

Text: Mark 6:14-29

Theme: A Sorry Oath

Goal: That the hearers use their Oaths not for sinful things but for the good of their neighbor.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the Sixth chapter verses fourteen through twenty-nine.

Boys and girls, how are you doing today? Good. Have you ever had a happy occasion become a sad one? Maybe you had a birthday and got some sad news during it or maybe one of your best friends was not able to make it. That would be sad! In our text for today, we hear about a sad occasion during a birthday party. It teaches us to be careful with how we use our words towards others, how do we use our words nicely? Let me know after the service. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

A happy occasion, the birthday of King Herod. He is surrounded by nobles, military commanders, leaders, and higher ups from the region, fancy food with plenty of wine. In this state, his own step-daughter came out and danced for them. Herod is so pleased that he makes an oath that whatever she asks for, even if it be up to half his kingdom, even though he is not really a king, he will give to her. What would you ask for if you had that sworn to you? Maybe money, power, authority, a new car or television, half the kingdom to rule over? Solome goes back to her mother Herodias, one who despises John the Baptist, and she makes it clear as day. "I desire the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter." This is where we get the phrase "On a silver platter"

from. Herod is sorry for having make this oath but carries it out because he does not want to lose reputation in front of his guests. He even goes so far as to put John's head on a platter, one used for the serving of food for the feast.

“I swear!” How often have you said words similar to King Herod, only to instantly regret them the instant they are out of your mouths? Swearing an oath is a serious matter because it invokes the divine. An oath calls upon God to be the judge of the oath keeping, ‘in the event that the oath-maker fails in his or her obligations God delivers the judgement.” “I swear that I will be there come rain or shine.” “I swear that we will see a drop of rain today.” “I swear that I will never do that sin again, it will never happen.” All of these are examples of false oaths, oaths sworn falsely. They are false because you do not know if you can actually be there come rain or shine. You do not know if something will come up. You are not in control of the weather. You cannot say it will rain, it may not. Then you are made out to be a liar. You are a sinner in thought, word, and deed. Sure, you may try your best not to sin, and to live a God-pleasing life, this is well and good. But to say that you will never sin again? Impossible, unless our Lord calls you to His nearer presence or comes again in power and glory.

So how do we make an oath not falsely but in in truth and faith? The first thing we do is we hold onto the truth of the word of God no matter what happens, the same as John the Baptist did. He dies a martyr's death because of the truth that he is proclaiming that Herod has sinned by taking Herodias, his brother's wife, and divorcing his current wife in the process. For this, John is imprisoned and now beheaded. John shows us that the world's rejection and even violent hostility cannot stop the truth. John's suffering and death foreshadows the suffering and death of our Lord as well as the suffering that all who follow Jesus will experience for the sake of the truth. As we see in Mark's usage of the word *perilypos*, very sorrowful, used only one other time in Mark when

our Lord is suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. John suffers greatly for the truth, the same as our Lord, who is the Word and truth made flesh, suffers on the cross for us. He suffers in order to give us the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation of our souls. He even defeats death itself in order to redeem us. Jesus' victory over death and the grave shows how wonderfully He can turn such antagonism into life and salvation.

The second is we do not make oaths about things we do not know or cannot control. We make oaths for the good of our neighbor and those around us. We truthfully say what we will or will not do. We are sincere in our promises and solemnly carry out that which we have said we will do. Some oaths are good to make. For example, those which are done in service to help our neighbor. Oaths of the military to protect the nation's citizens from harm and danger. Wedding vows, that you will be faithful to your husband or wife, care and tend for them and their wellbeing both in good times and bad. In courts of law, that you will tell the whole truth in service to your neighbor and his wellbeing. Oaths even to the church, as Debbie did last Sunday, Josh and Kate, as you will do in a few moments, that you will be faithful to the church, support its mission, and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it. All in the strength given to you by God and for the betterment of those around you.

A sorry oath it was for Herod, one that he regretted as it did the most immense harm to his neighbor. Yet from it, we learn about how even today, we can make oaths rightly, by the grace of God, and continue to be steadfast in the faith that He has given to us, no matter what may come.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.