

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 10
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 6:14-29

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

A birthday party, a fancy banquet -- Herod is having a grand time. A beautiful woman dances. Herod flamboyantly promises her whatever she wants in gratitude for her dance. She wants what? Herod is stuck with his promise; his decision has consequences. John the Baptist's death casts a shadow across the hearts of the disciples of Jesus.

Theme: God is There in Good and Bad

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture and copies of the Books of Common Prayer for the group. Talk with the teachers for the younger children and older children to find out their plans for this lesson.

Beginning: Tell the group (especially if they have young children in a class today) that this is a hard passage to read and the younger children will be doing a review of past stories rather than dealing with this one. Older children will read the passage and look for strategies to help overcome temptations that confront them. If there is a mentoring program, especially connected to a confirmation program in your church, the older children have been asked to think about an adult friend to talk with in addition to talking with their parents.

Opening Prayer: Grant us the wisdom, Dear God, to avoid temptation. Guide us today as we discuss and wonder about your word. Amen.

The Scripture: Mark 6:14-29 Invite volunteers to read the parts of the narrator, King Herod, and Herodias.

Reflection Questions:

- What stands out for you in this passage?
- Verses 14-16 clearly happen after verses 17-29, something of a flashback. I wonder if Herod had misgivings about the death of John the Baptist or whether he simply is frightened.
- Why did Herod want John the Baptist dead? (See verse 18.) Notice the conflict Herod was experiencing. (See verse 20.)
- What do you think caused Herod to make this incredible offer to Herodias? (Pompousness? A bit too much wine? Confidence in his position?)

- What do you think went through the head of the girl who was told to ask for the head of John the Baptist?
- When the disciples came to get the body of John, what did they do with it?
- In today's headlines, it is easy to find examples of people taking advantage of their political power. In what ways do each of us use our power to get what we want?
- What are the ways in which we can use the power we might have?

Getting Closure: Pass out copies of The Book of Common Prayer and direct the group to pages 447–452, which contains a process for unloading indiscretions that may be weighing on our hearts. (The purpose is not to conduct the rite of reconciliation, but to make sure people are aware of its presence.)

Closing Prayer: Our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us our sins by the grace of the Holy Spirit and direct us in all we do that we may serve you today and always. Amen.

Mark 6:14-29

Narrator: King Herod heard of Jesus, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said,

King Herod: "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

Narrator: For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl,

King Herod: "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it. Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom."

Narrator: She went out and said to her mother,

Herodias: "What should I ask for?"

Mother: "The head of John the baptizer."

Narrator: Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested,

Herodias: "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

Narrator: The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

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