

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 8
Saturday, July 13, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, July 14, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

“The King of the Jews”

Mark 6:14-29

Mark tells us that “King Herod” hears of Jesus performing miracles like raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead, as we heard last week. Jesus’ name had become known. Everyone was talking about Him – especially up in Galilee. That was Herod’s jurisdiction. You see, Herod was not actually a king.

Herod Antipas, was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. His father, Herod the Great, as he was known, who was given the title of “king” by Emperor Octavian, was the King Herod who killed all the young boys in Bethlehem after the wise men came.

When Herod the Great died, Rome did not pass on the title of “king” to any of his children or relatives. Instead, Rome divided up this area which they called Syria-Palestina to four of Herod’s relatives. This did not stop Herod Antipas from calling himself “king.” He even says to Herodias’ daughter, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.”

This is how liars and propagandists operate. It is a technique called “anchoring” where you put forth falsehoods or political spin which is not the main

focus of the statement. But you keep putting this into statements to “anchor” the idea in the minds of the people. Especially in politics, you hear the same words and phrases parroted over and over again to anchor the idea regardless of the subject matter. People will believe a lie especially when they want to believe a lie.

The entire Herod family is built on lies. Herod the Great wanted to be the King of the Jews. Herod was not a Jew; he was Idumean, that is an Edomite – a descendant of Esau – a pretender to the birth-rite of Israel. He married Mariamne, she was Jewish royalty of the line of the Maccabees who had ruled Israel for 100 years in between the empires of the Greeks and the Romans. Herod the Great plays both sides of the civil war between Emperor Octavian and Mark Antony (of Antony and Cleopatra fame) and convinces Octavian to make him King of the Jews so that he can do Rome’s dirty work for them.

So that no one could challenge his throne, Herod the Great killed his wife Mariamne (even though she was his favorite wife). He killed her brother Aristobulus (who was the high priest). He killed his mother-in-law (I guess for being a mother-in-law). I’m joking. She declared herself to be queen and declared him unfit to rule. He killed three of his sons for fear that they would want the throne before he died. Herod has done all of this by the time the Magi come visiting. Herod the Great dies a few years after Jesus is born.

Just before Herod the Great dies, he orders the arrest of the most distinguished citizens in Judea, imprisons them, and gives the order that, when he dies, they are to be executed so that there will be great weeping and mourning in

the streets, no one will celebrate his death, and so that the display of grief that he craved would take place. Herod was a real piece of work.

And in walk the Magi saying, “Where is He who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star . . . and we have come to worship Him.” And all of Jerusalem was troubled at hearing this. Of course they were troubled; Herod was told of a new king being born. Someone was going to die.

Herod the Great was determined that this King must die. That was the one thing Herod had right. This King must die, but it is not yet His time.

We fast forward to his son, Herod Antipas, and he has unlawfully taken his brother’s wife as his own wife. John the Baptist has spoken out about this and Herod has John arrested because his new wife wants John to be silenced.

Like his father, Herod’s life is a lie. Herod’s marriage to Herodias was a sham. She was his first cousin. Her father was Aristobulus, one of those killed by Herod the Great. She was first married to Herod Antipas’ older brother, Herod the Second (Herod was not really creative with the naming of his children. But what would you expect from a psychopathic narcissist?). Herod Antipas then divorced his first wife so that he could marry Herodias. Eventually, because Herod Antipas likes to call himself “king”, Herod and Herodias get banished by Emperor Caligula to Gaul. They are exiled to what is now modern day France.

Herod the Great and Herod Antipas were both obsessed with being the King of the Jews. There is only one King in Israel. There has always only been one King in Israel. Herod the Great tried to kill the King of the Jews when He was a

baby, but it was not yet His time. Herod Antipas killed John, the one who announced Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

There is evil and lying and treachery in Herod and his family, yet we see God using these events to fulfill His work. John the Baptist had prophetically told his disciples, when they were concerned that more people were going to Jesus and His disciples than were following John, John said, "I must decrease that He may increase."

John's ministry decreases and ends because of the lies of a king who was not a king. In the days of Herod the Great, gazing at the stars led the Magi to the false, wannabe king of the Jews. It was only when Scripture revealed Him did the Magi know where to actually look for and find that child who was not only the King of the Jews, but was the Son of God prophesied to be born in Bethlehem.

When that child becomes a man, He is revealed as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world by the man who would be beheaded by another wannabe king of the Jews. And the real King of the Jews continues to be revealed. He continues to be revealed in His Word. Searching for Him anywhere else will only lead you to a false king. He is revealed **here** in His Word and in flesh and blood under the form of bread and wine. We no longer need to ask "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" He is here, and He has promised to remain with us, as He says, "even to the end of the age."

Ultimately, the true King of the Jews would be revealed on the cross with a placard above His head which reads: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Amen.