

## MARK 6:16-29

## PEOPLE PLEASERS

<sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" <sup>17</sup> For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup> So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, <sup>20</sup> because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

<sup>21</sup> Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup> When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." <sup>23</sup> And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." <sup>24</sup> She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

<sup>25</sup> At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

<sup>26</sup> The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup> So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, <sup>28</sup> and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

The worldly man plays his life for the accolades of a worldly audience. Invariably, this results in his getting into trouble. His dilemma might not be as dramatic and obvious as Herod's, but it is of the same genre. When pleasing the crowd is more important than doing what is right, especially in God's eyes, you are in deep trouble.

At least in the South, NASCAR is a Sunday (religious?) ritual. According to the way NASCAR was created, drivers spend hours making left turns at very high speeds. Suppose one driver decides to please the crowd by making a right turn. There would be no escape; the result would be disastrous for that driver. Likewise, God has created us to live in relationship with him and to place him first in our lives. When we, in our own way, rationalize his truth to please our neighbors, rewrite his message to support our behavior or otherwise choose to live according to the way of the world instead of his will, we are taking a right turn in the race of life; we are playing Herod.

**Dear God, make me ever cognizant of my need to keep you first in my life – daily. Protect me from the siren voice of the crowd. Help me to manifest the fruit of self-control so that I might not rashly and inadvertently promise what I should not deliver. Keep me running in your will and in order to please you. Amen.**