one way or another to get out. I've got no other option. God doesn't present us with that. Why? Because one Corinthians 10, verse 13 says to us, every temptation comes with it a way of escape. And by way of escape, what that means is a Godly way of escape.

And so God will never allow us to be in a situation in which we have either unknowingly put ourself in a position or unwisely put ourself in a position where either we've have to sin by breaking our word or sin by following through with our word. Instead, God will look at that situation and he will say, yes, you were foolish in entering the situation, or you were just ignorant.

You didn't know. You didn't understand. But either way, the Godly way out is to say, to stand up, to own it. Say, I took this oath foolishly. I gave you my word, foolishly. Now I've reconsidered it. I've prayed about it. Now I'm not going to keep that word because that would require sin of me. Herod doesn't do that.

Instead, verse 24, I'm sorry, verse 22. Verse 23. Whatever you ask, I'll give you up to half my kingdom. Verse 24. And she went out and said to her mother, so she went out, her mother's not in there. She went out and said to her mother, for what should I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptist. So why did she ask with a head?

Why didn't she just say, kill John the Baptist? The life of John the Baptist. We don't know, we're not told. The only thing I, I could suspect was that we were just told that Herod wants to keep John safe. So perhaps Herodias is smart enough and perhaps she knows her husband well enough to know that she needs proof that Herod can't just come and say, alright, I'll give you that and it's done, and send somebody out to take John out and then say, say to Herod's, yeah, he's killed and we threw him in the pile in Gehenna

Perhaps Herod's wants proof and the proof that she wants is in a hand or a leg or foot. The proof that she wants perhaps is the head. That's the only thing that I can think of. But in whatever case, it does make the story much more dramatic. I want the head of John the Baptist. So notice here just the stark contrast.

The stark contrast between. What the earthly kingdom values and what the heavenly kingdom values, what the, the physical kingdom values and what the spiritual kingdom values. So the earthly kingdom, they value John the Baptist as nothing more than just a form of entertainment for this drunken party. I mean, that's, that's really all the value that he holds for them, is just some form of entertainment.

Just, just bring in his head on a platter that'll sort of round out the night's festivities in a fun way. We'll all sort of have our laughs at John's head right there on a platter. That's all John is to them. Kind of like Samson. Remember Samson some parallels here with Samson. Remember as, as Samson, his, his eyes are gouged out.

He's blinded and they bring him in as entertainment for the Philistines in a, in a similar sort of way, John's head is nothing more than entertainment for the Herodians here. Meanwhile, Jesus speaking of the same man in Matthew 11, verse 11 says, there's been none greater. There's been no prophet greater than this man.

All those prophets of old, including Moses, none of them were greater than this man. You see, you see the stark contrast and what the spiritual values and what the earthly values. Verse 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.

Here we see what I think is the starkest lesson of the story, and should we put it this way, just the powerful influence of a parent, the powerful influence of a parent. Here's how I see that in the text. Notice when Herod makes this vow. Notice how quickly she's have to run and ask mom, and she runs and she gets the news from mom, and then we're told specifically that with haste, immediately she comes back in and then she makes the request.

And it's not just any request. Did you notice what she added to it? Herod's asked for the head of John the Baptist. It seems as though salami added the platter part, but one thing is for sure, there was no hesitation in this. What I see is a young girl, 11, 12, 13, maybe 14 year old girl who is so eager to please her mother because in her mother's pleasure, she finds her own worth.

Do you know that that's what God has planted into the hearts of all people? And its strongest of course, in children, that in the pleasure of your parents, you, you find your delight, your desire, your worth, and in such a thing as that the parent yields such power over the heart of young children. This mother has wielded such power over Salome's heart.

Notice what she's going to do. Not only has she displayed her body to room full of lusty men, probably some of them were strangers to her, but this young girl is going to be handed on a platter, a freshly decapitated head. Now, most of you in the room are adults. What would you do? If someone handed you a freshly decapitated head, what would you shriek?

Would that platter hit the floor with a crash and then the head roll off? That's what we would do. Such a repulsive thing as that. Notice something about the heart of this poor young girl. There's no indication that this bothered her in any way. She takes the head, takes it back into the party. She has been so hardened and so calloused from a mother who has raised her to show her that what she values are things like incestuous relationships, adulterous relationships, the putting of self above others.

The devaluing of marriage, the devaluing of human life, to the point that she as a young girl can literally be handed the freshly decapitated, still bleeding head of John the Baptist, with the blank look in the eyes and the expressionless face and the fluid still coming out of the head. She can take that apparently without any real hesitation.

What a sad story of a sad young life. Salome was a sinner just like you and me, but she has had the power of the influence of her mother and what her mother finds pleasing. She has had that so influence her as to callous her heart in a way that's almost indescribable. So folks, let me just remind you of the power that you hold over your children, whether they're adults or small children.

Because what pleases you is what motivates them. What pleases you is what shapes their hearts, what they see in you as what you find pleasing. That is what shapes their soul. No one can convert their child, but we hold great power in shaping, can we say the shape of their soul?

You know, it breaks my heart to see, and I see this on a regular basis, and you see it too. It breaks my heart to see parents of young children laughing when their young children are acting, so simply when their young children are acting in ways that are so selfish and so self-centered and so sassy. And so disrespectful of adults that if that behavior came from an adult, nobody would like that.

Everybody would call that what it is, which is sin. But when it comes from a cute little child and the parent laughs at it, you know that laughter is one of the greatest forms of approval. What you laugh at is what you approve of. And doesn't it break your heart that for the sake of cuteness, so many children are encouraged at young age, young ages to act in such selfish, self-centered, disrespectful ways and to have their soul shaped like this.

And the same thing is true for adult children. What you approve of in your adult child holds great power for them. And so many of them wouldn't say it. Maybe they wouldn't admit it, but it's still true. They can be 40 years old, 50 years old. I'm 52. And what your parents approve of still shapes you. So just a word of, I don't know, caution and encouragement for everyone in the room.

Take great care and what you approve of. Take great care in what you show your children brings you pleasure. Do your, do your children see you taking pleasure in those Netflix shows that they've have to leave the room for you to see? Or do your children see you Take pleasure in daily opening the word and getting up early before work to meet God in his word and placing a priority in the gathering of God's people.

Do your children see you valuing that? Because what they see you value is what will shape their soul. You cannot convert them. You cannot gain salvation for them. But you can shape what they value and you can shape the softness or the callousness of their hearts. This poor young girl probably hasn't experienced her 12th birthday yet, and her heart has been made so cold and so calloused, and so uncaring, and so unfeeling that any way of salvation for her must climb over a wall tall and wide and strong.

But this is the picture that we're shown, the power of the influence of a parent. Now, verse 26. And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oats and his guests, he did not want to break his word to her. So here we see a number of things. We see, of course, the the fear of man, man, he's more afraid of what the people in the room think of him, even though most people in the room probably don't even like him.

Most people in the room would probably, probably betray him at the drop of a hat. Nevertheless, he caress more for their opinion of him than for the life of John The Baptist contrast, if you will, just, just the, the stark contrast between Herod and John. Here's a man that is so afraid of what people think of him, that he will behead the greatest prophet of the Old Testament.

Meanwhile, in prison there sits one who was so, who had such a fear of God, that the fear of man had no place in his life to such a degree that the Pharisees would make this two-day journey out to the wilderness. To hear him preach and be baptized by him, and he would say to him, he would say to them, who told you to flee the coming wrath you brewed of vipers?

That's a man with no fear of man. Because he fears God. Contrast it against one who does not fear God, but instead fears what everyone thinks about him. Notice also the parallel with Elijah. We don't need to go into that, but the same thing that we saw in Elijah. We see the fear of man because of his oats and his guests.

He did not want to break his word for her to her, to her. We also see the progressive nature of sin. Sin will always do the same thing, and that is progress and take more and consume more and kill more. Sin is never content with what it has. Sin knows only one thing, and that is to grow. It's like cancer.

You cannot say to cancer, it's okay if you just have my spleen. Just leave. Everything else to me, doesn't work that way. It's all right if you just have this one lung, just stay right there and we'll be friends. Doesn't work that way. Skin is like, or sin is like termites. You cannot say to, to a nest of termites.

You know, why don't you only eat these boards over here and well, I'll leave you alone as long as you don't eat the rest of the boards in the house. No, they're going to eat every board in the house until either you destroy them or they destroy the house. Same thing with cancer. Same thing with sin. You cannot contain it.

You cannot manage it. So we see here the one sin leads to a second, leads to another, and another and another. That's the way sin is. But we also see something that's really helpful to see. Verse 26 again. And the king was exceedingly sorry. Exceedingly sorry. That's a word that Mark is only going to use one other time.

And that's at the end of the gospel to describe the emotions of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. So here Mark is, Thinking of a word and he's thinking, what word can I use to describe Herod's heart? Herod's attitude when he learned that his foolish vow is now going to cost the life of John. What word should I use to describe his, oh, I'll use this one.

The same word that I'm going to use to describe Jesus's heart and the garden of Gethsemane. That's how sorrowful Herod was. But here's the takeaway there. It doesn't matter. Herod can have in his heart all of the sorrow in the world, and sorrow never lead him to obedience. All of the sorrow that the world has ever known cannot produce righteousness.

That's why Paul will say to the Corinthians that there is a godly sorrow that leads to life, but there is also a worldly grief that leads not to life, but it leads to death. And this is the sorrow that Herod has. And it doesn't matter how sorry he is, because all the sorrow in the world won't change his heart.

All the sorrow in the world won't give him the power to obey. Only the spirit residing in a converted heart can give him the power to obey. And Herod doesn't have that. So he can be as sorry as he wants, just like you or any, anyone, any human. We can be as sorry for our sin as we want, and your sorrow will do nothing unless it is genuine repentance, which opens the door, of course, to the spirit.

So his sorrow does not give him the power to obey only the indwelling spirit. Only the converted heart gives him the power to obey. Verse 27, and immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head, and he went and beheaded him in the prison. So with incredible

succinctness. Which is typical of the Bible, typical of the, of the Gospels, with an incredible paucity of words.

Mark just simply says he went and beheaded him in the prison. We're not told if the executioner was delighted to do that. Maybe he was sick of John. Maybe the executioner was so sick of listening to John preach and, and declare his sins to him that, that he would, he just, he was gleeful, couldn't wait to do it.

Or maybe the executioner was sad. Maybe the executioner had grown to love John after listening to him day after day and had grown attached to him. Maybe the executioner had even been converted, and now he had to do this tremendously hard thing. We don't know. We're just told that he was executed. We don't know if the ax was dull, took five or six chops, or if it was sharp.

We don't know. We just know his head was separated from his body. In the prison, verse 28 and brought his head on a platter, and the executioner gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. Notice again, the heart of Salome. What did the mother do with the head? We don't know. I mean, what do you, what do you keep ahead.

So gave it to the mother, verse 29, and when his disciples heard of it, they came and they took his body and they laid it in a tomb. So here we, we see once again the longstanding, solid Christian tradition of caring for the body of the deceased and placing that body in the grave to await the resurrection.

So I remain fully convinced that this is the most faithful way for Christians to care for the body as of the deceased, is to take those bodies and place them in the ground to await resurrection. There is not one instance in all of scripture except for one of God's people burning a body. And that was in the case of the body of Saul that had been so mutilated that that was all that they could do for it.

So this is to say that today we live in a time in which cremation of Christians is ever increasingly popular. The percentage of those who are cremated after death has it's, it is never been anything close. I think it's something like 40%. Now, the, so it is not a sin for a Christian to cremate. It is not sinful.

The Bible does not declare it in those such terms, but it does see, it does present to us an understanding of the body after death. That says to us that the most faithful thing to do with the body after death is to place it in the grave to await resurrection. What will happen in the grave? It'll rot.

That's what it's supposed to do. Dust to dear, earth to earth and dust to dust. It will rock as it's supposed to do, but it's the statement of the Christian placing the body in the grave to say, this body will rise again. This body will rise again in a glorified body again. It is not sinful for Christians to cremate, but it is the solid, longstanding tradition of Christians to take the body instead and care for it carefully put it into the grave.

So his disciples heard of it and they came and they took his body and they laid it in the tomb. So the last thing that we're going to see really is probably the main point of the whole story. The last thing to see is of course, this beheading of John and aren't we tempted in the story to just think of this?

What a tragedy. What a tragedy. What a tragedy this was. I mean, here was John. The most powerful of the Old Testament prophets. The, the one who had such boldness to speak to the leader of the land as well as the Pharisees to the, to the Roman soldiers. He would say things to the Roman soldiers like, stop taking advantage of people.

I mean, and here and here he was in the prime of life executing. What a tragedy.

Let me just finish the story by encouraging all of us to change the way that we think of what just happened in the story. The story is a tragedy, but the tragedy is Salome, she's the tragedy. What happens to John is glorious. I'm going to borrow from a man by the name of Albert Martin and his handling of this episode, of this passage of scripture.

I'm going to borrow some metaphors and some way of looking from some way of looking at this from him, because I think that the way he presents this is the best way could be presented. What John was presented with was a door.

And what God did in the story was God used some raw materials to fashion a door. In John's instance, he used the raw materials of a long imprisonment, maybe up to a year, probably some cruel guards. This impetuous little bratt of a girl Salome, her mother, who didn't like to be told no, her indecisive divided father

and an ax. Maybe it was a dull ax, maybe it was a sharp ax. But God took those raw materials and he fashioned from those raw materials a door. And he said to John, here's your door.

Now step through it. My son, step through it so that I can say to you, well done thou good and faithful servant.

You see, John was of course invincible until his work was done. His work was to proclaim the Christ to point to the Christ. His work was to proclaim the sinfulness of the leader. His work was to be a voice, and the moment his work was done, his father said to him, here's your door. Now come and step through it.

All of God's children, God does the same thing for all of his children. He fashions a door for all of us. Now, those doors, they're never the same. All of our doors are different. He makes those doors out of different material. Two weeks ago, we saw our brother Harold's door. Our brother Harold's door was, we don't know, maybe it was an electrical cord.

He tripped over, maybe it was a rake. He tripped over and it was a hard concrete floor and it was the back of his head and it was uncontrolled bleeding in his brain and it was extensive brain damage. And that was his door. And God said to Harold, here's your door. And our temptation is to say, what a tragedy.

I mean, Harold was still in good health, still just loved by all of us. Such a, we were talking this morning of just how it's just not the same without Harold here. And so the temptation is to say, what a tragedy.

That was his door.

A couple years ago, God made a door for Jerry. That door looked like a sudden, unexpected, massive heart attack. Few weeks ago, Amber's not here, but her grandfather had a door made for him. Let me encourage all of us to take this story and what I feel like is the central main point is to say God has a door for all of his people.

And what our heart should do is our heart should say to God, God, when your work through me is done, and when your work in me is done, I do not want to stay here one moment longer because you know God is doing two things. He is doing a work through you for his kingdom, and he's doing a work in you to prepare you for his kingdom.

And what our prayer should be is the moment that work is complete, the moment, I don't want to be here one instant longer. Make the cry of my heart, the cry of Paul to the Philippians, to to live his Christ, but to die is great Gain. To die is a door that we step through that door and that's when life really begins.

Your door might look like the doctor's report of that thing that's been hurting and bothering you for a while, and he says, yeah, it's what we're afraid of. It's cancer. And it's not only cancer, it's stage four.

Some doors come quickly and unexpectedly. Some doors look like a car that missed the red light and T-boned into the driver's side of your vehicle. Other doors you see coming from a long way away, like what is apparently my mother's door that's going to be at the end of a long road of a disease that is taking all of her memory, it's already taken all of her short-term memory.

And it's working hard at taking her long-term memory too. She doesn't know if she's in her twenties or forties or her sixties, and that door could possibly be a long way off, and it might take a long time to get there, but it's still the door. So John is a story that says to us that the glory of this story is this.

The moment John's eight-pound head bounced off that dungeon floor, his soul had flown to his God,

his race was run. His glory was now beginning the moment. His head was separated from his body. His soul was separated from pain and sorrow and tears and frustrations. The moment his head was separated from his body, his soul was connected forever in a tangible and real way with his God.

Let me just encourage you to foster that prayer within your soul, that prayer, that prayer that cries out to God. God help me to not see the disease, help me to not see the illness, help me to not see the accident. Help me to not see the failing health. Help me to see a door.