

“Jesus Taunted by Herod”

Text: Luke 23:8-11 Midweek Lent 3 Wayzata 03-03-10

Little kids do that to each other to taunt and make fun of each other to try and get the other person angry. We wouldn't expect an Olympic winner to turn to the person he or she beat and taunt them. It happens in some sports but it shouldn't. Those taunts are childish only to try to get the upper hand, to look big and important so the other person looks ridiculous, foolish, and small. Most people avoid someone who taunts them.

This evening we are going to see what kind of person Herod was and how he treated Jesus. Jesus had called him a fox. Today that name has a different meaning than it did then. It is used of someone who is good looking, foxy lady, for the guys, a fox. When Jesus used it the name meant someone who was sly and tricky, a predator that went after your chickens but wasn't very brave, just sneaky. Herod only met Jesus this one time.

The bible says Herod was glad to see Jesus because he was curious. He was a skeptic. There are many who curious see Jesus. Herod was It wasn't the first time or the last. Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate wanted to see Jesus for their own reasons. They were outright scoffers who wanted to see Jesus to reinforce their disbelief.

Some asked him questions to trip him up and make him look like a fool. The stubborn ones really wanted to see if Jesus were someone different. But they didn't want to be different themselves. The rich young man couldn't give up his riches. Some scoffers stood under the cross. The self righteous wanted to see Jesus to prove how righteous they were and how mistaken he was. The Pharisees always belittled him especially for healing on the Sabbath or dealing with those whom they considered riff-raff. The self righteous also stood under the cross.

There were the seekers who came to try and understand. Some were amazed at what he said others went away sad. It wasn't what they had expected. Some were not convinced until later. Nicodemus was a seeker. There were seekers who stood under the cross.

Then there were the sinners whose joy to see Jesus was born out of genuine need for His forgiveness. They knew if they didn't have it, it would kill them, people like Zacchaeus and, Mary Magdalene. The sinners were under the cross. So the skeptic, scoffer, self righteous, stubborn, seeker stood under the cross with the sinner.

Those who were not changed to believers in the Christ went away without the great gift that he had to offer. What Herod said to question Jesus is not recorded. The dialogue did not come down to us.

Jesus encountered Zacchaeus, the Publican. He offered to come to his house and Zacchaeus changed his life and his lifestyle by giving back four times anything that he might have stolen. Jesus encounter with Nicodemus showed the Father's love who sent His Son to be lifted up on the cross as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness.

Herod wanted a miracle. Jesus wouldn't do miracles in his own home town because they refused to believe he was the Messiah. Even his own brothers, at the time, refused to believe in Him.

Herod wanted pyrotechnics. Jesus should do some miracle to bring honor and glory to Herod and not to the living God. One thing Jesus never succumbed to was to do miracles for his own convenience. That was Satan's temptation. Make the rocks bread. Jump off the temple roof. Let God hold him from death and everyone could see the miracle and wonder at Jesus power. He refused then and he refuses now.

How simple it would have been for Jesus to do something spectacular. Like the in rock opera “Jesus Christ Super Star.” It has Herod urge Jesus in unforgettable rag-time piano. “Come on Jesus walk across my swimming pool.” I rather doubt that's what Herod asked. But it was probably something as trite.

To make sure that all went as they had planned the Sanhedrin went with the cohort from Pilate. They did not want to see Jesus get away from them. They knew it was possible that he might do or say something spectacular that would impress Herod. If he were like everyone else, they reasoned, he would not miss the opportunity to place himself in better circumstances. So the Bible says they continually, vehemently accused him to keep the pressure on.

If Herod were going try Jesus they were going to make sure he heard what it was they had against him. As it turned out it was for nothing. Herod was not about to get himself caught in the trial of Jesus. It was apparent that Jesus was not going to talk to him so he treated Jesus as if he were nothing.

He sent him back to Pilate for the rest of the trial clothed in a white shimmering garment. Pilate should have understood the symbolism. Herod found Jesus harmless and not worth anyone's effort.

Herod had it in his power to help but he did nothing. Herod and his court mocked Jesus. He refused to treat Jesus seriously. He would not try this case even though it came under his jurisdiction. He could have found Jesus innocent. He was not influenced by the High Priest's or the Sanhedrin's conspiracy.

Herod was guilty of a sin of omission. He wouldn't do anything. He came to the most crucial time of his life, stood face to face with the Incarnate Son of God and trifled with him and mocked him. That was Herod's sin. Jesus answered him nothing. How many other people want to trifle with Jesus? Treat him as if he were not important. Not enemies of Christ mind you. They aren't against him in mortal combat they just don't take him seriously.

Some put him down by saying that he never really existed or that the Gospels show he is not very wise at all. What we call secular culture stands face to face with the Incarnate Son of God and trifles with him. Even today Christ makes no reply. His reply is in the Bible.

Some of the religious things we think we do also trifle with Jesus. We get addicted to forms of worship and worship experiences like some people are addicted to theater or music. But we haven't let our hearts soar to the living God who became man. People trifle with Jesus even with moral lives. Some have no real understanding why they should be moral. No love only law or live anyd way you want to.

Often people trifle with Jesus in their prayer life. Talk with God as if it were some kind of psycho therapy, or want a God who gives them a leg up on others. Prayer is not a magical means of getting what you want. Some trifle with Jesus when they profess to possess all the virtues and yet live as if Satan were dictating their life pattern. Some trifle with Jesus when they show all outward marks of religion except to love those who are in need whose lives are broken and hurt.

Jesus came to live and die that those who would know him would treat him seriously. He loved beyond any human ability to love. Those who take him at his word and seriously recognize their sin and his forgiveness do not trifle with him. Those that do trifle are like Herod, skeptics to the end. Where are you? Teasing Jesus or committed. Lent is a time for our commitment. Amen.