The High Stakes of Kingdom Work

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Thank you so much for leading us today. They've got some competition, but I think they have the award for those that drive the furthest to get here every single Sunday.

We've got several in our church that drive a long ways, but I think they're the furthest every Sunday. They leave their house about 2 a.m. to get here, but not quite that early, but pretty early in the morning for sure.
I want to encourage you for a moment some things that we've got available to try to help you as we approach a new year. One of the good things about a new year is a time for new commitments, a time to reestablish helpful habits.
One of the things that most of us want to do when the new year comes is to make sure that we are in the Word and having daily time of Bible study. The hardest thing with that is organization, knowing what am I going to read each day.
We've got some things at our bookstore at the table out there that I would love to encourage you to look at. Some of those are just daily quiet time guides. We've got some read through the Bible in a year Bibles, so they're already divided up already in the daily readings for you.
[1:26] We've got some books that will walk you through books of the Bible verse by verse, already broken down into studies for you.

We've got a number of those out there, so you can look at those. But what I really want to encourage you to do is on that table out there by the bookstore, you're going to see four different stacks of papers.
There are four different read through the Bible reading plans. The books have a suggested donation. The reading plans obviously are free. They're just copied off, something you can take with you, put in your Bible.
Some of them have readings seven days a week, some are five days a week. One of the reading plans out there is to read through the Bible in 90 days. If you've never done that, it's a lot, but I would commend it to you.
It takes about 45 minutes a day. It's a great way to get a fast, quick sweep through all the Scripture. It's a great way to read through the Bible.
[2:28] We've got four different reading plans out there. Stop by there. Just pick one of those up or pick up a couple of them. And I would love to encourage you to get that so you have a plan. In just a couple of weeks when the new year starts, it would be a perfect time to jump in there with reading through the Bible each day.

So I hope that that would be an encouragement. You can stop by there at the resource corner. And if you have any questions about that, let us know. But I'd love to encourage you to do that and have a plan for when the new year starts.
Let's go to Mark chapter 6. And I've got two plans. Plan A is to get to the sermon.
Plan B is to get to a part of the sermon. Plan C was to have joy come up here, but it's too late for that. So if we don't get through the whole thing, we're going to push it back because you'll find out in a minute.
I don't want to deal with this on Christmas Day. You'll find out why soon enough. So we'll just see how far we get. In Mark 6, what we see is this truth that religion and politics without God will collapse.
[3:46] You see it in our world today. You saw it in Jesus' day. It's been said, and rightly so, that religion, religion without Christ, which there's plenty of that, religion doesn't like the Lamb of God

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because the Lamb of God reminds us that we are sinners.

We need a Savior and we can't do that ourself. And so man-made religion wants nothing to do with the Lamb of God because it reminds us of our sinfulness. And politics doesn't like the Lion of Judah. The Lion of Judah reminds us that Christ will rule and he will reign, not by election or someone's decision, but by divine authority. And so religion doesn't like the Lamb of God.
And politics would not like the Lion of Judah. And both of these are exactly who Christ our Savior is. He is the Lamb of God who is the Lion of Judah.
That's been well said. And what that shows us is that pride and power, two things that go hand in hand, and eventually if either are allowed to exist in someone's life and power outside of yielding yourself to the Lord, you are going to collapse.
[5:13] It's true for us. It's true for individuals. It's true for governments. It's true for nations. It's true for kings. In Mark chapter 5 that we spent quite a few weeks walking through, we saw great examples of people with faith.

We saw the man that had the demon, the legion of demons, and he had faith. We saw Jairus who had faith. We saw the woman who came to touch the hem of Jesus' garment.
We saw these great examples of faith. In chapter 6, we see quite the opposite. We see those who are faithless.
When you come to chapter 6, as we've already covered, you see Jesus rejected at his own hometown. In chapter 6, you see Jesus having to warn his disciples, when you go out, here's what you do when people reject you.
And now in verses 14 to 29, we see another very graphic, very gruesome example of someone who rejected the truth, a man known as Herod, who puts to death the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist.
[6:32] So we're going to look at this account of the death of John the Baptist. And it's kind of interesting. If you're just glancing through the Gospel of Mark, it seems at first like this is kind of a strange place to tuck this in.

If you're just kind of glancing through, you've got all these accounts of Jesus in these examples of his teachings, his miracles, sending the disciples out. And it almost seems at first glance, if you're not careful, that Mark just forgot about this and wants to make sure and throw this story and so he just slips it in here.
But it's not what he's doing. He's just sent that… Jesus just sent the disciples out. We looked at that last week in verses 7 to 13. And he's just talked to them in verse 11 about what to do when you're not received, when you're rejected.
And to make sure that people understand this isn't just hypothetical. This is no empty threat. You really are going to have to know how you will respond in the face of persecution.
Mark says, let me remind you of what happened to John the Baptist. Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist as he begins his earthly ministry.
[7:56] Shortly after that, John the Baptist is arrested by Herod and he would remain in this dungeon, in prison, for about a year before he is executed.

And so Mark's going to take us back to this event. And we look at these… this section of Scripture, verses 14 to 29. We're just going to break it down into two categories.
First, in verses 14 to 20, is Herod's dilemma. Herod's dilemma. Look at it with me in verse 14. King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known.
What he's heard of is the ministry of Jesus. He's heard of what's going on. And when King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known, some said, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead.
That is why miraculous powers are at work in him. Others said he is Elijah. And others said he is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.
[9:05] But when Herod heard of it, he said, John, whom I beheaded, has been raised. What Mark does here is he reminds us of a few theories that were going on in the days of Jesus' ministry.

When people heard about Jesus, people connected it back to John the Baptist. specifically, there were some who thought Jesus was John the Baptist who had been raised back to life.
Some looked at Jesus and thought he was Elijah. Others thought he was some kind of a resurrected prophet.

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Matthew 16 specifically says that some thought it was Jeremiah. King Herod, verse 14, his decision of who Jesus was, he assumed, according to verse 16, when Herod heard of it, he said, John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.
Now think for a minute. If you are Herod and you put a holy man to death, they cut his head off, and you've convinced yourself in your mind that Jesus is a resurrected John the Baptist, that's going to mess with you.
[10:33] You put a man to death you shouldn't have, and now you've convinced yourself this man whom you beheaded is raised back to life. You just imagine what that's going to do as it torments his own soul.

And that's the condition of King Herod. Verse 17 says, For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.
For John had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. You ready to go on a little history trip? Buckle up with me, all right?
Herod the Great is the man who was ruling and reigning for a couple of decades leading up to the birth of Jesus. 37 B.C., down to the birth of Jesus, Herod the Great reigns.
Herod the Great is the one that remodeled the temple. You'll be familiar with that. When Herod the Great dies, his kingdom is divided up among his sons, his children.
[11:52] Three of his sons, specifically, we'll deal with here in just a moment. And these children of King Herod are going to reign under the rule of Tiberius Caesar, the man who follows Caesar Augustus.

You're familiar with that name from Luke 2 in the account of the birth of Jesus. One of the sons of Herod the Great is a guy known as Herod Antipas.
He is a tetrarch. The word tetrarch means a fourth part. When Herod the Great dies, he's in charge of this big amount of area.
When he dies, they don't replace him with just one person. He gets replaced by several of his children and so his kingdom is divided up into pieces. One of them is his son, Herod Antipas.
He's the one that was over the region of Galilee. Today, that area of Jordan, east there of the Jordan River. Herod the Great had ten sons.
[13:04] So you've got lots of people running around with the name Herod, which makes it a little confusing. Herod the Great was an awful man. He killed one of his wives.

He killed two of his sons. And Herod the Great is the one who is responsible for the slaying of the male babies in Bethlehem in the attempt to kill the Messiah.
There was a saying in Herod the Great's day, it would be better to be one of Herod's pigs than to be one of Herod's sons because of how sinful and awful he was even to his own family.
Okay. What Mark tells us here in verse 17 is it was Herod Antipas, not the great.
This is Herod the Great's son, Herod Antipas, who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife because he had married her.
[14:14] Let me give you a quick genealogy. All right. Herod the Great has ten sons. Among them is Herod Antipas who we read about here in Mark 6.

Another is Aristobulus. Aristobulus has a daughter named Herodias. So Herodias is a granddaughter of Herod the Great.
Herodias marries another one of Herod the Great's sons named Philip. It's kind of gross. Herod Antipas goes to visit his brother Philip and when he does takes a liking to Philip's wife Herodias. Herodias would be Herod Antipas' niece and sister-in-law. Herod Antipas also happens to be married.
He had been married to a lady for I think it was 15 years when this happens. Herod Antipas' wife just happens to be the daughter of a king an Abatean king in the area.
[15:33] Herodos the fourth is his father-in-law. So when Herod Antipas meets Herodias who is married to Herod's brother Philip he divorces his wife marries his niece slash sister-in-law his father-in-law Herodos the fourth the Nabatean king does not take kindly to a man who treats his daughter like that and so the king sends an army to try to go kill Herod.

Rome has to send in their own army to protect Herod Antipas from his father-in-law's army. Are you dizzy yet? So what happened was Herod Antipas stole the wife of his brother who was the daughter of another brother.

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So he marries his niece slash sister-in-law. John the Baptist tells Herod that's sinful.
that's despicable and he calls him out on it. And the language in the scripture is what we call the imperfect tense.
It means it keeps happening. It's not a one-time thing. It continues. In other words the language tells us that John the Baptist keeps on saying of Herod that what he did in stealing his brother's wife was wrong.
[17:11] Now with that go back to verse 17. It was Herod who had been sent who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias his brother Philip's wife because he had married her.

Are you with me on that? So he takes Herodias away from his brother marries her and verse 18 John had been saying to Herod it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.
So John is preaching he's preaching repentance he's preaching for people to trust in God to trust in the coming Messiah and part of what he is doing is he is calling out the sinfulness of Herod and if somebody says why do you have a problem with Herod he says because he stole his brother's wife.
Well as you might imagine Herod got tired of that and so did his new wife Herodias. Verse 19 Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death.
Why did Herodias have a grudge against John the Baptist? Because he kept saying that she and Herod Antipas were sinful. She wanted to put John to death but she could not verse 20 for Herod feared John knowing that he was a righteous and holy man keep that in mind and he kept him safe.
[18:53] When he heard him he was greatly perplexed and yet he heard him gladly. Herod Antipas is in a bad way here.

He's married to a lady he divorces her his father-in-law sends an army to kill him the other army has to come in and spare his life so he survives that.
he steals his brother's wife as his own and now he's got a prophet John the Baptist who continues to call out his sin.
Herod who is ruling doesn't like that at all and his wife keeps hounding him saying get rid of this man. The problem is what has John the Baptist done that's wrong.
He was a holy and righteous man. The reason Herodias wants John killed is because John is telling the truth about their sin.
[20:06] And so Herod finds himself in this conundrum. He doesn't want to live a holy life but he knows that John's done nothing wrong. His wife keeps turning up the heat to get rid of him and do the wrong thing but he won't stand up to his wife and how can he when the very genesis of their relationship was steeped in sin and wickedness he has no moral high ground to claim and so he arrests John the Baptist and he's going to keep him in a dungeon for about a year.

Now the conditions of where John the Baptist would be would have been awful but Herod would not let him be killed. It's this kind of ironic view that Herod has of John the Baptist.
He's tired of him calling him out for his sin. He's tired of hearing how John is preaching against him.
At the same time there's something about John he admired.
He was a holy man. He was a righteous man. He was an influential man. He was God's man. And there's something about him that piques the interest of Herod Antipas.
There's something about John that Herod likes to hear but he doesn't like to hear him too much because if you listen to John for very long you hear John call out Herod sin.
[21:39] And it just becomes an example of what happens when those in leadership have no fear of God. Your life becomes a mess and so does your kingdom.

So Herod Antipas has John the Baptist put in prison. They keep him in a place known as the fortress of Machiris. It is by the Dead Sea.
He's kept him in prison here at Machiris for about a year. So this is Herod's dilemma. We've got this prisoner who's done nothing wrong who my wife is hounding me to put to death but I can't justify it but every time I hear that John is speaking to anybody or somebody comes to visit John it always gets back to me that he's calling me out for my wife keeps hounding me to do the wrong thing and kill him I'm not willing to set him free I don't want to put him to death I have some kind of strange affinity for this man even though I'm really tired of hearing him talk about my own sinfulness that's the dilemma that Herod finds himself in which leads us to a second thing and that's Herod's decree that he makes in verses 21 to 29 look at verse 21 but an opportunity came when

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Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee Herod Antipas having a birthday the Jews weren't big on birthdays it was a pagan festival in their mind but the Romans did it up big on their birthday and so what Herod Antipas does is he invites all the social elite the noble men the military commanders the leading men of the area he's got all these powerful influential people at his birthday party now this is a party for just men this is a party for just men who are godless and sinful people you don't have to think too long about what this kind of party would have looked like it would have looked exactly like you think it would have looked like verse 22 for when
Herodias his daughter came in and danced she pleased Herod and his guests who is Herodias daughter there's a historian named Josephus that gives us lots of great background into the New Testament Josephus tells us Herodias daughter was Salome now let me go back and confuse you for just a second Herod Antipas steals his brother Philip's wife named Herodias Herodias has a daughter named Salome so Salome for Herod would be his niece as it's his brother Philip's daughter and it would be his step daughter as it's the daughter of his wife Herodias so the girl who is sent in to dance is
[25:14] Herod's niece and step daughter this is how wicked the characters involved here are this is not just simply a matter of immorality this is the grossest kind of immorality so here's Herod with all these powerful people and in comes Herodias daughter Salome she came in and danced and it pleased Herod and his guests this is his step daughter this is his niece and Herod said to the girl ask me for whatever you wish and I will give it to you incidentally the term used here to describe the girl is a term Mark only uses one other place in this gospel and it was in chapter five to describe Jairus' daughter the girl who died that he healed

Talitha I say to you arise he healed her in chapter five so the language suggests this girl who comes in to dance is probably as young as 14 years old maybe as old as 17 this young girl comes in and dances and he shouts out to her in verse 23 whatever you ask me I will give you up to half my kingdom and here's what you need to know Herod Antipas had no authority at all to give away any part of his kingdom he reigned underneath the authority of Rome in fact by law he was not even allowed to give away an acre of the kingdom for any reason when he says I'll give you whatever you want up to half my kingdom it's a completely empty promise why does he do it well because it makes him sound like a king he's not a king not in reality he's a tetrarch he wants to be a king he may refer to himself he may have other people consider him as a king but when it comes down to ultimate authority and power he does not have the power of a king he's a tetrarch you remember even in the old testament in
Esther where a very similar statement is made where the king says up to half my kingdom so Herod's heard people talk like that he's read of stories like that it here is a man involved in this drunken party where the wine is flowing and the morality has ceased he's watching his own niece slash stepdaughter dance in a provocative way that's pleasing to him and pleasing to his guest and to try to sound bigger and grander than he is he says to her up to half my kingdom whatever you want even though he has no!
authority to give away any part of his kingdom in verse 24 she went out and asked to her mother for what should I ask now why does she do this because this is all set up by Herodias Herodias has this grand plan now we know what the plan is the plan is she wants John the Baptist killed she wants him killed because John the Baptist keeps reminding people of her own sinfulness and so she sends her own daughter out to dance she understands who her husband is an arrogant proud man who wants to be seen as bigger than he is she plays up to his pride and his own immorality and his own loose morals because she knows how Herod's going to act when he's drunk and if she has to use her own daughter as a pawn so be it so the daughter goes out and dances and does exactly what she was set up to do but the daughter doesn't know what the end result what's the game plan so she goes out and says to her mom hey he just said
I can have anything I want what should I ask for what's the next step of your plan and in verse 25 I'm sorry in verse 24 she answered you ask for the head of John the Baptist that man who's been in Makairus jail for a year who keeps telling everyone who will listen about me and my husband sin I want his head verse 25 and she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked saying I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter why would you want a man in jail not only to be executed but why be headed in such a graphic way that the head would be served on a platter because

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[30:55] Herodias wants to make sure he's really dead we're not taking anybody's word for it I want to see the severed head on a platter verse 26 and the king was exceedingly!

sorry I told you earlier he's got this torment he's got this issue with John where he wants him in prison but he doesn't want him dead he doesn't want him free he likes to hear him speak but he gets tired of what he says but he has something about him that he respects but not enough to do the right thing he knows that in his arrogant state he's just told his stepdaughter Salome I'll give you whatever you want Salome his mother Herodias Antipas his wife says we want John the Baptist head well why doesn't Herod just say well I'm not doing that that's wrong that's shameful that's wicked I'm not going to do that verse 26 the king was exceedingly sorry but because of his oath and his guests he did not want to break his word to her he didn't want to look weak in front of his friends peer peer pressure is a powerful thing the desire for power the desire for popularity the thirst to be seen as something you're not in front of others so they think more highly of you than they should is a strong intoxication verse 27 immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head this is why I didn't want to deal with this next week at Christmas time this is a good before Christmas sermon not Christmas day sermon it's the Sunday before Christmas why not look at beheading but not on Christmas day bring John's head he went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl and the girl gave it to her mother as though a Christmas gift that's been carefully selected knowing this is exactly what they want to open what people put on their Christmas list reveals something about what they love this is the heart of Herodias bring me his head on a platter and just as you dance provocatively to please the drunken men so the head of
John the Baptist will please her you cannot overstate the wickedness of this scene verse 29 when his disciples heard of it they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb so Mark right here in the midst of chapter 6 sending out the twelve apostles and what we're about to see at the end of chapter 6 feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on water gives us this interlude of this gruesome history lesson of the death of John the Baptist Incidentally Herod not long after this encounter is going to see
Jesus remember when Jesus is arrested and he goes in front of Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and they take him to the Roman authorities he goes in front of Pilate and Pilate wants nothing to do with him and wants to wash his hands of him and the crowd says this man Jesus stirs up trouble all the way to Galilee and Pilate says Galilee we have a tetrarch in charge of Galilee I can pass Jesus off to him and that was Herod Herod will encounter!
[35:55] Christ Christ and Jesus will be put to death and then a few years later one second after Herod dies he will once again meet the king of kings face to face let me just give you a few implications from this encounter that you need to know number one do not make decisions according to the flesh always make decisions according to God's ways do not make decisions according to the flesh always make decisions according to God's ways the temptation is there's not a person in this room who sees what

Herod did or sees what Herodias did and thinks they would ever do this I mean after all you don't go to these kind of drunken parties I hope after all you don't call for people to be murdered and executed I hope and we would think to ourselves we know nothing about this but let's consider what is the root sin that led them to such expressions of wickedness it was pride pride that said I would rather have the applause of people than I would the approval of God and if you don't think people fall victim to that every single day you are kidding yourself it may not result in you saying up to half my kingdom it may not result into you sending your own child out to dance in a wicked way but if you make decisions based on pride and peer pressure and the love of how you appear in front of people you are in the exact same thought pattern as
Herod and Herodias do not make decisions based on the flesh always according to God's ways second we must be willing to call out sin regardless of the consequences we must be willing to call out sin regardless of the consequences why was John the Baptist arrested because he called out sin why was he beheaded because he called out sin and we must be willing to speak the truth regardless of consequences but as we close I just want to make sure you catch this connection why is this strange wicked story here because Mark has just reminded the reader that
Jesus warned his apostles when you go out and preach you better be ready to deal with rejection and lest you forget how serious rejection may be Mark says let me remind you of what happened to the forerunner of Jesus John the Baptist who preached repentance and spoke the truth lost his

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head and had everlasting life it's worth it to follow Jesus that's the whole point the whole point of why this is here in Mark's gospel where it is is to help the reader understand it's worth it to follow Jesus but what if they arrest me they arrested John the Baptist what if they threaten me they threaten John the Baptist what if they kill me they kill
John the Baptist and better to be beheaded and welcomed into glory than to be a pseudo king and meet Christ in judgment that's the point those who turn their back on Christ never win never and those who give it all up for the sake of Christ never lose so Jesus says to his disciples I'm sending you out two by two be ready when rejection comes when persecution comes be ready and remember
[41:18] John the Baptist and you preach the gospel knowing he who believes the truth cannot lose this is where kingdom courage is found and this ought to sustain us to speak the truth no matter the cost yes there is a high cost for following Jesus and there is an eternal reward that can never be lost no right there is not all can but as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as

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