

Mark 6: 14-29 Discussion Guide

TEXT - Read Mark 6:14-29

¹⁴ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷ For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." ²³ And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." ²⁵ And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

What sticks out to you in this text? Any questions that come up? esu

- What is going on in this text (summarize the main points)? What is the context for the text?
- How does this text connect with the Gospel? What Gospel themes do you see in the text?

THEOLOGY - What do we learn about God from this text?

- What attributes or aspects of the character and nature of God do you see in these passages? What else can we learn about God from the text? Take a moment to list these out together.

LIFE

- Herodias is called to repent but she follows her own evil desires. Does Jesus respond with swift justice to right this wrong? How does God's Word guide you when you are grievously wronged?
- Mark continues the story of rejection of our true King which culminated in the death of John the Baptist. In the face of rejection, what gives you hope?
- John the Baptist's death is a foreshadowing of the substitutionary atonement by Christ's death on the cross on your behalf. How do your actions and words, empowered by the Holy Spirit and God's Word, proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ? How do you show others the reason for the hope you have?

PRAYER

- Pray in response to what God revealed to you in this text. If there is sin, confess it to him in prayer. If there is a need, petition God in prayer. If there is encouragement, praise God and share with others.
- What is one personal need you have that we can pray for you as a group?
- Pray for one friend, family member, or coworker with who you want to share the love of Jesus with.

Commentary on Mark 6:14-29

v. 14-16 King Herod: Actually, Emperor Augustus denied the title “king” to Herod. Goaded by the ambitious Herodias, Herod pressed for the title again and again until he so offended the emperor’s court that he was dismissed as a traitor. Mark used the title King Herod because it was the *local* custom to call him king, or more likely he used it *ironically*. All his ancient readers would remember the character of this man.

It is Elijah: Some people thought Jesus was Elijah, because it was prophesied Elijah would come before the Messiah did ([Malachi 4:5](#)). Others thought He was the Prophet whom Moses said would come after him ([Deuteronomy 18:15](#)).

This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead: Herod feared Jesus was John the Baptist. Herod’s confusion came from his own guilty conscience. It is hard to see clearly who Jesus is when we are in sin and rebellion.

v. 17-29 Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison: Herod imprisoned John for his bold rebuke of his sin. At the same time, Herod did not want to kill John out of fear of the multitudes – and because he knew that John was a **just and holy man**.

“More weak than cruel, Herod listened to John with an undeniable fascination. John’s word left him perplexed, and in anguish. Yet he found a strange pleasure in the authoritative preaching of this holy man, whose stringent life gave added power to his probing word. Too weak to follow John’s counsel, he nevertheless had to listen.” (Lane)

For John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” When he preached repentance, John did not spare the rich and powerful. He called Herod and his wife Herodias to repent, because Herodias had been the wife of Herod’s brother Philip.

John Trapp tells of another bold confrontation of sin in a king: “So Latimer presented for a new-year’s gift to King Henry VIII a New Testament, with a napkin, having this posy about it, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him: Herodias’ daughter shamelessly danced before Herod and friends, winning favor and a special request.

“With immodest gesticulations and trippings on the toe, wherewith the old fornicator was so inflamed, that he swore she should have anything of him.” (Trapp)

“Such dancing was an almost unprecedented thing for women of rank, or even respectability. It was mimetic and licentious, and performed by professionals.” (Robertson)

So she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist!” The immediate reply of Herodias showed that the mother had this planned out all along. She knew her husband and she knew the situation, and knew she could get what she wanted this way.

“The girl’s question implies by the middle voice that she is thinking of something for herself. She was no doubt unprepared for her mother’s ghastly reply.” (Robertson)

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And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her: Because Herod was afraid to cross his wife or lose face before his friends, he did something he knew to be wrong.

“The depth of distress experienced by Herod at Salome’s request for the head of John the Baptist is expressed graphically by the Greek word *perilypos*, ‘greatly distressed’. This is the same word used to describe Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane ([Mark 14:34](#)).” (Wessell)

“Neither was it long ere this tyrant Herod had his payment from heaven.” (Trapp) In order to take his brother’s wife Herodias, Herod put away his first wife, a princess from a neighboring kingdom to the east. Her father was offended, and came against Herod with an army, defeating him in battle. Then his brother Agrippa accused him of treason against Rome, and he was banished into the distant Roman province of Gaul, where Herod and Herodias committed suicide.