

Lenten Devotional March 6, 2024

Scripture

Mark 6:13-29

13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

17 For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. 22 When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." 23 And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." 25 Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Devotion

The Rev. James Golla '16

We enter our Scripture text after Jesus has sent out the Twelve. News is spreading about Jesus that it has reached the ears of King Herod. There is speculation over who Jesus is and King Herod believes that Jesus is John the Baptizer who he had killed. Mark gives us some background on what has transpired between King Herod and John the Baptizer. King Herod broke Levitical law (Lev. 18:16, 20:21) by taking his brother's wife as his own wife. John the Baptizer went to the King and called him out on his sin. John lives into the role of a prophet, much like how Elijah confronted King Ahab. The dynamic between the prophet of God, John, versus the power structure of this world, King Herod, is important to note. John stands and speaks truth and justice against power. The power system does not like to be told what to do or when they are wrong. John is arrested and eventually beheaded for standing up for truth and justice. Jesus in the same way speaks truth and justice. This pushes the power structures to eventually talk Rome into crucifying him. Will we, as followers in the way of Jesus, stand in the prophetic tradition of speaking truth and justice into our power structures today? Are we willing to faithfully risk persecution, even though it may lead to death? In the season of Lent, we are called to "suffer" for our faith. This is more than just giving up chocolate or coffee! Jesus calls us in this season to get uncomfortable, and stand up to speak truth and justice into this world!

Prayer

God of love and justice, we pray that you will embolden us to take a stand. Fill us with your Spirit to speak your truth and justice in the face of opposition. Give us the courage to choose you this day to serve you in your prophetic tradition. Amen.