

A Masculine Mess

Mark 6:14-29
Halifax: 1 September 2019

Introduction

Today we will continue our sermon series in Mark's Gospel.

- For the last few weeks, we have been looking at the majesty of Christ as it is displayed to us in Mark.

In Christ incarnate, we see a perfect picture of masculine authority in a man.

- Having come in human flesh, He is in the place that every human being occupies.
 - Like us, He is one who is both *in* authority and *under* authority at the same time.
 - He has God the Father *over* Him and He has the people of this world *under* Him.
 - He both submits (to God) and rules (over men) at the same time.
 - This is the way of masculine perfection.

The character of one's masculine authority is most clearly seen in those who have the most authority—

- a father in the home, the elders in the church, kings and magistrates in the land,
 - but it is also seen in the three-year-old sister who is in the masculine place of authority over her one-year-old brother.
- Put someone in charge of others, and you see what they are like.
 - You may see opposite errors in their leadership...
 - You may see tyranny and excessive control.
 - Or you may see neglect and irresponsibility.
 - But you may also see true godliness...
 - where authority is exercised with full recognition that all authority is from God, and where it is exercised as an extension of His gracious rule...
 - where the authority is exercised for the true benefit of those under it.

In Jesus, we see masculine authority exercised in beautiful perfection.

- His authority is exercised by giving Himself to redeem those placed under His care.
- He does this even though it costs Him that which is most precious to Him—He gives up His righteous standing with the Father to bear our sins on the cross.
- He does this both in obedience to the Father and in loving mercy to us.
 - As our king, His commands and His corrections are not arbitrary or selfish, but designed to restore us to the beautiful place of full submission to God and loving care over all that is placed under us.
 - What a beautiful place the new heavens and the new earth will be in which we who are His will all take our God-given place exercising the authority that He has given to us in full submission to God.

We need to learn about authority in our day because there is a masculine mess in our world.

- We are a society that has sought to remove authority because so many of us have been hurt by those in authority;
 - but as with our revolutions, we overthrow established authority only to find ourselves under an even worse authority than the one we cast off.
 - Many young men—and old men for that matter—know nothing about how to lead in a godly way, often do not even try, and are easily shut down if they do.

In our text today, we see pathetic authority in King Herod Antipas.

- As I mentioned before, put a man in a high position, and you will see the true character of his masculinity (be it good or bad).
- In looking at Herod Antipas's negative example, we will see the beauty of Christ by contrast and feel the call of God to come to Christ that we may be redeemed by Him so that we may be forgiven and may one day be like Him.

Our Scripture reading will begin this morning in Mark 6:6b and continue to verse 30, but my primary preaching text will be from 6:14-29.

- If you were here last week, you will recall that Mark inserts this account about Herod in his account about the first mission that Christ sent His disciples on.
 - As we shall see, the multiplication of Christ ministry by sending out the twelve to preach, heal, and expel demons got Herod's attention.
 - That is the reason the Mark gives us the history in this place about what Herod had done to John the Baptist.

Listen as I read this passage to you, beginning in Mark 6:6b.

Mark 6:6b-30: Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits. ⁸ He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts— ⁹ but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰ Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. ¹¹ And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” ¹² So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.” ¹⁴ Now King Herod heard *of Him*, for His name had become well known. And he said, “John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.” ¹⁵ Others said, “It is Elijah.” And others said, “It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.” ¹⁶ But when Herod heard, he said, “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!” ¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake

of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.” ¹⁹ Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he *was* a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. ²¹ Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. ²² And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, “Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you.” ²³ He also swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.” ²⁴ So she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist!” ²⁵ Immediately she came in 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.” ²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, ²⁸ 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 of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb. ³⁰ Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

May the LORD add His blessing to the reading and the preaching of His holy word.

This morning, we will consider three things about pathetic authority—the masculine mess that we see in such grand colours in Herod,

- and that we must admit is all too frequently found in us in our smaller spheres of authority.

I. First, pathetic authority fears God just enough to be tormented.

A. What a miserable condition...

- You know enough about God to be actually terrified of Him because of your sin, but you don't fear Him enough to come to Him to be reconciled.
1. Try as you might to avoid the knowledge of Him, it has a way of resurfacing—of coming to haunt you.
 - You try to drown it, you try to forget it, you try to do things to calm it, but it continues to emerge again and again...
 - And it will keep on doing so until the day that you either accept that God does have authority over you and yield to Him through Christ...
 - or you meet Him at the day of judgment and receive the full punishment that you deserve for rejecting Him through all your days.
 2. How grand it is for those who finally make peace with God as the God to whom you owe all things and receive His free and full provision for your restoration through Jesus Christ...
 - but how torturous it is to go on as Herod did, fearing just enough to be tormented, but never enough to yield.

B. Let's look at Herod's example as one who remained under this torment.

1. In verse 14-17, we see him haunted by the rising popularity of Christ.
 - It might have been very different...
 - a. He might have seen Christ going about now with His disciples doing good for his people...
 - casting out demons, healing the sick, and preaching reconciliation to God through the cleansing that He was providing...
 - truly a message of glorious hope that God has come in mercy to restore...
 - This might have been an occasion of great joy for him—that God had visited His people with the mercy promised.
 - b. But instead all this a source of excessive anxiety for him... he is haunted by his guilty conscience.
 - He concludes, as verse 16 says, that **“This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead.”**
 - He thinks that John the Baptist has come back with renewed powers, and all it means for him is terror of conscience for unjustly killing John.

2. We see this same torment of fear in how he had interacted with John when John was still alive.
 - a. We are told of this in verse 20.
 - It says: **for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.**
 - This fear that Herod had of John was a fear of God because Herod knew that John represented God.
 - John's boldness unnerved him—but also attracted him.
 - Here was a man that was not afraid of men, a man who did not vacillate and weigh out what to say, but who boldly and plainly spoke the truth.
 - b. Herod tried to find a middle ground—a compromise with his guilty conscience.
 - 1) Yes, he had imprisoned John... but look, his wife wanted to kill John, and Herod, because of his fear of John, was protecting him...
 - He was like you are when you are guilty and you do something good to say, “See, I am not so bad after all—I may have put John in prison unjustly, but I am protecting him... yes... I am not so bad.”
 - You are like a thief who boasts of his generosity.
 - Or the adulterer who buys flowers for his wife.
 - 2) You see how it says that Herod, hearing John, did many things.
 - He actually submitted to some of John's preaching—perhaps he was working on his temper or something—his fear of God led him to do so...
 - And he listened to the preaching too—
 - Didn't that show that he was not as bad as it might seem?
 - But there was no repentance—no true yielding himself to God.
 - You know how people that haven't repented will go to church, give to charity, read their Bibles, whatever, but without ever really turning to God as their God.
 - They never truly come to Christ who alone can restore them... cleansing by Him is more cleansing than they want...
 - So the tormented conscience remains.
3. And then there is this beheading of John... how tortured Herod is!
 - He fears God enough that he is filled with extreme sorrow at having to kill John... but there is not enough fear of God to keep him from doing it.
 - He is in a position where he feels he had no choice...
 - Look at verse 26: **And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her.**
 - I will have more to say about this later,
 - but for now just see that this beheading of John is the thing that caused the ministry of Christ haunt to him rather than bring him hope and joy.
 - So how does the ministry of Christ sit with you?

C. At bottom you have here an authority in Herod that never finds its rightful place under the authority of God.

- It remains an autonomous authority, detached from God.
- You need to understand that all authority is from God—
 - It is never your own rule that you are to exercise as a parent or a church leader or a manager at work or in the government... it is always *His* rule, and you either represent Him well or you misrepresent Him.
- When authority is exercised apart from God—even in defiance of His will, it is authority that makes you guilty...
 - It is His authority and you are misusing it... similar to a child who is given money to purchase something for his mother and spends it on a toy instead.
- It is truly a torturous thing to be short of repentance before God... to never really be able to yield to Him... to always be holding back from coming to Christ.
 - To know that you have crossed Him and that you will be judged, but to go on misusing your authority and adding more guilt to your account.
 - It is the miserable condition of those described in Romans 1:32: **who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.**
 - Such is the condition of all who are outside of Christ...
 - They find no rest... and then they meet God in judgment.
- But what a great relief it is to the soul that finally comes to Christ!
 - To know that finally, at last, you are reconciled to God.

TRANS> So that is the first thing about pathetic authority... it fears God enough to be tormented, but not enough to come to Christ and to find its proper place before God.

- But there is more I want you to see about this pathetic authority.

II. Second, pathetic authority is unable to rule over its own passions.

A. Some of the most powerful men in the world have been men who were never able to control their own passions.

1. They are able to conquer kingdoms, but they are never able to conquer themselves.
 - Instead of following Christ, they follow their own passions and desires.
 - Their lust has a death hold on them from which they cannot escape.
2. Though let me say again, were they to come to Christ, He would set them free.
 - Not that they may not have to fight, but at least they will be in the fight... sometimes falling, but able to escape the snare and find cleansing and forgiveness to go on with the Lord.
 - How weak grown men can be before some passion, some corruption...
 - Just ask the crack addict, the drunkard, the porn user, the angry soul, the child molester, the adulterer, the sodomite, the spend thrift, the liar, the cheat...
 - they will tell you the power of sin, but who needs them to?
 - You know it all too well.
 - But Christ gives us true repentance and keeps us so that sin cannot have dominion over us.

B. Look at Herod in our text... a man driven by sexual lust.

1. This king with all his authority could not conquer this sin.

- No man, no matter how great his earthly authority may be, can conquer his own sin.
- Look at how Herod's lust controlled him... verse 17: **“For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.”**
 - He married his brother's wife! This brother who had been disinherited by their father, Herod the Great, and who lived at Rome as a private citizen with his wife Herodias and his daughter Salome.
- Herod Antipas, the Herod of our text, had gone to visit Philip his brother, and though he was a married man, he became infatuated with Philip's beautiful wife, and she was a woman of ambition who thought it would be great to marry the tetrarch of Galilee...
 - So she agreed to divorce Philip and marry Herod Antipas if he would divorce his wife and have her alone.
 - Thus it was done.
- This was an act, not of sound judgment, but of sheer lust.
 - It was also bad policy, because the wife he divorced was the daughter of the Nabataean King Aretas IV who later sent troops to punish Herod for humiliating his daughter...
 - This made Herod displeasing to his superiors in Rome.
 - It was also bad policy for his subjects in Galilee and Samaria, for God's law strictly forbade marrying a brother's wife...
 - And on top of all that, it was, of course, very offensive to God.
 - Nothing but lust drove Herod to this sinful marriage.
 - He had no control of his passions.

2. And so it was that he refused to bring this sin to Christ.

- Now of course Christ had not yet been crucified or raised when he did this, but I mean that Herod would not bring this sin to Christ in the way that things were brought to Christ before He went to the cross—by repenting and looking to God for the cleansing that was revealed at the altar in Jerusalem.
- Though Herod, as we already saw, knew that John was a just and holy man and heard him preach with gladness, doing many things...
 - his lust for Herodias had such a hold on him that he could not bring this sin to Christ.
- Instead of repenting of his sin and giving Herodias up, Herod **had sent (verse 17) and laid hold of John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias...**
- **vs. 18... because John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.” Therefore, Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not because Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him.**
 - Herod would not kill John, but neither would he repent—though a king, his lust mastered him.

3. And in our text we see Herod's lust regarding his own stepdaughter, Herodias's daughter whose name was Salome.
 - Fathers (and stepfathers) are meant to protect their daughter's chastity—in love... to guard them from the kind of relationship that Herod had with Herodias—from a relationship that could not be blessed of God.
 - Some fathers do very little to guard their daughters from such things—to help them dress in modest, not sensual, apparel...
 - Fathers who are full of lust in their own heart, find glory in their daughters' immodesty.
 - Herod truly takes the cake here—having his daughter come and dance before all the nobles and military leaders who had come for his birthday.
 - This was a dance that was usually for immoral women, prostitutes, not for king's daughters—a pantomime that ended with nakedness.
 - How disgusting that Herod seems to be the most pleased of them all...
 - As a father, he ought to have used his authority to protect his stepdaughter, but instead of being a protector, he is a predator.
 - Men, where are you in your daughters' life?
 - Are you providing the kind of godly nurture that will enable her wait for a godly man, or are you leaving her with a hunger for attention that will cause her to run after the wrong kind of male attention?
 - In our pride we might say that it is hard to believe that any father would do what Herod did—but is it really so hard to believe?

C. How many men have been and are dominated by sexual lust?

- How many kings and ministers and fathers have been ruined by it and brought their households to ruin by it?
 - Drunkenness has slain its thousands, but sexual lust its ten thousands.
 - It is one of the primary ways that contempt for God is shown... often the drive is not just for the sin itself—but for the pride of expressing autonomy.
 - It is often committed by men who are unhappy with God, who are full of self-pity and want to exert their independence... God can't tell me I can't.
- But as with all sins, the great problem is not merely in committing this sin, but in refusing to bring it to Christ.
 - There is a great difference in man who struggles with sin, but is humbled like David was and repents... he brings it to Christ to be cleansed from its guilt and its power over him.
 - It is the man that harbours this sin and never brings it to Christ that will surely die in his sin.
 - That is the way of Herod—such a trade—his lust instead of eternal glory.
 - Such offers and powerful appeals he had from John—but all to no avail.
- I might mention that this sin led even to the ruin of Herodias and him in this life.
 - Herod, as I mentioned already, stirred up war with the Nabatean king, Aretas, and then had the audacity, at the prompting of Herodias, to ask Emperor Gaius Caligula that he might be given fortunes equal to his brother, Herod Agrippa I, and received banishment to Gaul instead.

TRANS> What pathetic authority... what a masculine mess...

- Here is a ruler that like so many rulers does not acknowledge that his authority is from God; and here is a ruler who, with authority over other people, has no authority over his own lust.
 - How he needed Christ.
 - How we all need Christ.
- And now let us look at the third characteristic of pathetic authority...

III. Third, pathetic authority is easily manipulated by those under it.

- Let me explain...

- A. When a man knows that his authority is from the Lord, he is not easily manipulated.
 1. He leads whatever is under him as the Lord's emissary. He is steadfast and solid.
 - a. If he is a leader in business, he is there for the glory of God—to lead those under his authority to serve others—he is there for God.
 - He will not work on Sunday. He will tithe. He will not misrepresent his product or his services. He will deal fairly because he is there for God.
 - Try as you might, you cannot entice him to deceive or cheat.
 - b. If he is a leader of a family, he knows that his authority in his home is for the glory of God.
 - He will exercise godly discipline, correcting ungodliness, not as a tyrant, but as a loving leader who knows that he stands in need of God's grace too... yet with the firmness of one who is representing the Lord... and the love of one who knows that God's ways are for the good of his family.
 - He will manage his family's finances, not by giving in to every whim and certainly not selfishly indulging in his own toys and pleasures,
 - but by responsible spending, investing, and faithful sharing, enjoying God's gifts, but not robbing from God by overextending.
 - He will lead them in regular prayer and family worship, teaching them God's word and helping them apply it, teaching them to call on the Lord in their distress...leading them to confess their sins before God.
 - Taking the responsibility to bring them to a sound church, even if they want to go to one that is weak and compromising.
 - He will stay in touch—he will know the state of their souls... he will talk to them and draw them out.
 - c. If he is a leader in the community or the nation...
 - he will also see that his authority is an extension of God's authority and ministry to his constituents.
 - His decisions will not be based on the polls, but on what pleases the Lord and is true to his word.
 - The question will not be whether the people want abortion, but whether God approves of abortion.
 - People can come with bribes and threats, but a godly leader will not be moved by any of these...
 - He is much more concerned about what the Lord thinks than he is about exploiting his office and God-given position for selfish gain.

- To him, to lose the favour of God is much worse than to lose a bribe or protect himself from a threat.
2. A godly man will not be manipulated by those under his authority.
- He knows who appointed him to lead and he is there for God.
 - Think of our Lord Jesus.
 - His mother and His brothers came to get Him supposing that he was deranged, but He would not listen to them... or be manipulated.
 - He insisted that His real mother and brothers and sisters were those who did the will of God.
 - That is real authority.
 - His own disciples tried to dissuade Him from going to the cross, but He would not be manipulated by them either.
 - He refused to listen to a bit of it, but insisted that He had come from heaven to do His Father's will, and that it was His Father's will for Him to go and die on the cross.
- B. But Herod, who had more authority given to him than most men, was this poor vacillating wimp who was easily controlled by his wife and daughter.
1. He knew that what Salome requested was evil.
- He knew that John was a godly man.
 - He knew that John did not deserve to die.
 - He knew that his wife was wrong to have their daughter ask for John's head.
 - I told you that we would come back to verse 26 where, having been asked for John's head on a platter, by two women of such hateful malice...
 - We read from verse 26: **And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her.**
2. He knew how wrong it was, and he was exceedingly sorry about it, but he did not have the masculine strength to say no.
- So he gave in to them.
 - ²⁷ **Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.**
 - He was weak because he had already severed himself from God...
 - by refusing to repent of his sinful marriage because of his lust...
 - by having his daughter dance before his nobles and officers...
 - How could he have the moral strength to say no to his wife and daughter when he himself was not living for the glory of God?
 - How could he call them to live for Christ, when he was not living for Christ himself?

- Men who try to do this when they are harbouring their own sins come off as harsh and irritated in their calls to repentance.
 - Often they just pull away and do nothing... who are they to speak into the lives of those under their authority?
- C. Here is a test by which you can see if you really are in Christ: Does He have real authority in your life? He has real authority in the lives of those He has redeemed.
1. If you are truly in Him for eternal life, He speaks with authority into your life and you follow Him.
 - As He said in John 10:27, **“My sheep hear my voice and they follow Me.”**
 - They may sin, but He rescues them and restores them and does not let them continue in their rebellion... because He is faithful.
 - We are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.
 2. If you are not hearing His voice, then there is only one thing to do.
 - You need to repent and come to Him to wash you from your sin.
 - He died on the cross so that by faith in Him, we could be forgiven.
 - And when He receives us, He becomes our Lord, and there is no manipulation of Him.
 - We have seen what His authority does...
 - It expels demons.
 - It cleanses lepers, heals the sick, and raises the dead.
 - It brings sinners to repentance, secures their forgiveness, and gives them eternal life in which they serve God and their neighbour.
 - You can continue to flounder about in your sin like Herod did...
 - or you can come to Christ to be saved and restored to the Father.
 - Then you will be able to lead others well.