

Pentecost 8 7/15/18
Mark 6:14-29 10B

SERMON TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON, FROM THE 6TH CHAPTER OF MARK'S GOSPEL

“It’s my life.” You don’t have to be a Bon Jovi fan or a child of a certain age to recognize that sentiment. Right? Consider that for a moment. Is it really your life, to do with as you want, to live as you want? That’s the question before us this morning as we look at the lives of the two men in our Gospel: King Herod and John the Baptist. In Herod, we see how one lives when they think it really is their life to live.

In John, we see what it means to live a Christian life, walking by faith, being faithful even unto death. This Sunday, we learn from John the Baptist.

I. Herod certainly thought that it was his life, to do as he wanted. The king was living in open sin. Though lawfully married, he had rejected his wife for another woman, who happened to be his own brother’s wife. And John, not telling itching ears what they wanted to hear, but faithfully proclaiming the Word of God, told Herod that was an unlawful thing to do. So, when opportunity arose, Herodias, cherishing her grudge and hatred of John, cried for his head. Herod, seeking to please sinful humanity rather than God, had him executed.

Like Herod, do you ever live as though it’s your life? God says, “You shall have no other gods.” We say, “I will create a god in my image; a grandfatherly kind of god who will wink and nod at my sin, and say its ok. God says, “You shall not murder.” We would never think of ending someone’s physical life, but we keep a record of wrongs your neighbor has done, bear grudges, and refuse to be reconciled. God says, “You shall not

commit adultery.” We laugh at off-color jokes. God says, “You shall not steal,” but we see nothing wrong with trying to get rich by playing the lottery. God says, “You shall not give testimony against your neighbor,” but we defame and slander our neighbor, especially when it makes us look all-the-better.

The 10 Commandments teach us what God’s thoughts are, how He wants us to live our lives. Are God’s thoughts your thoughts? Are His ways your ways? When God wants His thoughts to be our thoughts, when He makes demands on us, we loudly sing, “It’s my life!” Or, we use the words of that other popular refrain, “Who are you to tell me how to live my life?”

Daily, we live as though it really is our life. We seek peace and security, contentment, in what we want. And, then we have the audacity to grumble and complain when God doesn’t do things our way.

II. But, God has good news for us who live as though it really was our life, to live as we want. Hear the words of Paul from our Epistle lesson,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...In love, He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ...In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.”

The very Son of God redeemed us. That means He bought our freedom from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Jesus paid our redemption price not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. All those times you thought it really was your life to live as you want; every time you sought peace and contentment in what you wanted; all those times you had the audacity to grumble and complain against God; all your sin was laid on Jesus. And,

like a lamb to the slaughter, He, the Lamb of God, was led to the slaughter of the cross, shedding His blood to atone for your sin and dying as the punishment for your sin. And because He did, Be of Good Cheer, for you are forgiven.

Jesus redeemed you to be His own child, live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

III. In the new birth of our baptism, God the Holy Spirit works faith and new spiritual life in us with the power to overcome sin. This is why we pray this Sunday, "Give pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death..." He gives us pure hearts and minds to follow Jesus faithfully through the means of grace. The means of grace, the spoken Word of the Gospel and the Visible Word of the Sacraments, are the means God Himself has chosen to give us faith and keep that faith strong so that we may live for Christ and not for the selfish desires of the flesh.

Our human reason and Satan with his lies say that baptism is just plain water, a work of man. But, the Word of God teaches us that this is not just plain water, but water included in God's command and combined with God's Word. That is why every day of our earthly life, we return to the waters of our baptism to drown our sinful flesh with all sinful and unholy desires that we may rise to live before God in righteousness and purity each day.

Our human reason and Satan with his lies say that going to church is boring, a waste of time; besides, all they do is preach about money anyway, right? No, Dear Saints of God, we come to the worship services of God's House because here God serves us with His Word, teaching us of

Christ and teaching us what a holy life in Christ is, and strengthening us to live that holy life in Christ.

Here, we come to the Lord's Table. Our human reason and Satan with his lies say this is nothing more than bread and wine. But, the Word of God teaches us that in, with, and under the bread and wine is the true Body and Blood of Jesus given for us to eat and to drink, for the forgiveness of sins, and "where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

In our Old Testament lesson, God gives the Prophet Amos a vision in which God says, "Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never pass by them." That is the way the English translation in the bulletin reads. But, what God is really saying through Amos is "Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never forgive them."

God is calling the nation of Israel to repentance through Amos. The Golden Age of Israel under David and Solomon was long past. But in recent years, Israel had victory over her enemies. Times were pretty good. People were enjoying affluence, not going hungry – in fact, they had meat to eat, alcohol abuse was widespread, sexual immorality was on the rise. People thought their lives were theirs, to live as they wanted, and so that is the way they lived.

So, through Amos, God using the example of a plumb line, a dividing line, between the Israelites who lived as if it was their life and those who feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. Those who lived their own way, ignoring God, were the ones God would forgive no more.

Dear Saints of God, the Christian life is the life of repentance. That plumb line is still there for you today! Is it your life to do with as you want,

to decide what's best for you? Or, are you Christ's own, serving Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; faithful in your use of the means of grace that He may continue His work in you?

In what do you hope: the lottery ticket or your baptism certificate? What do you use your computer for? Defaming your neighbor on social media, or reading a daily devotion [like on the Lutheran Hour Ministries website]? Do you use your ability to speak to tell you spouse or child that they are stupid or that you love them?

The green paraments of Pentecost remind us that we daily die to sin and grow more like Jesus. Living in Christ and Christ at work in us, with His pure heart and mind as our very own, we use every opportunity to thank and praise, serve and obey Him, because God has created us, redeemed us, and sanctified us. We are not our own. We are God's, this day and forever.