

Sunday, July 15, 2018 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
“A Powerful Memory”

Mark 6: 14-29

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Adapted from CPR

Law/Gospel – Four Pages Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Herod was a man who took delight in the extraordinary. He liked listening to John the Baptist, this figure from the past who had visions of the future (1:1–8). He had ambitions for being a king, although he never received that title. He delighted in hosting a banquet to celebrate his birthday, in having Herodias' daughter dance publicly before his guests, and in making a promise he never could keep. (Since Herod was not a king, he had no kingdom that he could dispense as extravagantly as he promised.)

Herod then demonstrated an extraordinary faithfulness to his extraordinary words. Because of his promise, he had John the Baptist beheaded and delivered his head to Herodias' daughter on a platter. Herod's delight in the extraordinary—his pleasure, his ambition, and his promises—filled his life with a haunting sorrow. When the extraordinary did occur in his kingdom, when demons were being cast out, the palace of Herod's memory was filled with the troubling spirit of his extraordinary sin.

Herod is an easy figure for us to despise. His sin is so extraordinary! It makes our errors seem like minor infractions not even worthy of mention. Yet God's judgment is clear. All sin is worthy of damnation in his sight. We may not live in palaces, give great banquets, or make outlandish promises, but we, too, can be troubled by memories of our sin. Sin has a way of entering into the most humble home, the most holy environment, and turning it into a place of torment. We can suffer not because we remember beheading a prophet but because we remember one extraordinarily little sin.

Each sin, no matter how small from our worldly perspective, seeks to silence God's Word. As our Lord explains in the Sermon on the Mount, anger with one's neighbor is a sin against God's command not to murder, and a lustful glance is a sin against God's command not to commit adultery. While we might come to church on Sunday and listen to God's Word with pleasure, when we fail to respond to that Word, to put God's Word into action, to live according to God's will, we silence God's prophets. Such sin makes this world a troubled place. Our sins

haunt the halls of our memory, not only for those relatively extraordinarily little sins but for those “big” ones, too. And so we are haunted as we recall that one moment of weakness, that one word we cannot take back, that one night we lost our purity, that one day we lost our temper, and we tremble in fear before a holy God.

The temptation is to despair yet we dare not, for today Mark offers us a glimpse of an even more extraordinary story. Yes, a story even more extraordinary than the devastation and world turned upside-down nature of sin. Notice how Mark sets the past sin of Herod within the context of the present ministry of Jesus. Herod hears of what is happening in the name of Jesus. With that one small reference, Mark leads us into something as big as the salvation of the world. Mark surrounds the story of Herod’s extraordinary sin with an even greater story of extraordinary love.

Jesus has sent his disciples out to proclaim his Word and to cast out demons. He called them for this very purpose. They are entering into the world with a life-giving Word. While Herod stands transfixed in his troubled memories, Jesus is transforming the world with his extraordinary love. He enters the troubled places of our world and challenges us with a call to repentance, changes us with a proclamation of salvation, and transforms us by his life, death, and resurrection into people who remember God’s mercy and rejoice in God’s eternal love.

Although Herod missed this extraordinary work of God, we do not. Regardless of what sin – extraordinarily little, by human comparison, to Herod, or a really “big” one that you bring into this sanctuary today, you have come into a place of God’s life-changing love. There is no sin that can separate you from the work of Jesus.

Today, Jesus continues his ministry. Through his Word, he calls us and everyone to repent. No sin is too small for God to notice. All sin is worthy of damnation, and we stand this day before a holy God troubled by the memories of our sin. Yet Jesus enters into the troubled places of our lives – our places of regret, shame, hiding and pride and bears the punishment of God’s wrath for our sin, and dies and rises to bring us new life.

While Herod feared that John the Baptist, whom he killed, had risen, we rejoice that God has raised the One we crucified and through him brings us life. In Jesus, we see the wonder of God’s mercy, the extraordinary nature of God’s love: God the Father sends his Son for our

salvation; God the Son willingly endures eternal punishment for our sin and rises to send his Spirit to bring us life; God the Holy Spirit works through God's Word to turn us from sin, to bring us to Christ, and to awaken in us a memory of salvation and hope of eternal life.

Those sins haunting the halls of your memory, they do not get the last word. No, the memory of salvation and hope of eternal life now wins the day. *This* is a memory we will never forget. The apostle Paul, even when suffering in prison, sings of salvation because of this powerful memory of God's love. Jesus enters into those haunted halls of your memory, those dark recesses of your heart, those deep hurts, that terrible shame, all those troubled places of our lives and transforms them with his love and his life-giving word.

In Jesus' name, Amen.