

Lent Day 15
Friday February 27, 2016

Reading: Mark 6.14-29

Reflection

The movie, *The Matrix*, was a hit because of some pretty dynamic production moves. The scene of the hero, Neo, laying back in mid-air dodging bullets is still pretty epic! (I am aware the movie is now old, so am I!) But, I think what makes the movie so compelling is the core idea. Humanity is caged and being fed on and almost nobody has any idea! We are blind to the true world around us and it takes some anarchists to show us the truth.

I think that is why Mark inserts the report of what happened to John the baptist where he does. We get so used to the way the world is that we don't even see it any more. Mark wants to pull back the blinders from over our eyes and help us to see what has always been there — horror.

In our last section Jesus had sent out his twelve apostles to amplify his ministry and as a result more people are speaking about Jesus than ever. But keep in mind that this isn't just about healing people, the message they are preaching is for people to, "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Their preaching is the announcement of the king who has arrived, Jesus and their healing is a demonstration of that new kingdom being present. Remember all that they do is in his name which means it's his power and authority they are exercising.

Mark says, "King Herod heard about this," because it is rival kingdoms clashing and King Herod is taking notice that there is a challenger to his power. Others have challenged him in the past, like John the baptist and the end of that road is death. It's a story of power, of hatred, revenge, manipulation and murder. And, because we have been with Jesus seeing the healing and freeing power of God at work, we are horrified by what once seemed the normal way of life. In contrast the kingdom of God multiplies and gives life which is why the next section is the feeding of the 5,000.

This is a heads up for us. We are intentionally submitting ourselves to the king and the kingdom of God, the rival kingdom of Satan is not sitting quietly by to see what happens. We are a threat to the status quo so we will be attacked. As we practice being laid bare, repenting and preparing we need to be on guard as well. To practice Lent is to enter the wilderness and it's in the wilderness that Satan attacks.

Prayer

Our true king, make us ready to stand firm against all the attacks of the evil one. Dress us with your armour so we might extinguish all the flaming arrows of his attack. Amen.