

# Making Space for God

## Lessons From Mark #11—Herod and Herodias

### Opening Prayer

Our daily obligation to destiny must be like that of the soldier described by Nikos Kazantzakis, whose prayer is "the report to the general: This is what I did today, this is how I fought to save the entire battle in my own sector, these are the obstacles I found, this is how I plan to fight tomorrow.." Amen

### Arrival

Take some times to settle yourself. Invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last four weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? When have you experienced the Lord's presence? Journal your thoughts and offer these to the Lord.



### Scripture—Mark 6:14-29—Read Slowly

<sup>14</sup> King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying,<sup>[a]</sup> "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

<sup>15</sup> Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

<sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

<sup>17</sup> For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup> So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, <sup>20</sup> because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled<sup>[b]</sup>; yet he liked to listen to him.

<sup>21</sup> Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup> When the daughter of<sup>[c]</sup> Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." <sup>23</sup> And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

<sup>24</sup> She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

<sup>25</sup> At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

<sup>26</sup> The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup> So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, <sup>28</sup> and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.<sup>1</sup>

### Herod and Herodias—Reflection

The trait Herodias learned from her paranoid grandfather, Herod the Great, was ruthlessness. He murdered his two oldest sons and first wife when he suspected treason. Later he had all the children in the neighborhood less than two years of age killed when he learned from the Wise Men that the Messiah had been born. The death of her murdered father left her an orphan so grandfather married her off to one of his surviving sons, her uncle

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<sup>2</sup> *Artwork—What's For Dinner?, Acrylic Collage on Mat Board, 11 x 6.5 inches, Steven Stuckey, 2017*

Herod Philip. Together they had one daughter, Salome. To make the family tree even more convoluted, Herodias later divorced her first husband and married his brother, her other uncle Herod Antipas.

For some reason Herod Antipas took an interest in the desert preacher John the Baptist. Maybe he recognized in John true royalty. Maybe he appreciated John's clear, black and white morality and found it refreshing when compared to his own equivocations. Unlike his new wife, maybe he was beginning to tire of the bloody ruthlessness that sustained him on the throne. Regardless, when Herodias demanded that her husband arrest John the Baptist for accusing her of adultery, Herod Antipas reluctantly agreed. As a consolation prize, he would at least have John living with him in the same palace. If he ever wanted to ask him a question, he could always summon him up from the dungeon.

Ruthless people are driven by a primal soul killing fear. Their survival depends upon their ability to be hyper attentive to any opportunity to take advantage of their enemy. For Herodias, that opportunity came at the King's birthday party. Salome danced. Herod gushed with delight. "Ask of me whatever you want and I will give it to you, exclaimed the King. The girl consulted with her mother and then came back with a grisly request, "Give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter!"

The King gagged at the thought, but what could he do to not lose face with his guests? The order was given. Servants soon served up a dish that kept the guests from eating for a month and gave Herod nightmares for the rest of his life. Herodias, which is the feminine form of Herod and means "hero" in Greek, won that round. But in later years she overreached her power. As a result, the Roman emperor banished Herod and Herodias to a life of obscurity in the hinterlands of the empire. In the midst of the political chaos of the day, Lord Jesus came to save his people, which should give all of us hope for our own days.<sup>3</sup>

## Readings

Egotism is pathological self-obsession, a reaction to anxiety about whether one really does count. It is a form of acute self-consciousness and can be prevented and healed only by the experience of being adequately loved. It is indeed, a desperate response to frustration of the need we all have to count for something and be held irreplaceable, without price.

Unlike egotism, the drive to significance is the simple extension of the creative impulse of God that gave us being. It is not filtered through self-consciousness any more than is our lunge to catch a package falling from someone's hand. We were built to count... we are placed in a specific context to count in ways no one else does. That is our destiny.

*Dallas Willard in the Divine Conspiracy page 15*

The person who voraciously seeks outer validation through social position is one most likely to have large unfinished business within.

*James Hollis in Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life, Page 101*

## Benediction

Lord Jesus, Herod and Herodias are negative Biblical examples of who I do not want to become. Give me eyes to see my hidden wounds and fears. Help me to surrender them to you for your healing touch. Root out of me any anger or greed that would keep me from loving you and the people you call me to serve. Grant to us the faithful courage of John the Baptist. In the Name of Jesus, Amen

<sup>3</sup>Reflection by Steve Stuckey 2017