

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, July 10-16 (B) – Mark 6:14-29

The Choices of Discipleship: *Easy or Difficult?*

Focus Question: *What sacrifices do you make to follow Jesus Christ?*

word of life

“King Herod heard of [the healings], for Jesus’ name had become known.” Mark 6:14 (NRSV)

Read Mark 6:14-29

It sounds like Jesus is making a name for himself. Word about Jesus and his powers has spread all the way to King Herod. Being known by a king might be considered a good thing, but as the story unfolds, it is just the opposite. Word of Jesus’ fame reminded Herod of Jesus’ cousin John the Baptist – an outspoken prophet whom Herod had ordered put to death. John’s death seems to haunt King Herod. He wonders whether Jesus is John the Baptist risen from the dead.

The details of John the Baptist’s beheading make up today’s reading and offer insight into the stormy relationship between John the Baptist and Herod’s family. John had spoken out against the king for Herod’s marriage to his own brother’s wife Herodias.

In spite of John’s condemnation of Herod’s marital affairs, the King respected John and his preaching and believed him to be holy. He tried to protect John – that is, until the big birthday party. At the party, the daughter of Herodias danced and delighted the party-goers. Intoxicated by the dance and the ambiance of the celebration, Herod promised his step-daughter, the dancer, anything she wanted, even half of his kingdom. Herodias saw this as an opportunity to get revenge on the bold prophet who had condemned her marriage to Herod, and she persuaded her daughter to request John’s head on a platter. What a sobering request! Yet, Herod felt obligated to honor his promise to the dancing girl.

1. *How do you picture this scene?*
2. *Why couldn’t a king overrule the request by the dancer?*
3. *Was it easy or difficult for King Herod to go along with the request? How so?*
4. *What is a man’s life worth?*

Immediately – without much thought or consideration – King Herod, deeply grieved, ordered the beheading. The life of an innocent, holy, prophetic man was over because of a drunken promise made after a delightful dance. The head of John the Baptist was brought to the girl who in turn gave it to her mother. Then what? What did the mother do with his severed head?

5. *Do you believe King Herod was filled with grief?*
6. *How do you think grief was stirring in King Herod as he heard about Jesus? (Mark 6:14-16)?*

The disciples of John came, took his body, and laid him in the tomb. Their act of devotion for their teacher stands in sharp contrast with the actions of Jesus’ disciples who abandon him. The task of laying the body of Jesus in the tomb is left to someone else, Joseph of Arimathea. (Mark 15:42-47)

7. *What is the overall message for followers of Jesus?*

word among us

At first glance, the birthday party described in Mark 6:14-29 is easy to imagine, especially with guests and a dancing girl. It all seems very contemporary, even if the party is for a king. But the story quickly takes a strange twist as we read of the beheading of an innocent man due to the request of a dancing girl.

1. *Can you imagine this happening somewhere in the world today? Where?*
2. *Was King Herod just showing off?*

The sobering story of the beheading of John the Baptist describes an innocent man whose life ends too soon due to the frivolity of others. John spoke the truth and offended King Herod's current wife. The story goes downhill from there, preparing us for the death of Jesus, another innocent man whose life ends too soon. Both Jesus and John die at the hands of decision-making men who had the power and authority to command death.

3. *How does this story of John's beheading have any relevance for today?*
4. *What is the connection of King Herod, Herodias, and the beheading of John the Baptist with us, disciples of Jesus?*

Take a moment to silently re-read this story.

5. *Where do you fit into the story?*
6. *Would you have been able to stand up against the request of the dancer? How so?*

King Herod is portrayed as a mighty king, but in reality he is very weak. He could not do the right thing in regards to a holy person. Consider your own life.

7. *How difficult is it for you to follow Jesus?*
8. *When is it easy to do the right thing?*

This summer the Daily Discipleship theme is on the "Choices of Discipleship." Following Jesus is not always easy. Some, like Herodias, are threatened with truth and prophetic speaking. It may not be fair or right, but some in authority have the ability to silence others. Maybe their technique is no longer a beheading, but those in authority can exercise their powers.

9. *What might be a contemporary ending to this story?*
10. *How might someone try to silence you and your witness of Jesus Christ?*
11. *What are some choices of discipleship facing you in the coming week?*
12. *As you face these choices, what do you hope to remember?*

Prayer

Thank you for John the Baptist and his witness to Christ. Strengthen my faith so I might follow Christ even when it is not easy. Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 14:1-12

Luke 9:7-9

last word

Each day,
Remember a
martyr,
one who died in the faith.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship

July 10-16 (B) Page 2 of 2