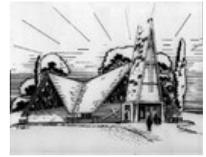




Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 10B) 2018

*God's weakness is more powerful than materialistic  
and human powerfulness!!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mark 6, 14-29:

- Commentary CPH **6** 14 And King Herod heard—for his (Jesus') name had become prominent and they were saying, “John the Baptizer is risen from the dead, and on account of this the powers are working in his case,”
- 15 but others were saying, “He is Elijah,” and others were saying, “(He is) a prophet like one of the prophets”—16 and, upon hearing, Herod *proceeded to say*, “He whom I have beheaded, John, **he** has arisen.”
- 17 For Herod himself *sent for and* seized John and bound him in prison, on account of Herodias, the wife of Philipp, his brother, because he *had married* her.
- 18 For John *was saying* to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.”
- 19 And Herodias *kept nursing a grudge* against him and was desiring to kill him, but she was not able (to).
- 20 For Herod greatly respected John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he *tried to protect* him, and upon hearing him a lot, he **was very much at a loss**, and he *used to bear him* gladly.
- 21 But when a propitious day had come, when Herod made a dinner on his birthday for his great personages and the “chiliarchs” and the leading people of Galilee—22 and after the daughter of Herodias had come in right there and had danced, it pleased Herod and his table guests. And the king said to the maiden, “Ask me whatever you **truly desire**, and I will give (it) to you.”
- 23 And he swore an oath to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.”
- 24 And upon going out she said to her mother, “What shall I *request*?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptizer.”
- 25 And upon coming in immediately with haste to the king, she *gave a request*, saying, “I desire that you give me at once, on a platter, the head of John the Baptist.”
- 26 And even though he became morose, the king did not wish to breach faith with her, on account of the oaths and his dinner guests.
- 27 And immediately the king *sent* a guardsman with a commission *and* directed (him) to bring his head. And *he went and* beheaded him in the prison.
- 28 And he brought his head on a platter and gave it to the maiden, and the maiden gave it to her mother.
- 29 And after his disciples heard (this), they went and took up his corpse and placed it in a tomb.
- Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears to hear Your Word and give us insight to understand it. Drive out*

*all wickedness and give us a good conscience before God! Amen.*

### • **Dear beloved of the Father!**

• King Herod bursts on the scene- ruler of one of the Roman provinces- a ruthless self-centered man who took what and whom he wanted. His material world seemed to be sorted out for himself. He had power over people. He simply took his brother's or stepbrother's wife Herodia. Was it right? For king Herod it was right, because he was always right. Nobody from his family or his brother's challenged him, because nobody had the power to do so. So, here we have a typical ruler of all times, who let's his position work for himself.

• But, then came John the Baptist and straight on his heels, Jesus the Christ! Yet, what could they do against such a ruthless man of the world? They had no army, no materialistic weapons to use against him. How could they even make a dent in his shell?

• Then comes the surprise: John speaks God's Word against Herod, [18] *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."* And this accusation of God's Law did in fact hit home! It hit home in Herod and Herodias! She was the one who had the greatest issue with John proclaiming the Law of God against herself and Herod. She wanted him killed and urged Herod to seize him for that reason.

• And now the king's power sort of unravels before our eyes as the plot thickens. As he, the powerful king, listens to his new adulterous wife, captures John, and then also starts to hear what John says, he even begins to hear him gladly. He begins to respect John.

• Who knows what might have happened if it wasn't for Herodias' cunningness to literally chop that relationship short. On the birthday party of Herod, him being surrounded by his noble men and military commanders, the type of scenario where a king cannot afford to show his weakness. It's the place to show-off his new found "daughter" and in his boastfulness Herod loses his senses a bit by boasting even more, *"Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom!"* That was a risky mouthful to deceitful women. Herodias took full advantage of the situation to ensure that John's head rolled.

• The question which begs to be answered is, why did Herod and Herodias make such a fuss about what John said? Couldn't they just have shrugged it all off?

- Firstly, it says Herod feared John for he was a righteous and holy man. So, John was getting through to Herod with his message. John's word perplexed him. And even after John's death, when Herod heard of Jesus, we see a strange thing happening to Herod- he thinks Jesus is John the Baptist risen from the dead. That is why Jesus had those miraculous powers. This is what was going on in Herod's head.
- So, what are we saying? In this powerful materialistic minded person king Herod, we find a guilty conscience [16]: *"John, whom I beheaded has been raised."*
- We know this, don't we? If we have sinned and we get sick afterwards, or anything bad happens to us, what's the first thought that comes up? Isn't it, 'I was punished for doing wrong'. Is that always the truth? No, not necessarily. But, the guilty conscience in us draws that conclusion. But, isn't that very interesting, that this happens even to someone like king Herod?
- That means, John's weapon, in this case the Law of God, God's Word, an immaterial weapon, very effectively hits home, in someone, who didn't even know himself that he had such a weak spot. The Word of God hit Herod's conscience, the very centre of his being and continued to do so, long after John was dead already.
- Looking after our body and getting our ducks in a row, as far as our material world is concerned is a good thing. Also as Christians we should be fit and train our bodies and get our house in order, so to speak, so that we can effectively serve others.
- However, it would be a deadly illusion if we would think that that is all what life is about. We cannot ignore our consciousness. Many try to forget about their nagging conscience. More try to cover it with loads and loads of material pleasures, some try to drown it, but once they get sober, its bugging them even more than ever, it's scratching their nerves. Others try to keep their mind occupied with extensive busyness, but once you lie in your bed, sick, down and out, it will come back and haunt you, like John "haunted" Herod. Please note, its not that John actually haunted Herod, its the Word of God's Law that unleashed its sting against him, and he was powerless against it! He would not have inner peace, even after trying to sort out the problem physically.
- That's where our restlessness comes from. We forget about our soul, about our conscience, which is getting clogged up with guilt! Once that happens, we cannot enjoy anything any-more. Our soul cannot find that deep joy the scriptures speak about.

• It is truly beneficial for us that Herod's dented consciousness was not right about Jesus, that He was merely the resurrected John. You see, Herod could only see the Law of God. Jesus was the resurrected Law of God for Herod. But, we know that is not true. Jesus came first and foremost to help those, to give those who have a crushed conscience, a new good conscience. A conscience of peace and rest, which results in the deepest joy one could hope for. A joy which is established and fed by the knowledge that God is our Father, who means it good with us. Our Creator is not only our judge, but first and foremost, our Father who very much so is concerned about us having a good conscience.

• We also know, that we cannot betray our own conscience. We cannot lie to ourselves. That never wants to work. And therefore, see, in what way God has accomplished salvation for us. Not in a fake way- our conscience would never have accepted such a cheap trick. And God would never have considered anything fake or symbolical only.

• Jesus Himself suffered and died, He took the full consequences of our trespasses on Himself, before God, and was punished on our behalf, with true God- forsakenness! This act of Jesus weighs immensely, for certain sufficient to be able to give us pardon, to handout forgiveness of all our sins! Therefore, we can be certain of God's forgiveness in Christ. Jesus did resurrect to come back as Jesus, our Saviour and Lord.

• ***He is the true king who reigns over our conscience!***

• His Word of forgiveness does the opposite as God's Law, namely it gives us a good conscience, it gives us an eternal quality of true life, even if we suffer material consequences in this life, even in the extreme case, namely, should we lose our head, because we believe, teach and confess in the reign of God, where good consciences are created, nurtured and sustained, forever.

• Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son and Glory be to the Holy Spirit! *Amen.*

• *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. [NKJ 2 Cor3:14.]*