

Mark's account of John the Baptist's beheading matches the world we live in. Grim. Violent. Messy. Senseless. You do know right now about half of the world's population is watching a soccer game instead of receiving the Lord's gifts and joined to Him?

Look at John the Baptist. See what happens when you mess around with politics and marriage? You might be killed. John wasn't martyred for preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God. He's murdered for criticizing Herod's morals for shacking up with his brother's estranged wife.

To borrow a movieline. I would contact Herod who imprisoned John the Baptist. *I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want. If you're looking for ransom, I can tell you I don't have money... but what I do have are a very particular set of skills. Skills I have acquired over a very long career. Skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my John the Baptist go now, that will be the end of it. But if you don't, I will look for you, I will find you, I will*

I could get John out of prison. So why didn't Jesus. I though the Christ was suppose to free the prisoners. Look at John.

But what does Jesus have to say about all this, what does He do? Nothing except to answer John's question from prison, are you the Christ or not? And just points Him to the prophet Isaiah, to assure Him, the Christ is here and prisoners will be set free. We need to see things not of this kingdom, but in Him of His kingdom and it will be well.

As John's disciples go to get the body and bury it, Jesus gathers His disciples together for a little wilderness retreat, then He goes on to preach, teach, heal, and throw a dinner party for 5000.

Here's a remark from Luther: *When the murder of John the Baptizer was announced, Jesus was silent, went away into the desert, fed the people, and did not make an issue of it, but only preached the Word and did His duty. Christian wisdom, therefore, means to commit oneself to the power of God; to turn one's cause over to Him who judges justly. A Christian can indeed, by the office of the Word, judge sin, but he should not raise his hand against it unless he is compelled to do so by God or commanded by the Word (like when you discipline a child or rebuke a friend or go to war). And so when you are alone and unable to set everything right and straight, commit your cause to Him who has more powers and who alone can do everything. commit your cause to Him who has more powers and who alone can do everything.*

John will be vindicated and so will you and in the end, you, like John will be deprived of nothing. John, of course, was right to get involved in politics and morality. Calling out sin. What surprises us is that Jesus doesn't immediately seize on the opportunity to go after Herod. Yet, although John or you don't see it He is taking care of everything.

This week marks the 85th anniversary of the ReichsConcordat. The agreement between the Pope and German government. The Pope will be criticized to this day for it, but he thought it would keep more Roman Catholics safe and not let the Nazi interfere with his churches. It didn't work that way. Instead it helped legitimize the Nazi authority. It prevented the Roman clergy from speaking out against evils of the government, they become political ponds and the government could control the church. The Riechsconcordat is actually still in place today. The Lutherans and Reformed, the other churches in Germany will struggle over this issue, with some allowing the Nazis a pass. In 1935, 700 Lutheran pastors were arrested, barred from being pastors after they read a protest statement from the pulpit. Several attempts by the Nazi were used to murder Roman and Lutheran clergy like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and laity who spoke out. Like when John the Baptist spoke against evil to the government leader.

John was always safe. John truly wasn't in prison. Herod was. John had nothing to fear (like you). While Herod had no peace.

That's why Jesus doesn't seem to react to His cousin John's death. That's also why God doesn't seem to react to every instance of evil or injustice in this world and even in your life. Oh you can be sure He is working your unique situation for your good. But the Lord does not have to come after Herod like me or Liam Nielsen. There's no need for that kind of reaction. God doesn't work by micromanaging evil but by drowning it in a deluge of grace and forgiveness. Christ has died, risen. **It is finished.**

It's easy to criticize the lousy morals of our own perverse, wicked generation. so much that's not right; much that must be said by God's people. To take a stand for God's truth, for what is good and right and pure and holy. Like on marriage and life issues. Like what a 5th Supreme court justice who is pro-life will mean for our society. We are justified in speaking out against declining morals, corrupt government, all of that stuff. And more.

But John served best when John preaches repentance a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. When he pointed his prophetic finger to Another and spoke **Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.** There's God's answer to all of this. There's God's solution to the world's problems, your unique problems and to your Sin. Yes, the sin of the world. Of Herod and Herodias. Of John and the disciples. Of you and me. Behold the Lamb.

Herod was a mess. No denying that. But so are you: **In him you have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of your trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which he lavished upon you. In him you have obtained an inheritance. In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of your inheritance.**