



## St. Columba's Church, Stewarton

(SC013595) (CCLI 1095831)

### Home Service – July Week 1

#### Prayer

Sovereign God, again we come as part of the great company of your people to offer you our worship. Touch our hearts, speak to our minds, and lift up our lives to give you the praise and glory, the honour and thanksgiving that you deserve. Through Jesus Christ Amen.

**Hymn CH4 184** Sing to the Lord a joyful song

**Reading** Mark 6:14 - 29

In this week's gospel story Mark plunks us down squarely in the world of real politics. It is the only story in the Gospel of any length that is not about Jesus; and it is no accident that Mark places it where he does.

Jesus has just finished giving instructions to his disciples about how they are to embody God's love in the world. Expect opposition and trouble, he tells them, but the only thing you need to take with you is the gospel and a confident faith. And then, Mark, as if to reinforce his point reminds us of the story of John the Baptist and his confrontation with Herod.

Now, this is not Herod the Great, who ruled Israel around the time of Jesus' birth. This is Herod the Great's son. He was called Herod Antipas to tell them apart, but he was a chip off the old block. The story that the gospels, as well as the Roman historian Josephus, tell is that he is the Herod who got into deep political controversy with John the Baptist. John was mad at Herod for several reasons; but the one that really stuck in John's throat was Herod's marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife.

John publicly accused this famous couple of "living in sin" and that was enough to turn Herodias practically purple with rage. Demonstrating that she was the one who was in control in the family, Herodias convinced Herod into throwing John in jail until she could figure out what to do with him.

Well, apparently Herod feared John almost as much as he feared his wife. He knew how popular John was with the people

and how dangerous it could be politically if there was ever an uprising over whatever he decided to do to John. At least in prison he could keep an eye on him, thought Herod, as well as keep peace in his own house.

But it wasn't just fear that motivated Herod. He was fascinated by John and couldn't help sneaking out of the bedroom at night and wandering down to the basement just so that he could hear John ranting in his old, dark prison cell. The portrait Mark paints is of a man who is transfixed with the very thing he fears and despises. "When he heard him," Mark says, "he liked to listen to him even though he became greatly disturbed every time he heard him."

Unfortunately, this fascination was not enough to convince him to change his life; and the day Herod decided to throw a birthday party for himself to end all birthday parties, he unwittingly set in motion forces the consequences of which he could never have foreseen. The climax was when Herodias' daughter Salome, who was actually Herod's niece, danced an apparently provocative dance. Herod gave in to her charms by following through on an oath to give her anything she wanted. In consultation with her mother, Herodias made sure that it was John's head on a platter that "she wanted"; and that, as they say, was the end of John the Baptist.

By the time Mark tells us this story, John has been dead for some time and Jesus has been actively preaching his own message throughout Galilee. Although Herod apparently didn't know Jesus, he knew that something equally as powerful as John was stirring out there among the people.

This story was likely sandwiched into Mark's Gospel here with the purpose of reminding us all that John's story is actually a foreshadowing of Jesus's story.

Jesus, like John would be totally innocent of the worldly powers' charges made against him.

Jesus, like John would be executed by the "powers that be" more out of political preservation and expedience than anything else.

It is a story which reminds us if we need reminding that sin brings its own punishment.

Because it is there in the middle of the story of Jesus mission it points us in the way of hope and salvation.

God can still at work in peoples' lives. The prophetic word can

change peoples' lives for the better in spite of evil and tragedy and we have many examples through recent history of that. Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, Desmond Tutu to name just a few. For God, in the face of evil, tragedy and suffering is able to work goodness, life and salvation in this world and the next! That's what the cross is all about! That is the source of our hope.

In the midst of suffering. John's martyrdom is not a defeat. Soren Kierkegaard said, "The tyrant dies and his rule ends, the martyr dies and his rule begins." God raises the dead and raises new witnesses to take their place.

Twelve more preachers are sent in John's place. Ironically even Herod suspected that John would ultimately triumph.

Like John, we are called to a stance of prophetic resistance to injustice wherever we find it.

We should be making some people uncomfortable with our words and actions for the sake of the gospel and for the glory of God. Amen

### **Prayer**

We praise you Lord God for the opportunity of worship, in this time we can put aside the uncertainties of this world and rest upon the certainties of the Kingdom, for your promises are not changeable but immovable and eternal

We can bring to you all the hurts and fears that trouble us, and leave them there, knowing that your strength and assurance are all that we require. As we draw near to you, we are transported from a world of concerns and fears, to a place where we can be at peace in your presence, find healing, wholeness and refreshment.

Lord we also bring our confessions.

You have given us a world of beauty, and we have spoilt it.

A world to feed us, and so many go hungry.

A world of riches, and we are unwilling to share.

A world to care for, and we think only of ourselves.

Forgive us, gracious God, for those times your heart is saddened by our selfishness.

For those times we have no thought for others, no cares but ours.

Enable us to see this world anew as a gift from you, to be shared and nurtured,

and those who live upon it to be loved and cared for.

We pray today for those who will be elected to government, grant them wisdom, dedication, integrity and humility that they may be equipped to honour the trust placed in them.

We pray for family and friends, especially any who are ill. Lay your healing hands upon them.

Lord, once more we declare our need of you.

We need your love, your help, your strength, your guidance and inspiration.

Be near to us this day and always and may your blessings be upon us.

All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

**Hymn CH4 110** Glory be to God the Father

### **Blessing**

May the Blessing of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be with you this day and always, Amen.

### **Summer Church Services**

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June - John Knox Church – Joint Service 11.15am

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July - John Knox Church - Joint Service 11.15am

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July - St Columba's Church 11am

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July - St Columba's Church 11am

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July - St Columba's Church 11am – Joint Service

**St. Columba's Church Holiday Club 2024 – 'On Your Marks'**

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August to Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August, 10.30am-12noon. To book or for more information contact Lauren Hussain 07738

689121 and within the Book Nook

**Interim Moderator:** Very Rev. William Hewitt BD DipPS

**Session Clerk:** Mrs. Mary Mitchell

**Clerk to the Board:** Mrs. Sheila McGill

**Locum:** Very Rev William Hewitt BD DipPS

**Organist:** Mr. Joe Auld

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