

Good morning, everyone. Turn with me, if you would, to Mark chapter 6. Mark chapter 6. We're going to be in verses 14

through 32 today of Mark chapter 6. The title of the message this morning is Christ the Sustainer, the Cost of Discipleship. Christ the Sustainer, the Cost of Discipleship. Once you've found that text, if you would rise with me in honor of the one who gave us this word, and I'll read the text for us together. Mark chapter six, verses 14 through

32. It reads, And King Herod heard it, for his name had become well known, and people were saying, John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. But others were saying he is Elijah, and others were saying he is a prophet like one of the prophets of old. But when Herod heard it, he kept saying, John, whom I beheaded, has risen. For Herod himself had sinned, and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Now Herodias was holding a grudge against him, and was wanting to put him to death, and was not able. For Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he was keeping him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed, but he used to enjoy listening to him. And a strategic day came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his great men and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. And when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests, and the king said to the girl, Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you. And he swore to her, Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you, up to half of my kingdom. She went and said to her mother, What shall I ask for? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head, and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb. And the apostles gathered together with Jesus and they reported to him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For there are many people coming and going and they did not even have time to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. This is the word of the Lord,

let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so grateful to be allowed to gather this morning as your body in praise. We're so thankful for your grace that has redeemed your people to yourself. I pray, Lord, that your words this morning would come from your text. I pray that you'd remove any hindrances from me, that you would remove any nerves and keep my voice solid as I speak today. I pray you'll be with those who may still be ill or suffering any kind of infirmity that they would be healed quickly and be able to rejoin the body. And I pray for us today that we would encourage one another to point to you, to glorify you in all that we do. We love you and praise you in your holy name. Amen. Okay, you can be seated. So our text today is picking up in Mark chapter six, not long after Mark has recorded, or right after Mark has recorded the sending of the 12th. And thanks to Wes for covering for me last week. I had COVID and it was a rough few days. So I'm glad to be back. But the text that we have here is following Mark, recording that the 12 have been sent out. And in Mark's usual fashion, how many times have we talked about sandwiches so far? So we're going to talk about another Markin sandwich today. And what Mark does is in verses 14 through 16, and then in verses 30 through 32, you'll see the bread of the sandwich. And then we're going to have multiple verses on the story of the death of John right in the middle of this, and it's going to help us understand the context of what Mark is saying in this passage. And so if we look at this passage today, my goal here, as we look at it, is to see some of the most beautiful things in this text are interwoven throughout it. It really is amazing to see some of the things that we're going to see. We get to see the message being taken out, the message of Christ. We see a good righteous man suffering at the hands of the world. We see foreshadowing of things to come. We see fulfillment of prophecy from the past. We get to see Mark's first passion recorded. Mark actually records two passions, one here and then the passion of Christ at his death. We get to see a savior who sustains his apostles. We get to see God giving rest in the wilderness like he's done for his people throughout countless centuries. There's so much interwoven into this text. It is a beautiful tapestry of God's sovereignty, of God's grace, of what it looks like to be a man or woman of God who stands against evil wherever it may be. The cost of discipleship when that time Comes and so we're gonna look at a lot of different things this morning And I hope that the beauty comes through for you as it did for me Now if you look at the last verse before we get into our main text if you look at the last verse verse 13 It says in the last text that we reviewed last week that the demons Excuse me that

the disciples had went out and they were casting out many demons were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them so remember To understand the context of what we're looking at for Herod suddenly realizing Jesus is on the scene, it's because of Jesus' ministry, but primarily because the disciples have been sent out. So they're doing what they were sent out to do, and we're going to see what that does to Herod and how he comes into the picture here. Now, as a point of introduction,

I want to give you a little bit of background on Herod because it can be really confusing. Herod in scripture is often referred to as the same Herod over and over, but actually there's multiple Herods at this timeline. Herod the Great, This that we have today is Herod Antipas. A-N-T-I-P-A-S. Herod Antipas. That is one of the sons of Herod

the Great. Now you may be thinking, is this the same Herod? My first question was, was this the same Herod that killed all the babies in Bethlehem? because of Jesus' birth. It is not. Herod the Great, which is Herod Antipas' father, is the one that killed all the babies looking for Jesus. You guys remember when Herod sent a bunch of soldiers to kill everyone that was under two years old trying to kill Christ. So this is his son. Now when we think of Herod the Antipas, there's a lot that we have to understand about him, about his personality. He was called a Tetrarch, which is simply a word that is used. Herod the Great divided up the part of the Roman nation, the Roman Empire, that he was responsible for into four different groups. And he let four of his sons, he killed many of them, but let four of his sons rule different sections of his kingdom. And one of the interesting things is Herod Antipas was very much like his father. He was shrewd. He was extremely intelligent.

He was absolutely ruthless, just like his father was. But we need to understand, it's very important that you keep in the back of your mind that he was denied the title of king by Rome. That's very important. He was

denied the title of king by Rome, but it's something he desired very, very much. Now, we also need to understand the other key players before we get into it that are here in this story, specifically around the death of John. Herodias was the wife of Herod Antipas at this time. However, Herodias, as you can hear in the name, Herod very much named all of his children and grandchildren. They had a line of Herod, different versions of Herod. The majority of Herod's great sons were named Herod with a different title after it. This happens to be Herod Antipas. There was Herod Philip, which is another son of Herod. He had multiple wives, multiple children. Herod Philip was Herodias' first husband. So we know from the text that it says he married his brother's wife. Now Herod Antipas was already married. He had to put away his wife,

and that'll become important later, so we'll talk more about that later. But ultimately what ended up happening is Herodias was actually also the daughter of one of Herod the Great's sons. So it was Herod the Great's granddaughter.

It was Herod Antipas's niece. This family tree is quite twisted around, okay? So ultimately what happened is Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great who married one of her uncles. Then Herod Antipas took Herodias from Herod Philip. and married her, casting away his own wife. So now we have the niece of Herod the Great marrying one of her sons, one of her uncles, being taken by one of her other uncles to be his wife. There's just a lot of drama, OK? Now, I'm bringing all this up because it's very important to the context of what happens at this feast. So I want to make sure we're very, very clear on that. Salome, although the text doesn't mention it, Josephus writes in depth about Josephus as an early church history historian. And Josephus writes very much in detail about Herod from a political, socioeconomic, cultural perspective. And then we have Mark and a couple of the other gospel writers' account of this same thing here. So we know from Josephus' writing that the daughter of Herodias' name was Salome, S-A-L-O-M-E. And she was from her first marriage, so she was Herod Philip's daughter, not Herod Antipas' daughter. She would have been in her mid-teens. I know this is a lot of detail but it's very important to understand the context of this so we know about what happens here to John and what's going on. So that kind of gives us a setting. The exploits that's going to be discussed in this narrative are very difficult. This is a difficult kind of narrative to understand and interpret because we have a quick introduction of Herod and then we have a flashback because Herod had killed John previous to where we're actually at in the timeline of Mark. So it's honestly a memory that we're reading about. And ultimately what we're gonna see is Mark use this sandwich to show us that the message is being taken out. John and Jesus have the same message. It's being taken out. It's getting the same attention. It's the same message. They are so intertwined in their message that Herod, as we'll see in a moment, actually thinks that Jesus is John resurrected. But ultimately that there is a cost. of discipleship. There is a cost to discipleship. Now we're going to see in this same text that Christ is the sustainer and this is one of those things where Mark is going to show us the ultimate price of discipleship in the meat of the sandwich helps us see that Christ still sustains his apostles and how busy they were in their work. So there's a lot of information here. We're gonna start digging into the text now. And I pray that you'll be able to see the beauty here in the cost of discipleship, but Christ being the one who sustains us. So number one, actions of the

apostles. So if you're taking notes, number one, actions of the apostles. We're gonna look at verses 14 through 16 first. I'll reread that for us. And we'll begin digging into the narrative to see what God has for us to learn today. Verse 14, and King Herod heard it, for his name had become well known. So remember, the thing that he is hearing is the disciples' ministry. Verse 13 and verse 14, the disciples' raw ministry, now Herod hears it. And King Herod heard it, for his name had become well known, and people were saying, John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. But others were saying he is Elijah, and others were saying he is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. But when Herod heard it, he kept saying, John, whom I beheaded, has risen. So as the disciples were going about their mission, they were out healing, they were casting out demons, they were preaching the message of repentance, this suddenly started getting Herod's attention. Now, what's implicit in the text, we have to understand that's here, that's not verbally written out, but it's implied in the text, is that Jesus's entrance into Galilee, into ministry, was so flashback, it was so sudden, that John, I mean, excuse me, Herod, his only thought was it has to be John. That's the only one that I know has the same message that's been ministering for a long time. It's the only one that I've ever had interaction with that has the same message that these men are preaching. The only difference is now, and this is Herod, the only difference Herod can think of is that now there's all these miraculous powers. You guys remember John wasn't doing miracles, was he? John simply lived a quiet life in the wilderness, ate some bugs, dressed in itchy clothes, and preached the gospel of repentance. And so in Herod's mind, the only thing that makes sense, the only thing that makes sense to him, is that this has to be John resurrected from the dead, and that's where he got these powers. Rome was very superstitious, Romans were. And so from their superstition, that has to be what it is. There has to be some extra miraculous powers that he's gotten now that John has been arisen. Obviously we know the truth that this is Christ and his disciples beginning the ministry. But this causes Herod to question some things. Who is this? Where did this power come from? How can this message be the same but now associated with all this extra stuff? And to prove that the message is very similar, mark down these three different texts from our study through Mark so far. We know from Mark chapter 6 and verse 12, that Jesus sent out the disciples and they went out and preached that men should repent. So we know the disciples were talking about repentance, okay? Mark chapter one of verse

15 records that Jesus was out preaching, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel. So at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, he began to preach repentance. And if you remember back in Mark chapter one of verse four, John the Baptist had the same message. Mark 1, 4 reads, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. So we see through Mark's gospel, he is setting up what the message is from John. Then he tells us what the message is from Christ. And then Christ sends out his disciples with the same message. So throughout the text of Mark, we have seen a very firmly established the message of the people of God. We see the last Old Testament prophet in John. We see Christ himself and his disciples all coinciding in the message of repentance. Now, it makes sense that some would assume this is Elijah. Now, the good news is they were right in their assumption. We know that Christ calls John Elijah in a different passage. We know that John is the last Old Testament prophet. But the contrast that we have to understand here that Mark is making is that we have seen with all these different ideas of Elijah or maybe one of the other prophets they weren't quite sure or John raised. Mark is giving us a very clear contrast that Rome is now starting to recognize something special in Jesus and his disciples. Now, Mark contrasts that here in chapter six versus what we just learned earlier in Jesus' hometown. Do you guys remember in Jesus' hometown? What happened there? The people that he grew up with, the people that knew him, knew where he came from, had no regard for him and in fact took offense at him. So Mark is showing us the message is spreading and those who hear it, even the Romans, Herod was intrigued by it. We will find out later in the text. Herod was intrigued by it. He didn't agree with it, but he was intrigued by it. He saw the seriousness of John's message. So Mark is showing us a very clear contrast here between Jesus's hometown from just a few verses ago to now the Romans picking up and hearing this teacher that suddenly exploded onto the scene with all these miracles and all these things with the same message that they've been hearing from John. But his first reaction is an incorrect one, Herod's first reaction. It's gotta be John coming back from the dead. Now, of course, when we think of resurrection, we know that in this case, there's only one that can resurrect anyone, and that is God himself. I don't think that Herod was here coming in trying to give glory to God. He was simply trying to find an explanation for how this message that he thought he had snuffed out was suddenly reappearing with more power. And this same idea, this same three thoughts about Jesus, that he was Elijah, that he was one of the prophets of old, or that he was John resurrected, are the same ideas that Peter gives to Jesus in chapter eight. We're

building up to chapter eight. If you guys remember in my introduction to Mark, and then I mentioned a few times throughout, we are building to the pivotal point of Mark, which is the end of chapter eight, when Peter confesses that you are the Christ, the son of God. And Peter gives this same rendition of who Jesus is, the same idea that the people may have. So this is something that we're gonna see later on. So as we sum up these first three verses, we have a lot of backdrop in what Herod's thought process was, why he would have thought these kinds of things. But really, there's some things that we need to see and understand here too, and apply to ourselves, because there's a pretty clear indication of what disciples should do, isn't there? If we look at verse 13, we know that the disciples were out doing what they were called to do. They were preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. They were following Christ's orders to minister to those who were in need. That is the directive of the disciple. And we need to take that role seriously because that role of discipleship is exactly what we have been assigned as current day disciples of Christ. In Matthew 28, Christ is very, very clear that we are to go and make disciples. The disciples are to continue to bring the message of Christ to the people. And so the disciples here were doing what they were told to do and doing it in such a fashion that they were not ashamed. They were not quiet about it. They were making a stir that was so great that the leader of Galilee, the Roman leader of all of Galilee and the surrounding area, Judea, heard about it. And heard about it in such a way that he had to deal with it. It wasn't in passing. It wasn't, hey, we have another Jew who's making some fuss. He's used to that. Herod hated the Jews. He's used to hearing Jews making a menace of themselves. But this was something different. It was something he had to come to face with. He had to determine, what am I going to do with this message? The disciples were making ripples. They were making an impact. And that is something that we must understand is that the message must go forth. The message must go forth. That is our directive, is what we are to do. We must, as disciples of Christ, take the message forth. It's going to be disruptive. It's going to be costly, as we'll see in just a moment. There's going to be times that we're in the wilderness of this world with the message and we're getting beaten down, but the cost is worth paying. we'll see. But our directive, our first point of application for point number one is the message must go forth. Number two, paying the ultimate price. Can I have someone grab me that water over there? Paying the, sorry, paying the ultimate price versus 17 through 29. So we'll read that section next. Thank you. 17 through 29, paying the ultimate

price. Sorry guys, my throat's not 100% back from COVID. So let's read verses 17 through 29 first and then we'll dig into the middle narrative here. For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Now Herodias was holding a grudge against him and was wanting to put him to death and was not able. For Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man and he was keeping him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed, but he used to enjoy listening to him. And a strategic day came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his great men and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. And when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. And the king said to the girl, Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you. And he swore to her, whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you up to half of my kingdom. And she went out and said to her mother, what shall I ask for? And she said, the head of John the Baptist. And immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard this, this is John's disciples, they came and took away his body and laid it in the tomb. So here we're going to take a step back. So Mark has introduced, this is why Herod thought of John. And now, anybody seen movies where, I'm sure we all have, where the narrator goes, and then he remembered back in the day, and the movie goes all fluttery, and it flashes back to a memory. That's basically what Mark is doing. Herod is here, he's heard of Jesus and he says, this has to be John. And the narrator, who is Mark, cuts back to the scene of why Herod would think that John had raised from the dead, because he's already killed him. So now we get a glimpse into the past of Herod's life, basically a memory that Herod is having, where we get to see what happened to John. Now it is interesting to understand that this is, in fact, a passion that's recorded here. A passion, by definition in a narrative, is simply the account of someone's death. It's about, excuse me, goodness, it's a passion. So we see here the first passion, and it's important to understand that because this is a foreshadowing of both Christ's passion, so it's the first passion that we see in Mark, that foreshadowing, but it's also going to foreshadow what the cost of discipleship is. And we're going to see a



little bit later what that looks like. But this is the first passion that he's recording. Now, when I was talking about the ideas behind Herod and Herodias and their relationship, the similarities

to past kings and queens, hopefully you're already thinking about, we'll talk more about it here in a few minutes, the relationship between

Ahab and Jezebel, so be thinking to yourself, think about the similarities to that, think about their relationship to Elijah, because John is the return of Elijah. We're going to address a lot of those similarities, but I want to get your mind working in that regard. Think about those things. If you're familiar with the story of Ahab and Jezebel and Elijah, think about how many similarities there are as we go through this. Because this is a as I mentioned earlier, a fulfilling of prophecy of the second coming of Elijah. And so we're seeing Mark show us that this is truly who he is. But we're also seeing the foretelling, the foreshadowing of what Christ is going to have, because there's so many similarities between this passion and Christ's passion. Both John and Christ were victims

of politics. They were victims of unjust rulers.

They were victims of corruption. And both suffered as silent sheep before the shearers. There's so many similarities, it's uncanny. But ultimately, the greatest

similarity is that both die as righteous men who did not deserve to die. They were innocent victims. Now

the setting, the physical setting of where they're at is Machias. It's a temple palace, or excuse

me, a palace fortress, not a temple palace, but a palace fortress of Herod that he had built, he loved to build, spent a lot of money building, he made Rome very unhappy with his spending.

And so he built this big palace fortress on the east side, southern east side of the Dead Sea. quite a ways south of Galilee.

So John was very much removed from where he had done the majority of his ministry. And it's interesting that Macarius,

excuse me, I said Macias a moment ago, it's Macarius, actually means sword. So the setting is we're in this

special palace for Herod. Now, you guys remember a few moments ago when I was mentioning the fact that Herod wanted to

be king really, really badly. The whole reason that we have a birthday celebration at all is because Herod wanted to be king so bad that he mimicked everything that Caesar did. It

was common in the practice of Roman governance, excuse me, to have this insanely large birthday celebration. They thought Caesar was God, so they celebrated his birth as an act of God coming

to man, becoming here the ruler. And so Herod, this was not common for the Tetrarchs of the area. They didn't have these kinds

of celebrations. Herod's desire to be king, desire

to even one day be Caesar was his goal, is the whole reason

we have this birthday celebration in the first place. So understanding

the context of his mindset helps us see why we're even here. And then we see the sovereignty of God in showing us all these things coming about from desires of a sinful pagan. So it's important to note, as we begin to go through the narrative, what got John here. John took a stand against what was evil in the eyes of God. John took a stand against the marriage that Herod had found himself in. Now in order for him to marry Herodias, he had to put his current wife, Eratos, away. So he basically essentially divorced, it's not the word they would have used in those days, but divorced his wife, Eratos, and put her away. And this was very significant, and we'll come back to why it's significant later, but this is very significant because Eratos was the daughter of a high king in the east who later, actually defeated Herod and Herodias in battle. He came to get vengeance for his daughter's honor. And Rome was so frustrated with Herod by this point, Herod Antipas, that they banished him and Herodias to Gaul. And so God's judgment does ultimately come to them for what they have done. And that's a key thing that we have to remember here in a few moments. But I want to set this up for you, who Herod was, who Antipas was. In fact, he was so well known that Jesus calls him a fox in Luke 13, 32. So this fox, this man that was known for killing people, he killed his brothers, he killed his sons, just like Herod the Great, his father had done. He had learned how to rule with an iron fist. And now he was celebrating this birthday with John in prison because John had the audacity, this Jew in the middle of the desert wearing camel's hair, had the audacity to tell him and his new wife that they couldn't be married according to God. Now you may be asking yourself, because this is what I ask myself, why, why would John say anything to a Roman about God's law? Why? Couldn't he have kept his mouth shut? I mean, really? Couldn't he have lived a life in the desert doing exactly what he was told to do, which was prepare the way for Christ, preach a gospel of repentance, right? He was drawing the Jews out in hundreds, Why did John feel the need to speak up about the evil of what Herod had done? And the reason behind that is because Jewish law, the law of God, expressly forbids marrying your brother's wife while your brother is still alive. Leviticus 18, 16 and Leviticus 20, verse 21. If you'd like to write those down and look at them yourself. But Leviticus 18, 16, Leviticus 20, 21, both are very clear that marrying your brother's wife while he's still alive is uncovering the nakedness of your brother, which was absolutely an abomination to God. And so this man of God, this righteous man of God, this prophet that was given the voice of God, this follower of God, spoke out against the evil that he saw around him, calling people to live according to the law of God, regardless of who they were. So he took a stand against the

evil that he saw around him, regardless of the consequences, and he pointed people to the law of God. And the whole reason he was in prison was because He had spoken up against Herod, and Herod in his usual fashion said, strike first and ask questions later. So he swooped him up, lest this man from the wilderness become some sort of a rebellious leader. There was a lot of Jewish rebellions that they had just come off of. So Herod was worried about the Jews raising up another rebellion. And so Herod strikes first, puts him in prison. But here's the message. And by the sovereignty of God goes, this message is something different. It's intriguing to me. This is a righteous man. He really hasn't done anything wrong. My wife is just really mad at him. So let me appease her by putting him in prison, but I won't kill it. So the message that he has, the message that you must follow the law of God, that everyone, it should be under the law of the creator, got him put into prison. And I want to pause here for just a moment and call all of us as believers to understand it is our responsibility, it is good and right that all those who believe call out unrighteousness when it is outside the law of God. Now, I'm not talking about preference. I'm not talking about your own personal choices that are not clearly aligned with scripture, that are more of a conscious issue. But when the law of God says you shall not murder, we stand up and say abortion is murder and it should not be done. When we hear the law of God said that marriage is a man and a woman, we stand up and we say that is not what the law, whenever people go against that and start marrying amongst their sex, their own gender, we stand up and we say that is not according to the law of God. We are pointing to the righteousness of the creator and calling all of the creation to bow to the law of God. And that is good and right and just and we have to learn that lesson here. And this is why one of these narratives is very hard to understand because there's so much in it that we can learn from it. It's very hard to bring it all to surface. So I pray that we're getting all the things that we can learn to the surface this morning. So as we see here, Herodias has gotten Herod to strike first. She's kind of the steering wheel here of the whole shebang. Josephus records much more about who Herodias is and how vile of a woman she was and how she orchestrated this entire thing. If you notice in the text, In verse 21, if you have an ESV, it probably says on a certain day or a special day, but the better translation of that is a strategic day. The word in the original language is strategic day. She planned this. This was a strategy. She knew he was going to throw a party at his palace fortress. She knew all of these high ranking men would be there that he had to have support from if he was ever gonna rise up in the Roman Legion and eventually become Caesar. There was so much strategy behind this, it's unbelievable.

She planned everything from this and including using her mid-teens daughter as a pawn in her game. I read a quote this week that said, Herodias felt that the only place where her marriage certificate could safely be written was on the back of the death warrant of John the Baptist. She is the true antagonist of this story. It may seem like here it is, but she is the true antagonist. She wanted this man stopped. Now that might remind you of a woman in the Old Testament named Jezebel, who even in common cultural language, she's still used, that name is still used as a derogatory term. And so when we think back to Ahab and Jezebel, what did Elijah do? You guys can't be together. And what did Jezebel do? Oh yes we can, Ahab, do something about it. And then we see this entire situation almost identical to what's going on here unfold with the first Elijah. And so we see here with the second Elijah that the wife, the spouse, the woman is the one who is pulling the strings, who will get her vengeance. How dare you tell me what I cannot do? So now we're here at his palace fortress. All these great men, and the words here used for military commanders are those of thousands, leaders of thousands or more, so very high-ranking political men are at this banquet, and it's important to remember that they're there because they wouldn't have had the leverage to pull off what they did, what Herodias did, without having those men present. And so here we have a princess of Rome coming out to do a wildly sensuous dance. Josephus gives details, not explicit, but it makes it very, very clear this was a erotic, sensuous dance. Now, in those times, it was absolutely not uncommon to have slaves do these types of dances at parties. It was very, very common. So you kind of get in your mind and say, well, why was this such a special thing? What was not common, what makes this so different, is that a princess of Rome would never debase herself to that point. This was a big deal for a princess of Rome, the granddaughter of Herod the Great, to come out and do such a thing. apparently was achieved the goal that Herodias had using her daughter as a pawn in her schemes for this birthday celebration and got the king's attention. And he was so overwhelmed with this particular dance that he swore to give her whatever he asked, whatever she asked, use me up to half of my kingdom. Now, Josephus being one who lived during that time, he notes that Rome would not have let one acre exit the hands of Herod, that this phrase is simply a, I'll give you whatever you want kind of phrase. It was more of a promise of this spectacular thing. It was understood by everyone in the room that he couldn't actually give half of his kingdom away. It was just a metaphor, if you will, of his promise to give whatever she asked for. And so this common language used was a big deal. There was so much involved here with this situation that Herodias knew exactly what she was going to get if all the cards played out the way she thought they

would. And so at the end of the story, Salome doesn't know what to do. And we know from the implicit information from the text is that Salome was not fully aware of what the plan was going to be. She didn't know what to ask for. Mom sent her out here to do this and gave her just enough information to go do this so that we can get the Herod's favor. Salome had no idea what to ask for so she goes back to mom and the immediate response, there was no hesitation, I want the head of John the Baptist. Now if you notice there's a difference here. Salome unfortunately is learning from her mother and she adds on a spiteful little phrase at the end of her request. On a platter. That's not what Herodias said to ask for, is it? She just said, I want the head of John the Baptist. But Salome learning, being in this culture of death, watching her mom do the things that she was doing, added on a spiteful request. fully aware of what she was doing, fully aware of what she had been used for, and adds, on a platter. And so the king, being in front of all these high-ranking men that he wanted to have their support for, they had to act, or excuse me, Herod had to act to save face. He could not take the risk of these men no longer supporting him, so he acquiesced to the request, sent, and had John beheaded against his better desire. So as we've seen here, we see Mark recording here a righteous man who simply stood on the law of God saying, you cannot do this thing. Very similar to 1st King 19 and 21 when Elijah did the same thing to Ahab and Jezebel. And this righteous man who was sitting in this prison already there, he was already down in this palace fortress being beheaded. It's just an amazing commentary. It's been said that this is a bitter commentary on the inability of tyrants to tolerate righteous individuals. A fact no less true today than in John's day. The one who Jesus called the greatest man born of women in Matthew 11, 11 is sacrificed to a cocktail wagger. There is a high cost of discipleship. There is a high cost to those who are called to be disciples of Christ. There is a high cost to those who are sent out to carry the message of repentance to the world. The world is going to push back. The world is going to say, how dare you tell me I'm doing something wrong? Have any of you had experience, I know I have, of simply pointing out to someone calmly, cordially, coolly, just saying, hey, you really shouldn't lie. God detests lying, or whatever verbiage it is. Or simply refusing to participate in LGBTQ agendas at your workplace. Things that are actual abominations to God per scripture. And the world mocks you. And the world derides you. And sometimes the world persecutes you. Now, here in America we have, by God's grace, not reached that point. I think it's probably

not too long before we do reach that point. But there's definitely been a cultural shift in America to antagonism to the church. It's no longer agreement like

we've had, but it shifted to tolerance, just keep it in your churches and keep it out of our way, and now it's antagonism, right? It's purposely antagonistic.

And so this cost of discipleship, we have to understand, may cost us everything. Mark is making that point here.

This isn't something I'm driving into the text. Mark says, here's what the disciples were doing. They got attention. Here's what happens to righteous men sometimes. And we have to understand that we may be facing consequences for standing up to the evil,

wherever it may be. It may not cost us our lives,

but it may cost us our jobs. It may cost us our homes. I don't know what that's going to look like. I'm not trying to prophesy anything in particular. All I'm saying is please understand

we are called to count the cost of following Christ. Scripture is very clear. Take up your cross. there is

a cost of discipleship. So we see this foreshadowing

not only Christ's death, the very Savior who they are following, taking his message out, will be killed in a matter of 10 chapters from now. And in linear time, about a year

and a half from now, two years. and then every one of the apostles that we're gonna see here at the end of this passage, all

but one of them will be murdered and martyred for the cause of Christ. 11 out of the 12 disciples were killed by the Romans or other factions. And the only one that did live,

John, on the Isle of Patmos, only lived because he survived boiling oil. It's not like he had a cushy

place that he escaped from everything. They just decided they were done

trying to kill him, so they banished him to an island, by God's grace, so that he could write Revelation. There is a cost to discipleship,

and we must be prepared for that. But I wanna end with the text, as Mark does, on a high note. Because the main title of the

message is Christ the Sustainer. Yes, the subtitle is The Cost of Discipleship, and we've seen there is a cost. There is a cost

for being righteous men following the law of God. But my third point is rest for the weary. Rest for the weary, verses 30

through 32. It reads, and the apostles gathered

together with Jesus and they reported to him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, come away

by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For there were many people coming and going and they did not even have time

to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. So Mark, in his usual fashion,

has given us a quick introduction, given us the meat of the sandwich.

He's shown us what happened to John in a flashback memory as the narrator of his gospel. And now we're back to the point

of where he started. The disciples have went on their

mission, and now they're coming back to report. And if you guys recall, the disciples were sent with nothing. Wes did a fantastic job explaining that Christ is a sustainer. When he sends, he says, trust me, right? Don't take things with you. You don't need an extra pair of sandals. You don't need a money bag. You don't need an extra cloak. I am sending you and I will provide. And so now they're coming back. They're coming back to report what has happened. And Mark uses the word apostles here. That's why I keep referencing the 12. Mark only uses the word apostles twice. And in both references is only to the 12. It is the 12 themselves coming back to Jesus. and I want you to notice what our great Savior is concerned with. Yes, they reported to him, absolutely, verse 30, but in verse 31, Mark records, and he said to them, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For there were many people coming and going and they did not even have time to eat. Our Savior knows the cost of discipleship. Our Savior knows how hard the work is. These disciples were doing what they were called to do. They were sent out to be about the business of the kingdom, just as we are. And they were so busy about the business of the kingdom, there was such an impact to the people around them that they didn't even have time to eat. And yet our Savior, took them to a desolate place so that they could find rest with him. Now I want you to think back with me. Throughout Mark, we've seen this exact phrase in the original language was translated as desolate place in this text. This is a very specific word used to describe a wilderness location. Now, when we were talking earlier in Mark about Jesus going to have time with the Father alone, this is the exact same phrase that he used there. The exact same wording. This is the same idea that you see throughout the 40 years of Israel traveling. This wilderness location, they were being taken, they were in a wilderness, but they were being given rest. And I want you to think about our world today. This world in totality is not our home. We are in a wilderness. We are sojourners just like Israel was in a wilderness that was not their final destination. We live in a wilderness, folks. The wilderness that God uses over and over as a picture of a place that is not our final destination. Throughout the Old Testament, you see prophet after prophet using wilderness and other nations to be these godless places that these people, the God's people, now the church, are simply sojourners in. This is not our home. And so although we've been called to a task in this wilderness, just like John was called to a task in his wilderness and persecuted for it, we are called to tasks in our wilderness. And regardless of the cost, we

stay true to that task because we know that our Savior amongst the wilderness of our lives, the wilderness of this world, things going on that we can't control, that we don't have an answer for, our Savior sustains us. Now, that may mean that we still result in the removal of our heads, metaphorically. That could still result in that. Mark is very clear, there is a high cost for discipleship. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the story of John's death is here for a reason. There may be a high cost in the wilderness. But ultimately, what happens to those who are redeemed if the ultimate price is our lives. Our rest comes much sooner than it was going to. That's what we have to look forward to. If we're going to be in the wilderness like we're called to be, to live as Christ, we get to be in the wilderness, as Paul said, to live as Christ, but to die is gain. because then we're in the presence of God. We are in the presence of our Savior and we get to drink fully and uninhibited from His grace and glorify Him for the rest of eternity. And so what I'm hoping that you can see is this contrast that Mark gives us is that the cost of discipleship is high. It is high. It takes everything from us. Our service may be the point where we are doing so much that we are called to do that we even have a hard time finding something to eat. Now, I'm not saying to live your life at that level. Please don't hear me saying to go home and make sure that you're so busy reading scripture for hours a day that you don't take time to eat. That's not what I'm saying. But what I am saying is that in the role that we have been called to as disciples, there may be times that we are called up, that we are forced to sacrifice the comforts that we have become accustomed to, to live out the life and call of a disciple. And yet Christ sustains us. Despite the cost of everything, we are never, never without our Savior. And that's the beauty of living in the covenant of grace after Christ has returned to his throne, is that unlike John, we are indwelt by the spirit of our Savior himself. And we have the comfort of knowing that we are never separated from him at any time. That no matter what happens, we can't be put in a prison where the walls are keeping us from seeing Christ and being sustained by him. No matter where they take us, they can pluck out our eyes, they can cut off our hands, they can take us from our families, they can kick us down, but it doesn't matter what they do, we are never separated from the love of God in Christ by His indwelling Spirit. And that's where our true rest comes from. That's where the weary find rest. And understanding that Christ never leaves us, That His sustaining power is in us at all times, regardless of the circumstances of the wilderness. It doesn't matter how hot the sand gets. It doesn't matter how big the rocks are that we



have to climb. It doesn't matter the wilderness that we're in. Christ indwells us and we can rest our heads every night in our pillows, knowing that it is Him that we rest in. That it is He that sustains us. because we could not pay the cost of discipleship without him sustaining us. There's a very important aspect here that I want to make sure you don't miss. I'm not saying that you can conjure up the ability to pay the cost of discipleship within yourself. In fact, I'm here to tell you, you cannot conjure up the ability to stay faithful as a disciple within yourself. You can't. You can't white knuckle the Christian life. You cannot white knuckle the wilderness. Israel tried and failed over and over and over again, didn't they? Every time they turned around, So please don't hear me putting a burden on your shoulders that you cannot lift because you cannot maintain yourself as a disciple, but Christ does. Christ through his spirit maintains you as a disciple. That's the whole reason he gives us this every week. That's the whole reason we get at the table every week. That's the whole reason that we have relationships building in a body day in and day out, because this is how Christ sustains his people. So when it comes time that you're tired and the wilderness is beating you up, as a point of application, I want you to understand that Christ is the sustainer that will get us through. Look to him, rest in him. But that doesn't mean you do it by yourself. Lean on your brothers, lean on your sisters. We are the hands and feet of Christ for a reason. We are different body parts of the same body of Christ for a reason. And remember, remember, please remember this is not our home. Don't get caught up in the wilderness. There are some shiny parks, there are some oases, if you will, in the wilderness that look really good. That we think to ourselves, hey, I can sustain myself with this. Whether it be money, food, Pornography. There are things in this world that we can look at and go, in our wilderness, this looks like I could make a home here. A wilderness is not our home. We are sojourners here. We have to remember that. We are not destined to stay here. Look to the new heavens and the new earth. Look to Revelation. I know so many people in our day, especially in America over the last 200 years, look at Revelation as the worst possible thing that can ever happen. That is not how Revelation was intended to be read. Revelation is the glorious victory of the Son of God bringing His people home out of the wilderness, redeeming them to Himself ultimately and fully, glorifying them so that they can glorify Him for all eternity. That is something we should be wildly excited about. Don't let the wilderness become

your home. Let us look to Christ. And the loving gesture that he shows here almost brought me to tears. He sees them come back. He sees how weary they are, how tired they are. They've been out ministering to all these people. And the people that are coming to them are very much the same that we've seen throughout the ministry of Jesus so far and Mark. They just wanna get what they can get. They don't care. What food pantry can I get the most food from? Where can I get the most help from? There are people in this very town that know the church circuits, that know how to call and get free stuff. I've dealt with them myself. It still happens today. And yet Christ sees his weary apostles who have been on the mission that he sent them on. And he says, I know exactly what you need. Come with me. I know exactly what will be a rejuvenation for you. Come alone with me. Come and eat, come and rest. I can see you're weary and heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you. My burden is light. Come and rest with me. Don't forget that we're called to rest in him. So in conclusion, this sandwich has showed us two things. That following Jesus has a cost. And later on in Mark 8, 34, Jesus is going to explain, if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. We're a mere two chapters away from that. Christ himself tells us that we have to deny everything, including ourself, and come after him. But it shows us that we are not doing that on our own. We can't muster the strength to do that. that it is Christ who sustains us through all. Isn't it beautiful how Mark writes these sandwiches? Isn't it beautiful? I love this writing style. And Mark was so unappreciated as the gospel for so long. As we've gone through this, my appreciation for him grows each week because he writes in such a beautiful fashion. This and this will be explained by this. And it opens up the text in a way that many may not have seen before. And it's beautiful. And I encourage each one of you, the main thing to take away from this text is that Christ sustains us regardless of how high the cost is. And I pray that this week you'll look to him, resting in him, knowing he sees what you're doing. He knows where he sent you. He is the sovereign God of all, and he will sustain you through whatever he takes you through. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you and sheer awe of your grace. I pray that this text causes us to rest in you, but causes us to glorify you all the more. That we fall to our knees in humble awe of what you've done for us, that you have redeemed us by your blood, by your sacrifice, and then call us to yourself, saying, this is the cost, but I will help you carry the cross,

that you will sustain us through the wilderness that you have placed us in. And I pray that each one of us would look at the wilderness around us and reject it, and look to you instead. We love you and praise you and thank you for the opportunity to gather in praise to you. I pray that we will do all that we do coming into this next week to glorify you in your holy name I pray, amen.