

# The Compelling Word of God

Mark 6:14—29

## Introduction

All the people were speculating about the “real” identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Last week, we read how the people were amazed at His teaching and power to perform miracles, and were saying, “*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?*” (**Mark 6:3**). Now, some were *saying He was John the Baptist, some said Elijah, and still others were saying one of the prophets* (v. 14). King Herod was convinced that He was *John, whom [he] had beheaded, raised from the dead* (v. 16). Then Mark segues into how John the Baptist died.

## Herod, Another Wicked King

Herod had no moral compass. He had divorced his legal wife, the daughter of King Aretes of Petra, to marry his brother’s wife, Herodias, while his brother was still alive. Later, Aretes would go to war with Herod over this and defeat him in battle. John reminded him publicly that the king was not above the Law of God, reprimanding him for his actions. For that, Herod had John imprisoned in the dungeon.

## Herodias, Another Scheming Queen

This wasn’t good enough for Herodias. She wanted John dead, but Herod kept him safe, for he knew John was *a righteous and holy man* (**Mark 6:20**). In other words, he knew John was right. Then came Herod’s birthday and an opportunity for Herodias to get her way.

## Herod, Another Spineless King

Drunken Herod promised anything up to half his kingdom to Herodias’ daughter if she would just dance for his guests. She did, and on the prompting of her mother, asked for John the Baptist’s head on a platter. This rash, egotistical king could not go back on his word in front of his guests and had it done.

## The Puzzlement (v. 20)

But in this whole story, the “puzzlement” I see (to borrow a word from Yul Bryner in *The King and I*) is found in **verse 20**: *When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly* (v. 20b). What was perplexing about John’s message and why did Herod hear him gladly?

## John's Message

John proclaimed a *baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (**Mark 1:4**). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. Like all the prophets before him, he preached the Law to a sin sick Israel. Like those prophets, he called the people to repentance. However, like those prophets, he also pointed to Christ, *preparing a way for the Lord* (**Mark 1:3**).

## The Word – Law

According to the Law (read **Romans 3:10—18**). The word translated “perplexed” in our Gospel lesson carries with it the meaning of *to have no way out, to be at a loss*. That’s what the Law shows us. Because of our sin, we are at a loss with no way out. This doesn’t just describe Herod. It describes every one of us, lost in sin and doomed to hell.

## The Word – Gospel

But according to the **Smalcald Articles**, it’s against this hopeless situation that the Gospel gives us counsel and aid: *First, through the spoken Word, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world [Luke 24:45—47]. ... Second, through Baptism. Third, through the holy Sacrament of the altar. Fourth, through the Power of the Keys. Also, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren [Matthew 18:20]* (**Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. IV, The Gospel**).

## The Power of the Word

The Law of God terrifies. That is why Herod was perplexed. King Agrippa heard Paul gladly, and he was almost persuaded to become a Christian (**Acts 26:28 KJV**). But nothing changed. The Gospel has the power to save (Read **Romans 1:16**). But the Gospel can be resisted by stubborn individuals. That is the reason not everyone who hears the Gospel is saved.

## Salvation in the Word

But to the one who will listen and hear, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. We are undone by the Law and made into new creatures by the Gospel. Our lives are changed by the **COMPELLING WORD OF GOD**.

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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