

Mark 6:14-29
Nothing Can Stop God's Truth
4/10/22

ILL: In **1963**, the **US Supreme Court prohibited** prayer and Bible reading in public schools. The driving force behind this decision was a lawsuit that the **atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hare** and her teenage son, **Bill Murray**, had filed.

O'Hare reared her son to hate religion and deny God's existence. So, while Bill was in his **20s**, O'Hare and he worked on anti-God lawsuits. She wanted to end the tax-exempt status of churches. She wanted to remove the phrase "**In God We Trust**" from US coins. And, she wanted to remove "**under God**" from the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

But, Bill began to **question** atheism. He saw that his mother was a bitter, destructive person, who had abused and manipulated him all his life. So, he became depressed and began **drinking heavily**. In an alcoholism treatment program, Bill met people whom the **Christ** had transformed. So, he opened his heart to Christ and committed his life to his **Savior**.

Today, Bill Murray is a **Christian evangelist**. And, even though he resisted God every step of the way, he couldn't keep fighting God's will or God's Word forever¹.

RN: Hasn't God said that the World will hate His Word? Hasn't God said that the World will hate Him? Hasn't God said that the world will hate Christians? But, hasn't He also said that His Word will **accomplish** His will through us?

AN: Clearly, the **Sovereign Creator** of the universe can accomplish His will through miraculous or natural means, but the World will not love us for it. In fact, more often than not, the World will hate us for it.

BI: Speaking God's Word can be costly and dangerous, but no one will ever stop **God's Truth** from accomplishing **God's will**. **Please turn in your Bible to Mk 6:14-29.**

I. Today, we'll see what **King Antipas** says about Jesus.

II. And, we'll see what **links** the **Baptizer** and King Antipas.

III. And, we'll see when **Queen Herodias gets even** w/ the Baptizer.

Nothing Can Stop God's Truth. **[PRAY]**

Last time, we learned that the Baptizer is a type of Jesus who shows that despite death his message and Jesus' message will go on. But, there are also other parallels b/t the Baptizer and Jesus. First of all, weak-kneed tyrants fear them both, but these tyrants give in to pressure and kill them. What's more, the Baptizer and Jesus die as the silent victims of conspiracies and corruption. And finally, the Baptizer and Jesus both die as the virtuous, innocent victims of wicked, guilty men.

(TRN) In (14-16), **King Antipas** says that **Jesus** is the **Baptizer** resurrected.

Mark 6:14–16 (NASB95) ¹⁴ *And King Herod heard [of it], for His name had become well known; and [people] were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him."* ¹⁵ *But others were saying, "He is Elijah."* *And others were saying, "[He is] a prophet, like one of the prophets [of old]."* ¹⁶ *But when Herod heard of [it], he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"*

(14-15) Herod Antipas rules **Galilee**. He's the son of **Herod the Great** who killed the baby boys in Jerusalem after Jesus' birth. And, like his father, Antipas is wicked.

A. Antipas is a tetrarch; that is, he rules ¼ of his dead father's kingdom. So, he's not really a king. But, the people call him a king to poke fun at his ambitions. Antipas is ruthless and loves luxury, and Jesus calls him "**that fox (Lk 13:32),**" b/c he's cunning.

B. Now, Antipas has heard about Jesus and His **12** Apostles' miraculous powers. And, he's also heard **3** views about the source of Jesus' miraculous powers:

1) Jesus is the **Baptizer** risen from the dead. **2)** Jesus is **Elijah** returned to usher in Judgment Day. **3)** Jesus is another **Prophet** like the prophets from Israel's glory days.

C. Now, it's vital to see how people refer to Jesus as Elijah, b/c Elijah cared for the poor and he's supposed to come b/f **Judgment Day**. IOW, the people see Jesus help the poor and powerfully cry out about Judgment Day, too.

D. And, it's also crucial to see that the people refer to Jesus as a Prophet from Israel's glory days. Prophets were famous for speaking God's Word against the wicked and speaking it for the oppressed. IOW, the people see Jesus as incorruptible and heroic.

E. But, Herod's guilty, superstitious conscience overwhelms him, so he thinks that Jesus is really the Baptizer who called him on the carpet for marrying Herodias. Now, to see why the Baptizer cries out against Antipas, we must look at his family.

F. The **Herods** are just a delightful family. Aside from murder, mayhem, and mania, they practice incest: Antipas marries his half-niece, Herodias, who was his half-brother **Philip I's** wife. IOW, their murderous, sensual lusts respect no boundaries.

(16) So, Antipas' justifiable guilt provokes him to see Jesus as the Baptizer come back to life, ready to miraculously even the score by leading a revolution against him.

A. **Josephus**, the Jewish historian, says that Antipas fears the Baptizer might do this, so Antipas kills him. IOW, Antipas' paranoia and the Baptizer's piety lead to his murder.

1. What's more, superstitious people like Antipas believe that murder victims come back to haunt and harm their killers, so Antipas is close to going over the edge.

2. At the end of the day, the Baptizer's piety and Antipas' paranoia are 2 sides of the same coin. But, Mark stresses the moral side while Josephus stresses the political.

B. ILL: In **Japan**, there's a custom that vividly illustrates how the guilt for past sins hangs on. Although most **Japanese** believe that abortion is a woman's right, many Japanese women, like other women around the world, the memory of their aborted children often haunts them. So, to help themselves cope w/ this habitual guilt, many of these women bring statues representing their aborted children to **Buddhist** monks who care for them in their temples.

Often, the women dress these childlike statues called *mizuko* in bibs, sweaters, and booties to protect them from the cold. Others bring toys. Pathetically, some even pour water over the figurines to satisfy their thirst. One young woman says, "**I think I've done something bad enough to be cursed**."

C. APPL: Guilt can horribly warp a life. But, Jesus comes to forgive us and liberate us from every haunting ghost.

We can be liberated from guilt, b/c Nothing can stop God's Truth.

*(17-29) are a flashback that connects the dots to (16). And, they also provide a foreshadowing of Jesus' own suffering and death. But, Mark also draws a parallel to the Elijah-Jezebel conflict, b/c Jesus later calls John, **Elijah**.*

(TRN) In (17-20), Mark flashes back to the link b/t the Baptizer and King Antipas.

Mark 6:17–20 (NASB95) ¹⁷ *For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, 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 *Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not [do so];* ²⁰ *for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.*

(17-18) The Jewish historian, **Josephus**, says that Antipas imprisons the Baptizer at the palace-fortress called **Machaerus** near the hostile **E** shore of the **Dead Sea**.

A. Antipas' father, **Herod the Great**, built a chain of these fortresses. And, Josephus says that they combine military defense w/, "**magnificently spacious and beautiful apartments**."

1. Ironically for the Baptizer, Machaerous comes from the Greek word for “**sword**,” the instrument of the Baptizer’s murder.

B. Now, Antipas imprisons the Baptizer, b/c his ambitious **2nd** wife **Herodias** hates the Baptizer. The Baptizer loudly denounces her marriage to Antipas, her **half-uncle**, b/c **Lv 18:16; 20:21** say incest is unlawful and “**abhorrent**” in the sight of God.

1. IOW, the Baptizer tells Antipas and Herodias God’s Truth, and Herodias despises the Baptizer for it; b/c God and he are contradicting her ambitious, self-serving will.

2. Antipas has more power than **Philip I**, her previous husband. So, she’s more interested in Antipas than Philip.

(19-20) The Baptizer’s public rebuke also possibly stirs up the people and threatens Herodias’ throne, so she wants to murder him and eliminate the peril.

A. But, Antipas is **superstitious** and dreads the Baptizer, b/c he knows that the Baptizer is God’s man. So, Antipas refuses to murder him.

1. Instead, Antipas comes up w/ a shrewd compromise that protects the Baptizer and keeps Herodias in her lair—He **imprisons** the Baptizer near the **Dead Sea**.

B. Now, despite this drama, the Baptizer **fascinates** Antipas, b/c the Baptizer is an impressive, influential, and inspiring moral preacher and—**Antipas knows it**.

C. But, the way that the Baptizer uses the Law to **convict** Antipas leaves the king in a real pickle. On the one hand, he really respects the Baptizer.

1. But, on the other, he’s insanely **lusting after** Herodias. So, Antipas keeps going back and forth, and he grows more morally confused w/ each passing day.

D. ILL: The **Associated Press** headlines said this: “**Thief Tries to Donate that Guilty Feeling.**” Then, the news release gave the details: “A burglar who stole **\$7,000** in jewelry, old coins, and cash from a home has mailed in the family’s **\$10 church offering**. A hand-written envelope w/ a misspelled address arrived Friday at the Church. It held sealed envelopes stolen from a mother and her children. The pastor said, ‘**I think it’s characteristic of the moral confusion of our times that someone would think it’s all right to steal from widows and children but think it’s wrong to steal from the Church^{iv}.**’”

E. APPL: A man can’t respect God and keep lusting after his **sins of choice**. So, being morally clear or morally confused results from a choice to **believe** God or **not**.

We can be **morally clear**, b/c Nothing can stop God’s Truth.

(TRN) In (21-29), Queen Herodias outwits King Antipas and executes the Baptizer.

Mark 6:21–29 (NASB95) ²¹ *A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee;* ²² *and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you."* ²³ *And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom."*

²⁴ *And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist."*

²⁵ *Immediately she came in a hurry 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 although the king was very sorry, [yet] because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.*

²⁷ *Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded [him] to bring [back] his head. And he went and had him beheaded 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 [about this], they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.*

(21-23) Herodias finally has her revenge. Antipas throws a big birthday bash for himself, and he invites all the upper crust and top brass in Galilee.

A. Then, Herodias stoops as low as a mother can go, and she intentionally sends her teenage daughter into this keg party, s/t she can dance seductively for Antipas.

1. None of the Gospels name the girl, but Josephus calls her **Salome**. She's the daughter of Philip I, Herodias' **1st** husband and Antipas' **brother**.

2. And, Mark says in **Greek** that Salome is a girl of "**marriageable age.**" So, that puts Salome in her **mid-teens**.

B. Now, no decent Jewish or Gentile mother—**let alone a queen**—would ever let her teenage daughter dance in front of a drunken wolf pack.

1. But, Herodias is no decent mother. She hates the Baptizer so violently that she'll even defile her own royal daughter to get her pound of Prophetic flesh.

C. This dirty dancing is all the rage at the **Roman** court of **Augustus Caesar**. And, it's a vulgar pantomime that prostitutes perform.

1. As such, Salome gets the wolf pack, and especially Antipas, all worked up. So, in a drunken fit of arrogance he offers her anything up to **1/2** of his kingdom as a reward.

2. Offering $\frac{1}{2}$ his kingdom is common way of saying that Antipas wants to be **very generous**, but Salome knows that she's **not** supposed to take him literally. But then, Antipas seals his offer w/ a stupid oath. And, his **VIP** guests witness his buffoonery.

(24-25) Salome goes to her mother and asks her to suggest a reward. And w/o missing a beat, Herodias says, **"Ask for the Baptizer's head!"**

A. So, flirtatious Salome sashays back to Antipas and giggles and coos, **"I want you to give me . . . and I want it right now . . . the Baptizer's head on a platter!"**

1. The cadence of Salome's demand is sly and sick. First, she builds up suspense, and then she hits Herod right b/t the eyes w/ her ghoulish desire.

2. **And, check this out**—The demand for the platter is Salome's way of tying the murder into the **party**. IOW, decapitating the Baptizer is her way of **having fun**.

B. When you see how Salome and Herodias act together, it's clear that the fruit hasn't fallen far from the tree.

(26-29) Salome's demand really scares Antipas, b/c he respects the Baptizer. But, he doesn't have the guts to face down his VIP guests. So, he immediately does **her** will.

A. IOW, the Baptizer, whom Jesus calls **"the greatest man born of woman"** (Mt 11:11) dies, b/c Antipas is too yellow-bellied to call off a stupid vow made at his wild keg party.

B. So, Antipas' executioner beheads the Baptizer, plops his head on a platter, and hands it to Salome. And, she gleefully takes the Baptizer's oozing head to Herodias.

1. Herodias has pulled the thorn from her paw, but she's only confirmed what the Baptizer's said about her b/f God and man: She's **lawless, unclean, and evil**.

C. Now, some people might think that the Baptizer was stupid to take on the Herods, especially when you consider their history. But, the Baptizer was **God's Prophet**.

1. And as such, he had to speak against wickedness in high places if God told him to do so. IOW, God doesn't give sacred cows a pass, and real Prophets don't pick and choose their assignments.

D. Furthermore, God tells the Baptizer to go up against Antipas and Herodias the way He tells **Elijah** to go up against **Ahab and Jezebel**.

1. And, both the Baptizer and Elijah obey God w/ no thought given to their **success or safety**. So, Jezebel persecutes Elijah and Herodias murders the Baptizer.

E. Now, after his martyrdom, the Baptizer's disciples claim his body and give him a decent Jewish burial. This is the **only clean** detail in this whole unclean story.

1. **But please note:** These brave men risk Herodias' wrath as they honor the Baptizer like **Joseph of Arimathea** risks the **Bigwigs'** wrath as he honors Jesus.

2. IOW, the Baptizer's disciples and Jesus' Followers show that they will **carry on** the work of their respective masters w/ no thought given to their success or safety.

F. ILL: At the height of **WWII**, the **Nazis** imprisoned **Protestant** theologian **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** for standing against **Hitler**. But, he kept urging his fellow Christians to resist Nazi **tyranny**.

Now, some Christians, who believed that Hitler was the **Antichrist** asked Bonhoeffer, **"Why do you expose yourself to this danger? Jesus will return any day, and all your work and suffering will be for nothing."**

Bonhoeffer answered, **"If Jesus returns tomorrow, then tomorrow I'll rest from my labor. But today, I have work to do. I must continue the struggle until it's finished."**

G. APPL: Sometimes, God tells Christians to speak against wickedness in high places. So, when God tells us to so, we **can't pick and choose** our assignments.

We must speak out at God's command, b/c Nothing can stop God's Truth.

ⁱ Tom Johnson, *Hooked on the Book* (Zondervan, 1996).

ⁱⁱ "Lutheran Witness," Mar 1996, 3.

ⁱⁱⁱ *War* 7.170-77; *Ant.* 18.119.

^{iv} "Honest Before God and Man," INFOsearch Pro ver 4.3P.

^v "Playing With Prophecy," Ibid.

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