

Series: Who is this man?
Sermon title: ***The Ultimate Price***
Scripture: Mark 6:14-29
Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
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Possible opening Illustration....my friend, Chris- killed in Africa.

The last few times we have been in the book of Mark we have seen something about REJECTION. Jesus went to his hometown in Mark 6:1-6 and if you remember they took **offense** at him. Jesus, had **no honor in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.**

Then in Mark 6, verses 7-13, Jesus sends out the Twelve. He sends them out in an odd way; the way of prophets....simple dress....dependent on the Lord to feed them. Very similar to how God fed Elijah and Elisha in 1st Kings 17 & 19. Like prophets, they were to call people to repentance. Some would listen and others would not listen. Some would reject them. So, Jesus experienced rejection. The disciples *would* experience rejection when they went out.

Jesus sends them out in verse 13. Then we have a break in the story until Mark 6 verse 30. There, we have the apostles returning to Jesus.

Sandwiched in between the sending out and the coming back of the 12, we have this story about John the Baptist. At first glance, it seems like it doesn't fit. I asked the Lord and the text over and over, Why is this here in this place? I understand the need to record John's death but why here, as an afterthought? What would Mark want his audience to know by putting John's death here? What are we to learn from this?

In verse 14, King Herod has heard about this guy Jesus and his miraculous powers. Even Jesus' followers have been doing great works. Some people say Jesus is Elijah the prophet. Some say he is like one of the other Old Testament prophets. Herod says he knows *exactly* who he is....he is John the Baptist come back to life to haunt him. And Herod seems afraid. Why?

We get the story starting in verse 17. Some time before Herod had John beheaded. Now he is afraid that John has come back from the dead to pay him back! Like a Zombie Apocalypse.

You know the story. Herod had married his half-brother Philip's wife. A scandalous romance. A brother steals another brother's wife. Her name was Herodias. She hated John the Baptist! Why? Cause John (a prophet) kept telling Herod that he was sinning by having his brothers wife.

[Leviticus 18:16](#) and [Leviticus 20:21](#) are clear passages that Herod is sinning. John has great boldness and

courage to tell this puppet king and his wife that they are sinning. That's what prophets do.

Herod has a love/hate relationship with John the Baptist it seems. He finds him intriguing and likes to hear him. He knows he is a godly man, a righteous man (v.20). And it seems he put John in prison maybe to keep him from being killed by Herodias.

BUT, an opportunity arises at a big birthday feast. Herodias' daughter breaks all the cultural rules and dances a seductive dance before Herod and his male guests. Herod is so pleased that he is willing to reward her greatly. "Name it, & I'll give it to you!" She is coaxed by her mother to ask for John's head on a platter. The plan has worked! An executioner goes and takes off John's head and brings it to the feast- on a platter.

Now, all of this has already happened some time back. Herod thinks he has returned when he hears of Jesus' miraculous works.

The story of how John died is told as an **illustration**. Remember that the context in chapter 6 has been one of **REJECTION**. Jesus was rejected in Nazareth. The disciples were sent out....expecting that *some* will **reject** them. John's story is an illustration of what could happen to you if you speak up and speak out; what can happen to you if you are a righteous and holy man; what happens if you proclaim repentance to people.

You can get your head chopped off.

John paid the ultimate price for proclaiming that people should turn from their sin- even calling out Herod.

Many of the disciples would eventually follow in this same path. Most of them died as martyrs.

You speak up for Jesus and it can cost you.

John's death is a foreshadowing of Jesus' death. Jesus would also pay the ultimate price....the greatest sacrifice of all.

John was a prophet. Jesus was God.

John would be beheaded. Jesus would be crucified.

John wouldn't rise from the dead, as Herod thought.

Jesus would.

So, why do we have this record of John's martyrdom in between the sending of the Twelve and the return of the Twelve. This is recorded here surely to give the Romans, to whom Mark is writing to...a sober reminder of what it costs to follow Jesus. For many of them reading this in the 1st century, they would have a similar fate. Some would die like John. Some would die like Jesus and be crucified.....all for belonging to Jesus Christ and daring to speak out and speak up about him.

We must be reminded of this fact, too. The fact is that in the world today, if you chose to follow the Lord's call to take the gospel to some nations and ethnic groups, you could pay the ultimate price- like my good friends paid.

Be a Christian that speaks up, people will not like you, they'll be offended, they might fire you from your job, run you out of town or take off your head. Easy for us to think that isn't true due to the present friendliness toward Christianity in our city. It could change quickly.

In closing, I think it will be helpful to look at Matthew chapter 11. There's a part of the story that Mark doesn't include. While John is in prison, he sends some disciples to Jesus to ask him something. Jesus' response will help us a lot.

Mark 11:1-6

When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" 4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

Some commentators say that what John is doing is simply guiding his disciples to follow Jesus. Like he is saying, 'Go to Jesus and ask him this.....' and Jesus will answer and they'll follow Jesus and trust him.

It seems to me that John is struggling a bit. John the Baptist isn't God. He is a man. The prophets were men. They struggled too from time to time. Jesus has left his cousin in jail and has not come to rescue him. John wants to know one last time, "Are you the one?"

Jesus gives John's disciples assurance by telling them of all he has done....healing the blind, making the lame walk, cleansing lepers, causing the deaf to hear and raising the dead. These were things they expected that the Messiah would do. And then Jesus gives this statement.....

"Blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

A word of caution and a word of encouragement to John, to the Romans that Mark was writing to and to Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church.

Don't be offended by Jesus.
Don't be embarrassed by Jesus.
Don't shy away from rejection **for** Jesus.

Go all the way.
Be all in.
Give 100%.

No matter the cost.
Even if it's the ultimate price- like John. Like Jesus.

Let's close with the words of Jesus in **Luke 6:22-23**

22 Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.