

Killing the Messenger, Matthew 14:1-12

The outer world . . . thinks we are dying of old age. But it has thought that very often before. Again and again it has thought Christianity was dying, dying by persecutions from without and corruptions from within, by the rise of Mohammedanism, the rise of the physical sciences, the rise of great anti-Christian revolutionary movements. But every time the world has been disappointed. Its first disappointment was over the crucifixion. The Man came to life again. In a sense – and I quite realize how frightfully unfair it must seem to them – that has been happening ever since. They keep on killing the thing that He started: and each time, just as they are patting down the earth on its grave, they suddenly hear that it is still alive and has even broken out in some new place. No wonder they hate us.

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

In chapter 14 the news of Jesus' ministry and miracles has finally reached Herod, and he reacts by claiming that it is John risen from the dead after he had him executed.

Executing John the Baptist: the first attempt to stop the message of repentance and redemption.

- Matthew's account: Herod recalls that he had ordered John's beheading.
 - Herod wanted him put to death due to John's confrontation regarding his "wife" Herodias, the former wife of his brother. _____
 - The dance of his niece, Herodias' daughter. _____
- Mark's account:6:14-29.
 - Herod had John arrested and kept temporarily safe from his wife Herodias. _____
 - Herod had actually been listening to John, v.20. _____
 - Yet Herodias scheme prevailed. _____
- In both accounts Herod's initial response was that it was John risen from the dead. _____

What is the real, timeless issue underlying this event?

- When the "good news" is "bad news."

- *Euangellion*: the gospel, or commonly, the "good news." _____
- The message of hope for all threatens the old status quo.
 - Priesthood status. _____
 - Authorities no longer have authority. _____
 - Applies to all messages of real hope. _____
- Stopping the message today.
 - From without: the Roman model.
 - Laws and oppression. _____
 - Propaganda. _____
 - From within: the ecclesiastical or orthodox model.
 - Pharisees and tradition. _____
 - Character attacks. _____
 - "Partial message" believers. _____
 - The enemy within: the "Kingdom of God" parables.
 - Tares and bad fish. _____
 - The good and bad sides of leaven. _____
- From the beginning: human nature.
 - Ambition and self-authority. _____
 - Jealousy toward God. _____
 - Fear (of abandonment) resulting in self imposed resentment, resulting in rage. _____
 - Ultimately: hatred of God. _____

The call to creation.

- Submission rather than resentment. _____
 - There is only one God, and he is not you. _____
 - *Draw near to God* . . . _____
- Seek the truth: the ultimate reward of authentic Christ following is far greater than that of self-deification. _____
- Selfless love rather than jealous hatred. _____

Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act of today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of.

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity