Sermon July 20

Mark 6

Be like Bob (The Beheading of John the Baptist)

**How many Bobs do you know?** How many can you name? We have our own Bob, Bob Scown…do you know of any other Bobs?

Bob the tomato, bob the builder…

TALK ABOUT DAD

**I want to tell you about a Bob I know, Bob Henderson.**

My old Dad.

Some of you had the pleasure of meeting him many years ago. He came over from Scotland for a visit twice.

I loved my dad.

I really admired him.

In fact, I was blessed to have the opportunity to tell him, before he died,

that when I grow up,

I’d be very pleased if I turned out to be like him.

I’d be very happy to **be like Bob.**

**He was a Christian, though I didn’t know this when I was very young.**

In fact, I didn’t know what a Christian was.

And I never saw any prayer or bible reading growing up.

But I was often told “we must treat people the way we want to be treated and be polite, have good manners”.

**We moved around a lot and at different times,**

we did go to church,

but that’s what people did back then.

It didn’t necessarily mean you have devoted your life to following Jesus.

It was just part of the culture back then.

**When I was still quite young,** I remember one morning,

I must’ve got up earlier than usual,

and when I went into the lounge,

I found Dad on the floor,

on his knees,

 in front of his chair.

My response was “Dad are you OK?”

I was really concerned,

and slowly he got up telling me he was fine.

I think he saw my concerned face,

and said he was just having his quiet time,

like I was meant to know what a quiet time was.

**It was only later that I learned that Dad spent time with God every morning**.

This is how he started his day.

With a quiet time,

reading Gods word,

spending time in his presence,

praying and listening for his guidance.

**My dad was a lovely man.**

Though very embarrassing when I was a teenage!

We used to joke that he would have your life history out of you within the first 5 minutes of meeting you.

As a teenager it was very embarrassing when your dad asked complete strangers lots of questions about themselves!

But here’s the thing,

the people he met really liked him.

He was genuinely interested in them.

People felt valued when they met my dad.

**ANYWAY.**

**Initially Mark said I could preach on anything** **I liked** but that was way too broad.

How do you pick one passage from the entire bible?!

Then he said I could just continue with the book of Mark.

So, I opened my bible to where he last preached to see what comes next.

The beheading of John the Baptist! Seriously?!

Anyway, I asked God what he would like me to say and with God’s help here we are.

**So… Mark 6 begins with Jesus not being accepted in his own hometown**

and then Jesus sending out his 12 disciples.

**They’d been with him for a considerable time,**

eating with him,

travelling from place to place,

hearing him teach

and watching him heal people,

so naturally the next step in their training was to go and have a go themselves.

And they did,

verse 12 tell us “They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.”

**Now let’s read together the next part.**

Mark 6 beginning at verse 14. I’m reading from the New Internation Version.

Mark 6, from verse 14.

***14****King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%206%3A14-29&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24422a)*] “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”*

***15****Others said, “He is Elijah.”*

*And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.”*

***16****But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”*

***17****For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married.****18****For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”****19****So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to,****20****because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%206%3A14-29&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24428b)*]; yet he liked to listen to him.*

***21****Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.****22****When the daughter of[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%206%3A14-29&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24430c)*] Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.*

*The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.”****23****And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.”*

***24****She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?”*

*“The head of John the Baptist,” she answered.*

***25****At once the girl hurried into the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”*

***26****The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her.****27****So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison,****28****and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother.****29****On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

**Now lets just address the elephant in the room here.**

In fact, I think there’s an entire herd here, I’m not sure I can even name them all!

**Herod, to be clear, Herod Antipas (Herod is a title, like King or Pharoah, and there were many Herods!),**

Herod, has married his brothers’ wife!

They were both married already,

and whilst Herod was visiting the family, Herod and his brother, Philips’ wife, Herodias “fell in love”.

So they got divorced, specifically to marry one another.

And if we dig a little deeper, we discover the brothers are actually Herodias’ uncles!

Yes, she married her uncle, twice, that is she married 2 of her uncles.

She also wanted John the Baptist dead,

and didn’t only want it,

like this isn’t just a passing thought or a throwaway line,

she actually had him killed.

Any why did she want him killed?

because he outed their bad behaviour.

He didn’t just let them do what they want and let them live happily ever after.

What they did was wrong under Jewish law,

they knew it, John the Baptist knew it, and he wouldn’t let them forget it.

So, she sneakily plotted to have him killed.

And, another elephant in the room, she even got her own daughter to help her carry out her evil deed.

I told you there was a whole herd of elephants.

**Does anyone else feel shocked by this behaviour?**

Incest,

throwing a marriage away just to remarry,

having someone killed because they make you feel uncomfortable…

And as I pondered this,

feeling rather pleased with myself for not being as bad a sinner as they are,

I felt terribly condemned.

As I asked God, “what does this all mean?”,

I felt terribly condemned.

I felt God saying “have you forgotten that ‘all fall short of the glory of God’ includes you?

And are you not also divorced?

And in the pain of your divorce,

did you not also feel terrible shame and wish ill towards your husband?”.

I have thought and done some terrible things in my life,

things that have hurt God and hurt people.

I have also sinned terribly.

**And have you noticed how we tend to grade sins?**

We grade them as some not as bad as others.

Speeding a little is not as bad as stealing,

and stealing is not as bad murder and so on.

**But what does the bible say about sins?**

Well, Luke 12:47-48 says “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded”,

implying that the more we know God,

the more we know better than to sin,

so God has higher expectations from us.

Conversely, someone who doesn’t know God at all, will not be judged as if they do.

If we have seen God at work, and still choose not to trust him,

well, we will be judged for that.

**Then there is our intention.**

If I saw you and was unaware you were in need,

I will be judged less harshly, than if I see your need and still offer no help.

**There’s more that could be said about sin,**

but the bottom line is,

it is wiser not to fall into the trap of thinking we are somehow not as bad as someone else

because that could lead us to thinking we are better than someone else,

and that will **surely** lead to sin!

**And have you notice how quick we are to shift blame these days?**

No-one wants to be seen as being at fault in any way.

It seems we spend so much time arguing about who is at fault rather than,

as Paul says,

bearing within one another and together working to resolve the problem.

**Most** **importantly, ALL sin separates us from our perfect and loving Father in heaven,**

and without repentance – that is complete trust in Him – we continue to sin.

**So, what are some examples of sin today?**

Well, excluding someone because of what they look like,

their ability,

how much money they have

or the type of job they have.

It’s very easy to sin,

and it’s very common.

People pass judgements on one another all the time,

then treat them according to that judgement.

It makes God very sad.

**So, what’s the good news**?

Well, the good news is the Good News.

Verse 20 says that *“Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled, yet he liked to listen him”.*

Guess what.

John knew Jesus.

He knew he was the Messiah,

the redeemer,

the chosen one,

the one who had been prophesied throughout the OT,

and the one he proclaimed as saviour to people who desperately needed a saviour.

**John was devoted to Jesus and the Kingdom of God, and it showed**.

And this intrigued Herod.

**And this is really good news,**

because the same applies to us.

The more time we spend with Jesus,

the more sure we become of the reason for our faith;

the reason for our hope,

the more **transformed** we become by the Holy Spirit to the likeness of Jesus,

and this shines out to the people we meet.

**Sometimes, we Christians can get hung up on how to share the gospel with people who don’t yet know Jesus**.

We can be like Moses and think we’re not articulate enough,

or like Jonah, and don’t really want them to change their ways and accept Jesus.

It can be so hard to want someone to know Jesus if you don’t get along with them,

but God loves **EVERYONE–**

“for God so loved the **WORLD**, that he gave his one and only son that **WHOEVER**

believes in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life” John 3:16.

**And Jesus said to us all.**

*“Go and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,****20****and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* **With the promise that he will be with us always.** Matt 28:19-20

**Jesus is for everyone.**

And we’ve been commissioned with the job of telling everyone.

And Jesus promises to be with us when we do. ...

Not only that, but he shows us how.

**The next part of Mark 6 is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand**,

which Margaret read to us last week.

In the scripture,

it begins with Jesus caring for his disciples and sending them away to get some rest,

but people realising where they were going, and run on ahead,

and when Jesus saw the crowd,

**WHAT DOES IT SAY? (pause)**

HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM BECAUSE THEY WERE LIKE A SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. v34

So, he began teaching them.

It had already been a big day,

but Jesus’ heart went out to the people,

so instead of going to rest,

he stayed and cared for them,

listening to them and giving them what they needed.

These people lived in difficult times,

under Roman rule, not free,

and the healthcare system was not what it is today,

in fact, Christians developed the first free hospital system but not till much later.

So, these people had physical needs,

**but more than that, they needed a saviour.**

**Now, it was late in the day,**

and his disciples, concerned with the logistics of all these people,

told Jesus to send the people away to get food,

but Jesus, **filled with compassion,** said *“you give them something to eat”.*

But that would take 8 months wages to feed so many people!

By now I imagine the disciples are panicking.

**And cool as a cucumber Jesus asks how much food do we have?**

Just 5 loaves and 2 fish.

He calmly gets the disciples to organise the people into manageable groups.

He takes the 5 loaves and 2 fish, the sum total of what they have

and he broke them into pieces and THANKED GOD FOR THEM.

Then he got the disciples to give them out.

**And what happened?**

THEY ALL ATE AND WERE SATISFIED

and the disciples picked up 12 baskets worth of leftovers.

And the number

 of people who were fed was 5000 men plus women and children.

**And then** Jesus,

understandably depleted from ministry,

went to be alone with God, he went away to pray. (PAUSE)

**So, we have all sinned.**

But Jesus came for us all,

he took on our sins

and he died and rose again

so that when we acknowledge our sins with genuine remorse,

and put our trust in him,

we are forgiven.

Fully and completely.

**But this forgiveness is not just for us**.

God loves the WHOLE world,

and this forgiveness is his gift to EVERYONE who puts their trust in him,

so he has commissioned US with his GREAT commission of telling the world his Good News.

**And how do we do that?**

Like Bob, we spend time with people,

we ask them about themselves,

we take a genuine interest in them.

We hear their pain,

and we have COMPASSION on them.

**Rick Warren calls it sadness, sorrow, suffering, sickness and sin.**

These are the connecting points for relationship and for the gospel.

EVERYONE experiences sadness, sorrow, suffering, sickness and sin.

WE have experienced sadness sorrow, suffering, sickness and sin,

and when we hear people’s pain,

when we walk closely with Jesus,

we are filled with COMPASSION

because we understand what it feels like to be in pain.

**Between us we have thousands of examples** of where we have seen God at work in our lives, or someone else’s.

And when the time is right,

with the Holy Spirit’s prompting,

we share our own experience of God’s amazing grace in our lives,

and we tell people the reason for our hope.

**I don’t know about you, but I can’t live my life without Jesus anymore**.

I can’t live without his forgiveness,

and I can’t live without his presence in my life.

And he is the reason for my hope because he has taken care of my past,

He is at work in my present,

And one day,

I will spend eternity with him.

**Do you know the reason for your hope?**

Do you, like Bob, spend time with God everyday?

Do you read his word, do you talk to him in prayer?

Do you take a genuine interest in the people you meet, like Bob?

What about the people God has already placed in your life?

**If you don’t spend time with God every day, I want to challenge you** to start today,

and I want to challenge you to ask him for opportunities to share where you have

experienced him at work.

**You know we have Alpha starting up very soon on Sunday August 10,**

why not ask God to show you the people he wants you to tell about it,

and then ask them to come along.

And take heart, he is with you to the end of the age.

**Lets pray**

**Father God, King Jesus, creator of heaven and earth, all powerful, almighty. We are sinners and we are sorry. Father test our hearts, helps us to own our own mistakes, and be gracious of the mistakes of those around us.**

**Help us to spend time in your word daily, in your presence everyday. Teach us to hear your voice and send us out to share your good news, knowing that you are with us always.**

**Father we are so so blessed, but sometimes we just don’t know how best to share the reason for our hope. Teach us and guide us so that others may know you and the incredible blessing that it is. In Jesus precious name we pray, amen.**