

# Talk Notes

Title: Mark 6:14-29

Meeting: Freshwaters

Date: 2/10/16

## Introduction

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Today we are going to explore aspects of character represented by three people from our passage. Through John the Baptist we can see the faithful servant, through Herod the person pleaser and through Herodias the bitter manipulator.

As we consider these different character traits we can be tempted to consider they are mutually exclusive, however there will be elements of all 3 in all of our characters. We all need to be honest with ourselves and with God, repenting and asking God to change us where we recognise the negative character traits and asking God to bless and develop within us the positive traits.

**Mark 6:14-29**

## John the Baptist – the faithful servant.

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Let's take a look at John the Baptist and consider the positive character traits that he demonstrated as a faithful servant.

To begin our look at John I want us to include another passage, **John 3:22-30**.

John had become well known, many had come to him for baptism, many had heard him or at least heard of him, he had a considerable following and then, at the apparent height of his fame and influence, Jesus begins his ministry. John's response is not to be offended, not to fight for his position, not to see Jesus as competition or a threat, but instead to proclaim the supremacy of Jesus and to accept with joy his role in preparing the way and then stepping back to make way for Jesus.

This demonstrated incredible **humility**, a real understanding of his own **identity** and role and a **submission** to the will and purposes of God.

## Humility

Humility is a great character trait for us to develop. It was a hallmark of Jesus, of John and of all true men and women of God throughout history. Pride is what caused Satan to fall into rebellion and sin, humility keeps us close to and dependent upon God, let's ask God to help us develop true Godly humility.

## Secure identity

Like John we need to be secure in our own identity. This has been a real emphasis for us recently. Each one of us is unique, each one of us is loved and accepted by God for who we are, not what we do and each of us has a role to play in God's purposes.

Let me just distinguish between identity – which is who we are as loved, forgiven and adopted children of God, joint heirs with Christ, uniquely gifted in our physical, intellectual and spiritual abilities – and our role – which is to do with what God has called us to with all that He has blessed us with and how that contributes to His plans and purposes.

**We do not need to strive to gain god's approval**, this is ours through Christ.

**We do not need to compare ourselves with others**, to promote ourselves or tear down others. God is not comparing us with anyone else **because no-one else was created to fulfil your role in His purposes.**

**We need to be secure in God's love**, to believe He has a role for us, to ask Him to reveal that role as we move through our lives and to give of our best to God in fulfilling His purposes for our life. We won't get it all right, God knows and understands that. We may not feel that we are achieving very much, but if we are faithful to our unique calling then we can look forward to Christ's words, **'well done good and faithful servant'**.

**Let me also be clear that our family, our work, our leisure time –are integral to our role and calling, not periphery to it and certainly not in competition with it.** If we will put Christ at the centre of every part of our lives, if we will include Him in our decisions, our conversations, in our tears and our joy's, then we can know His peace and presence every day.

## Submission

Also like John we need to be ready to submit to God's will. Let's face it, sometimes God asks us to do things, or not to do things that clash with our own will and desires. Our response to this sort of conflict needs to be swift submission.

As Jesus wept in the Garden of Gethsemane His will and desire was to avoid the pain and suffering to come, but His response was submission, not my will but yours.

If you recognise that God is saying something that you are resisting at the moment, let me encourage you to submit to Him. Not because of fear that He will punish you, but because of your trust in a good God who loves you and desires the best for you. No matter how hard it may appear now, submitting to His will is always the best call.

## Others

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Now let's take a look at what our passage from **Mark 6** can add to our understanding of John's character.

In **verse 18** we see that John had been challenging Herod who had married Herodias, his brother's wife. In doing this he showed that **he was more concerned about upholding truth and honouring God than about gaining people's approval**, or even his own safety. It is one thing to be indignant about the King's behaviour in private conversations with trusted friends, quite another to confront him to his face!

**Verse 20** tells us that despite the fact that John was challenging the king about his behaviour, **'Herod respected John; and knowing that he was a good and holy man, he protected him'**.

The word used for 'good' can also be translated 'righteous' – if John had been challenging Herod about his behaviour while his own behaviour was not right then Herod could easily have dismissed him as a hypocrite – **but here was a man whose life and behaviour matched his words.**

He was also 'holy', someone who stood out from the crowd because of his separation to God, sometimes translated as 'saint'.

Then finally in **verse 20** we have a record that Herod used to speak to John and was **'greatly disturbed'** but also liked to listen to John. There was something in his speech that was both intriguing and attractive, while also challenging to someone who remained in deliberate sin.

Let us again ask God to help us develop these positive characteristics, let's be more concerned with honouring God than pleasing man, let's ensure our behaviour matches our words and let's pray that those words are intriguing, attractive and challenging to those we interact with day by day.

## Herod the person pleaser.

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Having spent some time on the positive characteristics of John that we would like to emulate, let's turn now to Herod and see some of the more unpleasant characteristics that he displayed. As we do so, however, let's continue to apply this personally, to what extent can I see these characteristics in myself, do I need to repent? Do I need to ask God to help me to change in this area?

Herod, for all of his wealth and position was a **weak, insecure and troubled** man.

### Weak

He showed his weakness by succumbing to the temptation to marry Herodias his brother's wife and by putting himself in a position which enabled her daughter to ask for John's head.

It is not spelt out, but it would be a fairly good guess to suggest that sex had a role to play in both his unlawful marriage and in the pleasure derived from the dances of his step-daughter.

What is your weakness? Is it sex? Is it gossip? Is it greed, selfishness, pride or addiction? What fault line in our own personalities can lead us to reject sound judgement and to

pursue a path which if we continue to follow will be destructive, possibly for others but ultimately for ourselves and those we love?

Now part of being secure in our identity's and in God's love for us means that we can be honest with God and with ourselves about our weaknesses. We all have them, it does not mean that God loves us less, but it does mean that we need to honestly confess our weakness and to ask God to help us to strengthen our defences in that area.

How ludicrous it would be for a king to build a great fortress with a secure well defended drawbridge and moat, when at other points around the castle the walls have been breached, the moat dried up and anyone could walk in at their leisure. Yet our lives can be just like this, while staunchly defending the front door we fail to recognise that unacknowledged and submitted area of weakness provide a back door for the enemy to exploit.

### Insecure

Herod was insecure, he had the position and the authority to do pretty much what he wanted – certainly he could have spared John's life whatever his foolish promise to his step-daughter. He fulfilled his promise not because he was worried about breaking his word, but because he was worried about what others would think about him.

All of us will face times when we will have to choose between doing what is right and doing what is popular. If, like John, we are secure in who we are in Christ, then we will have the courage to face the criticism and possible rejection of people in order to do what is right. Insecurity will lead us to please people and lose our integrity. Then there is the problem, when some people want you to do one thing and others another. Which people do we please? Sometimes we try and deal with this by seeming to agree with everyone, but eventually we will be caught out.

Let's be secure in who we are and ready to please God before men.

### Troubled.

Finally Herod was troubled, he was not all bad, he recognised what John was saying was true, but he was not willing to pay the price of putting things right and the result was a troubled man who was not at peace with himself.

If we ignore our conscience, God's Spirit and His word, then we will not find peace. We will be troubled because we know that our actions are not in line with God's will and so fight against our own nature, created to be in line with God's will. If you are troubled ask the Holy Spirit to show you any areas where you may be out of line with His will, then submit.

### Herodias the manipulator

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Finally and briefly let's think about Herodias. She held a grudge against John, not because he had done harm to her or those she loved, but because he had consistently spoken the truth – a truth by the way that everyone else knew but kept quiet about.

She allowed that grudge to dwell in her heart turning to bitterness and from that bitterness came her desire to see John dead, a desire which though delayed was never diminished. As soon as the opportunity arose she was ready to carry out her murderous intent.

We don't know whether Herodias set up the whole scenario. Encouraging her daughter to use her charms to captivate the king, knowing the king in his weakness would make a promise and in his insecurity would not go back on that promise for fear of looking bad to his guests.

It is often the way with those who wield power and influence through manipulation use complex plots to achieve their own ends – whatever the cost to others.

Again let's not just condemn Herodias, or others we might recognise this trait of manipulation in, but instead let's examine our own hearts. Are we willing to use manipulation as a tool to get others to do what we want? Do we find ourselves devising schemes to get others to do what we want against their own will and better judgement?

Again, if we recognise this trait of manipulation in our lives then we need to repent, we need to lay it before God and say I submit to your will and your way.

## Conclusion

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So having looked at our 3 personality profiles, have we identified those things we want to emulate and those things we want to be cleansed off.

Let's **embrace humility**, let's **find security in our identity in Christ**, let's **be quick to submit our will's to God**. Let's **be more concerned with honouring God than pleasing men**, let's **ensure our actions match our words** and that **our words are attractive, intriguing and challenging**.

May we also, **from our place of security, recognise our weakness, deal with our insecurity and find peace by acting in accordance with our conscience and God's will**. Let's **reject manipulation** as a means of getting our own way and instead **ask God to have His way in and through us**.