

Week of Mar 31, 2019 — Focus: Mark 6:14-29

Introduction

Have you ever said something like, “Let me tell you a story that illustrates that”, in order to further your point? Perhaps when speaking to children or teaching something?

- What were you trying to explain the last time you said that? Did the story help?

Scripture/Sermon Discussion

Re-read Mark 6:14-29 to refresh your memory:

- How did King Herod view John the Baptist? (v. 16, 20, 26)
- How did Herodias view John the Baptist? (v. 19)
- What did John the Baptist do to them? (v. 18)
- What did they do to him? (v. 27)

Context is *always* important when reading Scripture, and it is particularly so here:

- First, remember that the Gospels (ex. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) are intentionally written accounts of Jesus’ life and message. As an author, Mark chose where and how to place certain accounts, and sometimes he made some interesting literary decisions
- Note the preceding verses (v. 7-13) and the verse immediately following (v. 30):
 - What do these two passages (surrounding the story of John the Baptist’s beheading) have in common?
 - Why would Mark have placed this account right in the middle like that? What function does it have for the reader?

Mark is “sandwiching” the account inside two accounts about the disciples going and returning from ministry. This is called *intercalation* and Mark does it a few times. The accounts on the “outside” help to interpret the account on the “inside”, and vice versa.

- To see another example, read Mark 11:12-24.
 - What is the account on the “outside” and what is on the “inside”?
 - How does the cursing and withering of the fig tree relate to Jesus clearing the temple?

- We often do this any time we begin talking about something and then use a story to further illustrate our point. We begin with our point, use a story to illustrate, then go back to our main point.
- *Knowing all that*, what does the account of John the Baptist’s beheading illustrate about disciples coming and going?

Discipleship

We are called to be disciples of Jesus and be *like him*. As his disciples, we are *identifying ourselves with him* and proclaiming *his* message to the world around us—even if it’s not accepted or appreciated. There is a cost to following Jesus (see Mark 8:34-38, Luke 14:28-33):

- What do you value the most in your life? What are some of your treasured possessions?
 - Are you *willing* to give them up to follow Jesus? Without actually letting them go, how could you ever prove to yourself that your willingness is true?
- As Pastor Jonathan asked, where is God asking *you* to “take up your cross”?

While we don’t often face extreme persecution for our faith in our part of the world, Pastor Jonathan mentioned the following examples of *costs* of discipleship:

- Rejection (due to identification with Christ, stances on marriage/abortion, etc)
- Lost opportunities by being ethical in unethical environments
- Extreme effort dealing with sin and sinful habits (see Heb 12:4)
- Forgiving others
- Giving / sacrificing resources and time

Which of the above examples is the most difficult for you to deal with? In other words, which do you tend to avoid if possible?

- Do any come easy / naturally to you? Why do you suppose that is?
- Are there any examples that aren’t listed here?

Is it worth it? What are we receiving by following Jesus?

- Encourage each other with the gospel by sharing some of your favourite “go to” verses.

Prayer

- Pray for courage and willingness to follow Jesus no matter that cost
- Pray for everyone in our church to lessen their grip and desire for the things of this world
- Pray for all the people named on the cross in the MRBC lobby (for our “pray and invite”, Easter campaign)

Final Note

- Make plans as a group to join us on Sunday night at 7pm for our final corporate prayer event of the ministry year!