



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

The Conscience on the Fence

Mark 6:14–29

THE BIG IDEA

You cannot stay on the fence forever. If you don't yield to Christ, you will yield to your sin and if you don't turn from your sin, your sin will turn you.

SERMON SUMMARY

Rudolf Otto studied holiness across cultures and found the same double reaction everywhere — the *mysterium tremendum* — it terrifies and it fascinates. Picture two properties divided by a fence. Step to either side and you take on that domain's benefits. Sit on the fence and you get the benefits of neither. Then sooner or later, something knocks you off.

Herod Antipas spent his life on that fence. He was a Jew governing Jews for Rome and a tetrarch who insisted on being called king. He took his brother's wife and jailed the prophet who told him it was unlawful. He feared John the Baptist, kept him safe, was greatly perplexed by him, and heard him gladly. Repentance would have cost Herod his status and his lifestyle, so he listened, let it gnaw, and did nothing. Then came a banquet, a dance, a rash oath in front of his guests, and a request he never saw coming. He was exceedingly sorry. But Herod beheaded John anyway.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What are people hoping for when they ride the fence with God? What does that indecision usually cost them in the end?
2. Read verses 19–20. Herod feared John, protected him, was perplexed by him, and heard him gladly all at once. What does that combination tell you about what was happening in his conscience?
3. People in every culture respond to holiness with conflicting feelings. It both attracts and repels. Have you been rejected by someone for what you represent? How can understanding the *mysterium tremendum* shape how you response to these rejections?
4. Verse 26 says Herod was “exceedingly sorry” but went through with it anyway, because of his oaths and his guests. What does that reveal about the difference between regret and repentance? How does 2 Corinthians 7:10 name the same distinction?

5. Luke 23:8–11 shows Herod a few years later. He was curious about Jesus, but only for the entertainment, and Jesus gives him no answer. Trace the trajectory from Mark 6 to Luke 23. What conviction have you been holding at arm’s length, and what would it take to yield to it now?

LIVING IT OUT

Most of us know what it is to keep a conscience balanced on the fence — to be convicted, push it away, rewrite the history in our minds, and keep both the sin and the sense that we are fine with God. But God is chipping away at our self-determination through that conscience, and he is gracious, kind, and quick to forgive the moment we stop resisting.

Heart Check: Is there a prevailing sin you have not repented of, because somewhere in you there is a hope that you can keep it and keep the benefits of God too? Where is God convicting you right now, and how have you been talking yourself out of it?

This Week: Name that one thing plainly — no softening, no minimizing. Confess it specifically to God, tell one trusted believer, and take the concrete step this week that repentance actually requires of you.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.”

— Mark 6:20

Ask the Spirit — the one who convicts of sin and softens hearts — to do that work in you now, and pray for the grace to stop pushing him aside.

Your Prayer:

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