**Follow – Gospel of Mark - Wk 13 - Tragic Victorious End**

**Happy Thanksgiving week – this is an interesting season. Some states are implementing more restrictions, some of you are making tough choices about gathering – it is definitely a different season.**

**We often feel heavy around holidays, as we think about those not here. Maybe loved ones passed on. Today touches on that.**

**Today an interestingly long passage. Mark is usually quick and concise – and on to the next event. … but not here… He gives an extended flashback about John the Baptist. (not his denomination)**

**What was so special about John the Baptist?**

* **John B. and Jesus were family - Jesus 6mth older cousin. John kicked in the womb when Mary (pregnant w/ Jesus) came near. Most likely grew up knowing each other. Mary visited John’s mom.**
* **John B. is the greatest (most significant) prophet in the Bible**

**Jesus said of John Matthew 11:9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: “‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

* **John B. was fulfilling prophecy and a purpose – He was preparing the way in the spirit of Elijah – the forerunner. A powerful and fearless prophet / preacher - 1st prophet in 430 yrs since Malachi. The only messianic prophet to stand in front of the Messiah!**
* **John B. lived in the wild – away from luxury and excess. Wearing what he caught and eating what he killed. He lived to preach & prepare the way.**

**Mark is about to unwrap a soap opera. Filled w/ affairs, adultery, sex, alcohol, and gratuitous violence. An odd tragic story to include. Why?**

**Let’s find out**

**Mark 6:12 They (the disciples) went out and preached that people should repent. (turn to God) 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (God was working… word is getting out) 14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, (what happened to Johnny B?) and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” 15 Others said, “He is Elijah.” And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.” 16 But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!” (How can he be alive?)**

**Let’s meet – Herod (name title)was not a king in Rome he was more a governor of Judea. Locals called them “king”.**

**He was afraid John was alive again - and coming for him!**

**The Jerry Springer Bible moment – let’s meet the family… don’t blink.**

**See chart – Herod had 10 wives… see PPT (slides to be queued by Ted)**

**Why would Mark bring this up? Remember the audience were Romans – they knew the Herod family, Caesar allowed them to govern the area. They also knew the troublemaker John B. (Mark talked about John in 1:2). They knew he died – but did they know how? Mark filled them in on the gruesome and evil details.**

**Flash back (sound effects)**

**Mark 6:17 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. (Herod Antipas was her uncle, she was married to her other uncle Herod Phillip) 18 For John had been saying to Herod, (often and consistently) “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” (Imprisoned for public rebukes - be quite!!) 19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. (Don’t talk about my family!!) But she was not able to, 20 because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. (He kinda liked John)**

**21 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. 22 When the daughter of Herodias (Salome (Saulo-me) from previous marriage to Herod Philipp. Herod Antipas is her great uncle and stepfather - most likely an young teen or younger. Herodias has no problem exploiting her own daughter) (she) 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.” 23 And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.” 24 She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” (goes to her mother to ask…) “The head of John the Baptist,” she answered. 25 At once the girl hurried back to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”**

**26 The king was greatly distressed, (unhappy – he liked John) but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. (Did want to look bad) 27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28 and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother.**

**See chart – PPT (slides to be queued by Ted)**

**What a gruesome event – a decapitated head carried around.**

**A grizzly trophy presented to Herodias - the result of hatred, bitterness, peer pressure, and too much to drink.**

**Mark 6:29 On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. (some of the disciples of Jesus and followers were once disciples of John B. and were very close to him. That is how Mark ends this story)**

**This is tragic – but this injustice came back to Herod and Herodias.**

**Slide - In order to take his brother’s wife Herodias, Herod deserted his wife, a princess from a neighboring kingdom. Her father, offended, attacked Herod, defeating him. Then his brother Agrippa accused him of treason against Rome, and they were banished to the province of Gaul, where Herodias committed suicide and Herod of worm-infested gangrene.**

**What can we learn from this Tragedy? Lesson from the Loss**

**1. Truly following Jesus can be exciting and dangerous**

**Jesus had just commissioned his disciples to preach and set people free from spiritual oppression and possession - and it was happening!!!**

**Then what immediately follows is what is often the reward – death. This was to be the outcome for most of the disciples.**

**\*\*Ministry is exciting and possibly at times dangerous.**

**That is why following Jesus require we lay down our life.**

**The amazing stories of men and women around the world…**

**2. The Word of God can be offensive and always demands a response**

**John’s message was scripture – he was always speaking the Word of God, but it was hitting too close to home for Herod - too personal.**

**So many preachers are guilty of tickling the ears – but prophetic preaching is current and spiritually confrontational.**

**I am not here to preach a pep-rally – but to preach the WORD!**

**I’m not here to politics, but the WORD of God and Kingdom.**

**There will be times when the Word hits you right between the eyes. How will you respond? We see 2 Negative Responses to Biblical Preaching**

* **You can ignore the message – Herod**

**20 …Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.**

**Herod liked John, listened, was intrigued by his message, wanted him around, knew it was right – but was dull to any conviction. He did nothing about it. He ignored it.**

**Many in church are like that still – they come and agree, like the pastor, but just lock him up to a Sunday morning. I am not here to be merely a preacher – but a prophet pastor.**

* **You can attack the preacher – Herodias**

**6:19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him.**

**John was the voice of God to them – she had him silenced.**

**If the preacher is preaching the truth, he is just delivering the mail.**

**If you have an issue, you should take it up with the LORD.**

**They like the pastor until it’s personal. Until it exposes sin.**

**Then they hate him and don’t hesitate to attack. I’ve seen people get bitter and attack the messenger… (me)**

**Johns B. message – the disciple’s message: we are all sinners; we need to turn from self and turn to God. We must be born again. God in the flesh, Jesus – says come, follow me.**

**What will you do with this? They are powerful & offensive!**

**3. No one dies early**

**John would have been about 31 at his death. Not only a young death, but a violent ruthless, vindictive murder. (Paint a very sorrowful time of loss…)**

**Jesus response to this was not to restore or resurrect John – or unleashed vengeance on Herod – no, John fulfilled his beautiful purpose. People do die young but never early.**

**Psalm 139:16 – every day was established before we were born**

**John knew he had fulfilled his mission. His disciples were concerned Jesus was starting to get bigger crowds than John. John 3:27 John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.” (I love that phrase…)**

**John was at peace at moving into the background.**

**People do tragically die young but those in Christ never die early. When speaking to family members who lost a child – some never come home. Years later ask, “would you have rather not had the child of the 2 days?” The answer is the same. I am thankful for the 2 days.**

**4. Tragedy (Loss) can give bring you closer to Jesus**

**Matthew 14:12 John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus. (one of Fav funeral verses) 13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.**

**We can learn a couple things from this – when hurting, when loss comes talk to Jesus – and like Jesus get alone with the Father.**

**Grieving for family – for a friend – for a great man of God. He spent some time alone. Knowing John fulfilled his purpose and that he will see him again – still spent time alone to grieve.**

**There is Beautiful Portrait of Gratitude in what they did.**

**John talking to his disciples said - John 3:27 John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.” (If I have anything at all – it was a gift from God. It is not mine to hold onto.)**

* **Gratitude is humbling (God I need you)**
* **Gratitude is honoring (God You are in control)**
* **Gratitude Is healing (God, thank you for what I’ve been given)**

**Gratitude heals broken hearts- rejoices in the good were given.**

**When you start to think about your dad, mom, family, passed on or away form you due to Covid - get alone and talk to Jesus – be thankful! Don’t run from Him – run to Him!**

**Last thing - Matthew 14:13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. (Just like that, life follows him- life goes on. Another day begins. He could have been, “Come on, give me break!!”) 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.**

**5. Tragedy (Loss) can give us clear sight to see the lives in front of us**

**Jesus response could have been – leave me alone for a minute!! But he felt their pain and was deeply moved.**

**Our grief can empower us for ministry, teaching us to be more empathetic, caring, and sensitive. Knowing hurt helps us to heal the hurt of others.**

**I want to end with this thought from Jesus that he said about John his cousin - Matthew 11:11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

**Why does Jesus say that last part?**

**John never saw the fulfillment of the cross & resurrection – yet “the least in the kingdom” the humble who turn to Christ will see and understand. What a great honor- you can know the power of the cross and resurrection of JESUS!**

**\*\* This was a tragic story – but also a victorious story of God’s provision, purpose, and plan fulfilled,**

**Prayer:**

**Are John’s words your prayer today?**

**“I must decrease, he must increase”**

**How will you respond to the Word of the Lord today?**

**Don’t be like Herod (Ignore) / Herodias (get angry)**

**Next week – the greatest Thanksgiving Meal in the Bible!!!**