

## You Cannot Escape God

Mark 6:14-29

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 12, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

There is hypocrisy. There is hypocrisy when it comes to repentance. A person can pretend to be penitent and really not be penitent. A person can pretend to be sorry and not really be sorry. A person can pretend to hear the word of God but not heed the Word of God.

The rest of the congregation will not recognize such hypocrisy. They will not know. They cannot judge the heart of a person who listens to the word of God and does not heed it. If a hypocrite attends the Divine Service on a regular basis and appears attentive during the readings and the sermon, who is anyone to say that they are a hypocrite? The congregation cannot judge motives. The congregation cannot judge what is going on in their heart.

God recognizes the hypocrite. God knows the people who are coming to the Divine Service and although they seem to be paying attention to the word of God, they are not heeding it. God can judge heart. God can see the thoughts and motives of the heart. He knows when a person is sitting in the Divine Service and heeding the word of God. He knows when a person is sitting in the Divine Service and listening to the Word of God and not heeding it.

You cannot escape God.

He will eventually put you in a situation where it will be revealed whether or not you believe in Him. He will put you in a situation where it will be revealed whether or not you are loyal to Him.

Such a situation may not come about for years. If you are a hypocrite you may not face your hypocrisy for a long time. Do not be deceived. Just because God is delaying revealing your hypocrisy does not mean that He has forgotten about it. God delays revealing your hypocrisy to give you a chance to own up to it voluntarily. He would much prefer that you own up to it voluntarily rather than to reveal your hypocrisy in a way that is shaming to you.

The longer you delay confessing your hypocrisy the worse it will be when God finally does reveal your hypocrisy. When God does reveal it, everyone else will wonder why you did not come forward before. They will know that you were a hypocrite indeed. You kept your hypocrisy to yourself and hoped that no one would find out. You gave a show of righteousness and faith on the outside, but on the inside you did not believe any of it.

If you are a hypocrite, God will reveal your hypocrisy at a time of His own choosing. You will not know on what day it will take place. It will happen, but you will not know when it will happen. When it does happen it will come as a surprise to you. You will not have any control over when He does it.

When God reveals your hypocrisy it will be obvious to all that you are responsible for your hypocrisy. You will not be able to blame anyone else. You will not be able to explain what you did. You will lose credibility. It happened to King Herod.

Herod is a hypocrite.

His wife wants John the Baptist dead. Herod does not want to kill John the Baptist because John is preaching the word of God. Instead of killing him, Herod locks up John in prison. He would gladly go to John and listen to what he had to say.

Therein lies his hypocrisy. If he really wanted to support what John the Baptist was doing and saying, Herod would have returned Herodias to Philip and he would have released John from prison so that John could continue his prophetic ministry. Instead he keeps John in prison.

Herod probably thinks to himself, "At least I have not killed him. I could have killed him and I didn't." Herod could think to himself, "At least I gladly listen to him. I know that he is a righteous man." But that is his hypocrisy. If he knows that John is righteous and holy, then why does he have John in prison? If he listens to John joyfully, then why has he not returned Herodias to his brother, Philip? Herod wants to pretend that he is on the prophet's side, when really he is not on the prophet's side. He wants to kind of honor the messenger of God without totally honoring the messenger of God. God will eventually catch up with Herod. God will eventually reveal Herod's hypocrisy. God wants to know whether or not Herod is loyal to God and his prophet or is he opposed to God and his prophet. God will not allow Herod to dodge the issue. You cannot escape God.

And so you heard what happened. The daughter of Herodias danced and pleased Herod so much that he offered her up unto half of his kingdom for pleasing him so much. It must have been some dance! And it does not take much to speculate that drink and lust were affecting Herod's decisions. And then she at the behest of her mother asks Herod for the head of John the Baptist. And now Herod must choose. He can put off the choice no longer. Is he loyal to God and his prophet? Or is he loyal to his own power and prestige? Will he submit to God and his prophet? Or will he give in to a girl who danced suggestfully on his birthday? And Herod's hypocrisy is revealed.

Herod will forever fear what he did to John. He will forever be terrified before God for what he did to John the prophet. When our Lord goes about performing miracles, Herod is convinced that John the Baptist has risen from the dead. And why would Herod even think that John had risen from the dead except that his conscience is telling him that he is guilty before almighty God of murdering one of God's prophets.

Herod did not escape God. Herod was a mighty king. He could command the beheading of the prophets. He could command their arrest and imprisonment. He could not escape God. God eventually put him in the position where the truth was revealed.

If Herod could not escape God, neither can you. You are either loyal to God and His word or you are not. You either heed the word of God or you do not. God will not allow you to continue hearing His word without repenting of your sins. He will eventually put you in a position where it will be revealed where your true loyalties lie.

My counsel to you is to repent now. Do not delay. If you delay something worse will happen to you. Acknowledge your fault now. Do not delay. If Herod had returned Herodias to his brother like John the Baptist had exhorted him to do, then none of this would have happened. The blood of John the prophet would not be on the hands of Herod. Herod would not have had hundreds of generations of Christians hear about his lust and drunkenness. He would have spared himself much. And it would have been better for Herod in the judgment to have killed John right away at Herodias' request. At least he would have been consistent. But instead Herod tried to protect John. He tried to pretend to be righteous without being righteous all the way. God will not allow one to be half way righteous for long. Either one repents or God will do something worse to you in order to get you to repent. Repent now. Do not delay. If there is some subject in your life that needs repenting, repent of it. Confess it. Don't delay. Experience the grace of God now. You cannot escape God. What is done in secret will be revealed in public. What is whispered in secret will be shouted from the housetops.

Even now there is a celebrity whose money and reputation were not enough to protect him from his hypocrisy. Eventually the truth came out. Eventually Herod had to choose in public on his birthday of all days whether or not he was loyal to the prophet or opposed to him. At that point Herod could not

even release John. It would have meant that his word is worthless and what would John have done with his freedom except to return to his calling of preaching. John's loyalties are obvious.

Repent now and be spared the worst. Repent now and be spared the worst part of your hypocrisy. Repent now and be spared the embarrassment that will come when God brings down the hammer on what you have done. Repent now before all is revealed. For if you repent now, you will find the merciful God and you will be free from the manipulation of others.

If Herod had repented and sent Herodias back to Philip, the dancing girl incident would not have taken place. Herod would have spared himself from having to worry about the coming of Jesus and His miraculous powers being convinced in his terror that John the Baptist had come back for him.

Repent now so that you need not fear Jesus who goes about with miraculous powers.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.