

Service for Week 8th -14th July 2024 by
Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Loving God, it's easy to destroy relationships, and almost impossible to build them again. Forgive us for the weaknesses that so often create divisions, even sometimes from our own families and friends.

Teach us to act as peacemakers, restoring trust and breaking down barriers.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

Amen

Bible Reading Mk 6:14-29 Jesus sent out the 12 preaching and healing. King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." So, Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill

him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

Finally, the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.

The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.



Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God

Reflection.

Herodias's daughter who danced for Herod is not named in our reading from Mark's gospel. She came to be known as Salome from the writings of Jewish historian Josephus. Another woman named Salome, is mentioned (Mark 15:40) as one of the women who went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body after he was crucified.

However, from the account of the girl Salome who danced for Herod she came to personify the seductive female, a temptress who has been represented in many different art forms over the years. Salome and her involvement in the death of John the Baptist has been depicted by many famous painters such as Titian and Gustav Klimt. She was shown as a femme fatale by Oscar Wilde in his play Salome, and in Richard Strauss' opera based on Wilde's play.

It is not surprising that the account of Herodias, how she seeks revenge on John the Baptist and how she wickedly brings about his death has been taken up artists. It is full of human emotion, emotions that if not controlled and checked can lead to committing terrible crimes and murder.

In our human relationships all these same emotions can at times come into play, jealousy, hate, perhaps of

wanting people to stop saying things about us. Also, the emotional feelings of wanting revenge, and of passion and lust.

Having these emotions are not wrong or sinful they are part of our human character and actually what makes us human. What is wrong is when we allow negative emotions such as jealousy and hate to dominate our lives to change our behavior in a way that harms others and endangers their life. Even positive emotions such as passion and sexual desire which, in watching Salome dance we presume prompted Herod to make his extravagant promise, are good, enjoyable and also necessary for the continuation of life! But they are very wrong when not mutual and used to exploit others as Herodias went on to do.

After John the Baptist's death we read that his disciples 'came and took his body and laid it in a tomb' words which are echoed when later after Jesus' death on the cross his body was laid in the tomb in the garden at Gethsemane. **Amen**

Closing prayer Lord Jesus Christ, forgive me for failing to see in myself the evil that I so readily see in others. Teach me to look at the world with your eyes and to deal graciously with all my relationships as you have dealt graciously with me. **Amen**

Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett