



## Saving Face – TouchPoint for July 7, 2021

**Mark 6:14-29 (The Passion Translation)** <sup>14</sup> King Herod soon heard about Jesus, for the name of Jesus was on everyone's lips. Some were even saying about him, "John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead, and that's why miraculous powers flow from him!" <sup>15</sup> Others said, "No, he's Elijah!" While others said, "He's a prophet, like one of the prophets of old!"

<sup>16</sup> When Herod heard what the people were saying, he concluded, "I beheaded John, and now he's raised from the dead!" <sup>17-18</sup> For Herod had John arrested and thrown into prison for repeatedly rebuking him in public, saying, "You have no right to marry Herodias, the wife of your brother Philip! You are violating the law of God!"

<sup>19</sup> This infuriated Herodias, and she held a bitter grudge against him and wanted John executed. <sup>20</sup> But Herod both feared and stood in awe of John and kept him safely in custody, because he was convinced that he was a righteous and holy man. Every time Herod heard John speak, it disturbed his soul, but he was drawn to him and was intrigued by his words.

<sup>21</sup> But Herodias found her opportunity to have John killed—it was on the king's birthday! Herod prepared a great banquet and invited all his officials, military commanders, and the leaders of the province of Galilee to celebrate with him on his birthday. <sup>22</sup> On the day of the feast, his stepdaughter, the daughter of Herodias, came to honor the king with a beautiful dance, and she flattered him. Her dancing greatly pleased the king and his guests, so he said to the girl, "You can ask me for anything you want and I will give it to you!" <sup>23</sup> And he repeated it in front of everyone, with a vow to complete his promise to her: "Anything you desire and it will be yours! I'll even share my kingdom with you!"

<sup>24</sup> She immediately left the room and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" Her mother answered, "The head of John the Baptizer!" <sup>25</sup> So she hurried back to the king and made her request: "I want you to bring me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter—and I want it right now!"

<sup>26</sup> Deeply grieved, the king regretted his promise to her, but since he had made his vow in front of all his honored guests, he couldn't deny her request. <sup>27</sup> So without delay the king ordered an executioner to bring John's head, and he went and beheaded John in prison. <sup>28</sup> He brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl brought it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> When John's followers heard what had happened, they came and removed his body and laid it in a tomb.

**Grace and peace from the All in whom we live and move and have our being.**

Saving face meant everything to Herod. Everything.

Deeply grieved in the doing of it - but too proud to change his mind, too proud to lose face - Herod ordered the execution of John.

We are no better. No different. Well, maybe you are. I'm not.

I am, just like Herod, deeply invested and complicitly enmeshed in **saving face**:

- Like Herod, I too have made promises to keep ... family dysfunctions to honor, political loyalties to uphold, national allegiances to maintain. My pension. My social security. My medicare. My tax bracket.

- Like Herod, I too hold a position of privilege in the world. By sheer accident of birth and fortune, I ended up on the invite list to Herod's gathering of honored guests. I am a citizen of the United States, and so – whether I like it or not – I have benefitted from unholy things done to others to save face, to save – specifically - this white American face.
- OF COURSE those mass killings and targeted executions and bombs “Made in the USA” dropped on Gaza and children put in cages at the border grieves me. Deeply grieves me. But I am invested like Herod and I am complicit like Herod and I am at Herod's party and saving face is everything. Everything.

Why else would we, as a nation, still cater to gas and oil interests, even as we deeply grieve the dying of the planet?

Why else would we, as a nation, a deeply grieving nation, not already have made reparations, honored treaties, equalized wages, and leveled the distribution of food, health care, education, housing?

Because saving face is everything to us. Everything. If we were not so foolishly prideful, if we actually humbled ourselves enough to change our minds, to change our ways, it would mean losing face ... losing stature ... losing money. It would mean letting ALL kinds of riffraff come to the party. Better to save face, though it deeply grieves us, than to address the injustices that keep people under-fed, under-educated, under- resourced, under-performing, under us.

*“Deeply grieved, the king regretted his promise to her,  
but since he had made his vow in front of all his honored guests, he couldn't deny her request.”*

The Greek word for deeply grieved is *perilupos* (pair-REEL-a-pos).

It is a word Mark uses only twice:

- As a description of Herod's feelings for the killing of John.
- And to describe Jesus' feelings, that night in which he was betrayed, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Deeply grieved, Herod gave up everything holy to save face, expecting us to pretend with him that we can keep this party of the elite going strong. We are masters at pretending.

Deeply grieved, Jesus gave up everything holy too, asking only that we stay awake with him through the long night in this dark garden. We are failures at staying awake.

Even so, honored guests, even in our pretending and in our stupor, we are invited to a party where there is a place for all, with a table where there is enough for all, where none need exploit another to save face.

Our host, Jesus the Christ, is the face of our salvation. **His** is our saving face.

Come to this party. Come to this table.

And let us be filled with the good will of God, here in the kingdom of God.

**AMEN.**

## WORDS OF COMMUNION

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Our Lord, on the night in which he was deeply grieved, took bread and gave thanks and broke the bread, saying,

“Take and eat. This is my body, given for you.”

And later, taking the cup, he said,

“Take and drink. This is my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this to remember me.”

## COMMUNION BENEDICTION

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By this bread and cup, we are re-membered to the Body of Christ.

May his be the saving face that guides and keeps you. Amen.

# **Spirit in the Desert**

## **Opening Songs**

### **Be Still**

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

### **You Lord Are In This Place**

(Keith Duke)

You Lord are in 1)...this place.  
2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.  
Your presence fills it.  
Your presence is peace.

## **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **Inpoured Spirit**

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd.)

Inpoured Spirit, deep and still.  
Love eternal, the world to fill.

## **The Meal**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

(Taize Reflections)

## **Benediction**

### **Gaelic Blessing/Deep Peace**

(John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers)

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.  
Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light of the world to you.  
Deep peace of Christ to you.