

榮耀的使命（下）——马可福音 6:14-32 A Glorious Commission (2) – Mark 6:14-32

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 6:7-32
 - Teaching text : Mark 6:14-32
- 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!” **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. **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. **30** The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. **31** And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) **32** They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.
- The murder of John the Baptist is far more than some random story in a soap opera. As the forerunner of Jesus, John’s fate foreshadows the hostility Jesus would encounter. In addition, note that verses 14-29 is a flashback, inserted into the story of Jesus sending the apostles which starts in verses 7-13 and does not end until verse 30, indicating that the mission of the apostles is in the same vein as that of John and Jesus!
 - **2 Timothy 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

- Outline:
Title: A Glorious Commission (2)
 1. Its Core: Jesus (vv. 14-16)
 2. Its Character: Righteousness (vv. 17-20)
 3. Its Cost: Your Life (vv. 21-28)
 4. Its Continuation: All Disciples (vv. 29-32)

Its Core: Jesus (vv. 14-16)

- “His name had become well known”: It shows that the focus of the twelve apostles' preaching was very clear. All that people heard from them was Jesus. With power and authority to heal the sick and cast out demons, the apostles could've easily drawn attention to themselves. But instead, they knew full well that their power came from Jesus and was to be used to point to Jesus.
【Caution】 Many churches love to brag about their own achievements. I once went to a house church and heard pretty good teaching overall; but as soon as the service was over, zealous co-workers immediately gathered around me to tell me how great their church is and how it's definitely the best church in the city. Beware of church-idolatry! Beware of pastor-idolatry!
- “John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets”: Three speculations about Jesus' identity. Exactly the same as in Mark 8:28, indicating these are three popular opinions. The basis for guessing Elijah is Malachi 4:5; the basis for guessing one of the prophets is Deuteronomy 18:18; but there is no basis for guessing John the Baptist at all. John never performed any miracles.
- “But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying ...”: This is called the accusation of conscience! Ever since he killed John in violation of his own conscience, his conscience has been restless, always fearing some kind of retribution might happen. Now, his conscience just keeps accusing him of his sin.

Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion.
1 John 3:21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

【Caution】 If you have a defiled conscience, you won't long for the return of Christ! I often hear people say, why do I not feel the longing for the Lord's return? Think about it, is it because you don't have a clean conscience so you dare not see God face to face? Christians, it's time to deal with that sin you've been hiding for years! When will you quit those unholy addictions? When do you plan to completely repent and pray to God for help? Is there anyone waiting for you to demonstrate your repentance through practical actions?

Its Character: Righteousness (vv. 17-20)

- “Herod, Philip, Herodias, and the daughter of Herodias”: The story of two men and two women. A notoriously sinful family, all descended from King Herod the Great, with all kinds of incest throughout the family.
- “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife”: Because of this statement, Herod had John thrown into prison. This is the price of faithful preaching. John preached God’s righteous standards with no compromise and no fear of offending people. (cf. Matthew 3:7)
Acts 5:29 We must obey God rather than men.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.

【Application】 Some preachers today also have the boldness to condemn the evils in our society. In every age, God’s people always need the fearless kind of preachers who persist in preaching God’s truth, in season and out of season.

- “Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe”: Herod has almost become a hero here. Matthew says Herod also wants to kill John, which is no contradiction. Herod had mixed motives, wanting to kill him on the one hand, but on the other, he doesn’t dare to do so, for he knew the people held John in high esteem. But Herodias only had one single idea: kill John!
- “He used to enjoy listening to him”: Because John is the only one who spoke the truth! Others would say: Hail! Your Majesty! Long live the king! Only John would say: You are no majesty at all; you are a bastard, a morally corrupt sinner! This just happens to be the same thing his conscience keeps telling him, so he had some kind of enjoyment listening to John.

Its Cost: Your Life (vv. 21-28)

- “Herod on his birthday gave a banquet”: Who’d give himself a birthday party? Happy birthday to myself! Roman birthday parties were often drunken orgies. Herod invited a bunch of dudes to eat, drink, and indulge themselves.

【Caution】 We should be careful in using our Christian liberty and avoid parties we shouldn’t go to. When people get themselves filled with food and alcohol, they begin to talk nonsense and flirt around. Countless people have done things at parties that make them regret for the rest of their lives!

- “He swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask of me...’”: This is sheer braggadocio. Herod had no right whatsoever to promise this.
- “The head of John the Baptist”: John preached faithfully all his life, only to end up dying in the bloodiest way at the plot of two evil women.
- “The king was very sorry”: Obviously not the godly kind of sorrow over his sin, but the worldly regret because he forced himself into a dilemma. He didn’t want to kill John, for this would bring trouble to himself; but he also didn’t want to break his oath and lose his ego in front of his dude friends.

Proverbs 13:15 Good understanding produces favor, But the way of the treacherous is hard.

Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

- “Had him beheaded in the prison”: John the Baptist was a faithful servant of God and a forerunner of the Lord Jesus. His preaching prepared the way for Jesus to come, and now his death foreshadows how Jesus would die.

Its Continuation: All Disciples (vv. 29-32)

- “When his disciples heard about this...”: Matthew says they went to Jesus. Perhaps they finally believed John’s testimony of Jesus and became Jesus’ disciples.
- “The apostles gathered with Jesus”: They just came back from their first preaching trip which was a big success, and then suddenly, they heard about the cruel death of such a faithful preacher at the hands of evil men. Their hearts must be heavy.
- “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while”: Jesus must have given them the comfort and encouragement they needed to strengthen their faith. Perhaps He also taught them about the significance of John’s death. John’s death foreshadows the death of Jesus, and the cost the apostles must pay for following Jesus, as well as the cost for all Christians to follow Jesus. The Great Commission is a glorious mission, but it also comes with a heavy price. Are you ready to pay it?

【Application】 We often hear of Christians getting discouraged while serving the Lord. Some would quit altogether after having some frustration. Why are we so weak? A very common reason is that **sometimes we have wrong expectations for service**. Some people serve just to enrich their leisure time, some serve in order to receive praise from others, and some serve hoping to make big contributions to society. But the Bible says, perhaps, what we should expect, is a blood-covered plate with our head on the top.

Summary:

Is it worth it? Is it worth your life to follow the Lord? Is this a worthy cost to pay? Picture this: After you’ve faithfully endured all things for the service of the Lord, here stands John the Baptist, at the gate of heaven, greeting you. With a smile on his face, scratching his neck with his hand, he says to you: “It’s so worth it! Is there anything worth more? Welcome home.”