

## Dancing

### Mark 6:14-29

Herodias never liked John the Baptist. And who could blame her? Most of us don't like the one who holds a mirror in front of us, exposes our inappropriate, or worse yet, sinful behaviour, calling us on it and pronouncing judgment upon us.

That's what John the Baptist did with Herodias. He held up a mirror so she would see herself, honestly, fully.

Herod and Herodias had an affair while Herodias was married to Herod's brother Philip. Now, Herod and Herodias are married. John the Baptist is in prison because he dared to tell them that their relationship was wrong, that they had sinned. Herod both fears and respects John, often asking John to speak with him, to preach the word of God to him. Herodias simply hates John.

On the occasion of Herod's birthday, Herod throws an elaborate party to celebrate. To say that the party ends badly is the ultimate in understatement. All of his friends and family, the members of his court, everyone who is anyone, are all present. Herodias, daughter of Herod and Herodias, dances, as part of the entertainment. Herod is thrilled and offers her anything for which she might ask. Herodias seeks the advice of her mother, also Herodias - and we know the rest of the story. It is a story that is gruesome, one of palace intrigue, seduction, infidelity and gore.

What hate can do! or was it, for Herodias, a stubborn unrepentant nature coupled with repressed guilt and shame?

David was by no means a perfect man. There were times when his guilt, shame and remorse all but overwhelmed him. And he had reason to be filled with contrition, regret, sorrow. To name a few of his more outstanding, public sins, David committed adultery and then arranged the death/murder of his lover's husband to cover it up and to claim his lover for himself. But listen to him pour out his heart to God in one of the psalms - # 51...

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. ...

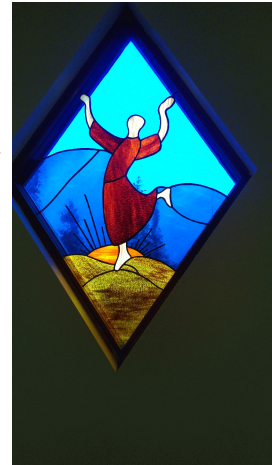
You desire truth in my inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ...

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. ... The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. ...

Could confession be the reason that David could dance before God - without hesitation or restraint, with utter abandon and joy and delight? Is this why his "dance of life" continued as a celebration, a reverence, an honouring, an adoration - as worship of the Almighty who had made him and whom he claimed as his Lord and King?



You're right if you think that the questions are rhetorical. I have no doubt that David lived with confidence, purpose, assurance, because he chose to live under God, as God's servant, flawed and imperfect though he was. He talked with God. He knew that what God had given - life, blessings, callings - were sacred and to be cherished. And when he abused one of God's gifts, he confessed his sin, without self-justification or excuses. He threw himself on the mercy and grace of God, accepted whatever judgments and sentence, and then moved forth with faith that God moved with him.

Herodias' hatred and unrepented sin brought only cruelty and death. David's openness to God as the director and ruler of his life, brought celebration and wonder, worship and praise.

Two dances - the dance of life; the dance of death - it's our choice, really, which dance we will dance?