

No Greater Love-Part 7
Unmet Expectations
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, it is great to be preaching God's Word this morning. And without getting all sappy on you, I just want to tell you how joyful and grateful I am to be preaching God's Word in this church. You guys are... And here's the reason because you guys are so receptive by and large to the truth of God's Word, the straightforward preaching of God's Word and that is a profound encouragement to me for the past 13 years preaching here at Compass. It doesn't get better than that. To wrestle with the Word and then bring that Word to you on the weekends and in other settings in our church. I know sometimes it's not easy because the sermons are, as I'm sure some of your friends who wonder why you go to this church, are saying, you know, they kind of hurt, some of them, they're hard. And I understand that. Like last week I had you slide into the sandals of the Sanhedrin and say, "Hey, let's see the Sanhedrin in yourself, you know. Look at the response to Christ," and that's hard. And this week it's not a lot better. And I want you to consider for just a moment, honestly, about, now that Jesus goes before Herod, I mean, do we see any of that Herod in us? And I think that's helpful, it's a safeguard, but it just takes that honest connection between you and me in this time to be able to say, let's just see what the Word says, let's see what the problems are, let's see to what extent it applies to us and how we can rightly respond to that.

So before we ever get to Luke 23, as we finally reach verse 6 of Luke 23, I want to take you to Mark Chapter 6 to give you a sense of who this Herod is. Now here's the problem with the word Herod. Herod represents by title at least three people in the Bible, the New Testament. By that I mean, you will find in the text, you'll be reading along and you'll see the word Herod, that's one guy, and then you'll be reading along in another passage, you'll see the word Herod, that means another guy, and you'll be reading along in the Bible and you'll read Herod and that means another guy. Now there are at least six Herods that could be called Herod in the Bible that we see them there outside of the Bible. In other words three of them are called Herod outside of the Bible, which would include Archilochus, one of the sons of Herod the Great. Aristobulus is not in the Scripture but Philip is certainly in the Scripture. And then the third one is at the end of the book of Acts, he's called King Agrippa who is technically known as King Herod Agrippa the Second.

But the three of that are called the Herod, we've got to keep clear in our minds. It is clear for someone in the first century because they know the timeframe. Herod the Great, I've already tried to distinguish him as one of the Herods in the Bible in Matthew 2. He's the one that kills all the babies in Bethlehem. Right? Smile at me if you remember that. You shouldn't smile, you should frown at me if you remember that. Right? That was a bad scene and Herod was so jealous when the Maggi came from Persia and said, you know, there's a king of the Jews born here. They learned that from Daniel and his prophecies, and Herod got torqued because he was called the king of the Jews. So he had the babies in Bethlehem killed because he couldn't identify exactly who they were because the Maggis split on him.

So that's Herod the Great. He has sons and they take various positions in the kingdom Archilochus that we do run into and Philip. But the one that becomes a key player in the Gospels, which they would distinguish, even though in the Bible he just appears as Herod, is the Herod we're dealing with in Mark 6, the Herod we're dealing with in Luke 23. He's known outside of the Bible as Herod Antipas, Antipas. Herod Antipas, as you study Bible should say in the margin there, is the son of Herod the Great. Well, one of the nephews of Herod Antipas is another Herod, who is called Herod in the first part of the book of Acts, who causes a lot of trouble for the early church. He's just

presented to us as Herod who dies on the throne there because of his great arrogance, which Josephus, outside of the Bible, gives the same basic factual details about his death and how he died. So, the three Herods in the Bible, distinguish them, are Herod the Great at the birth scene of Christ, bad guy. Herod Antipas who we're dealing with today and Jesus goes to trial before him. Then Herod in the book of Acts, first half of the book of Acts, where we see him being a persecutor of the Church, he ends up dying there in the book of Acts.

Second half of Acts, there's another Herod, that's Herod Agrippa's son, who's not called Herod in our Bible to distinguished that in that short literary work, we have Herod, Herod period, who is Herod Agrippa the First and then Herod, King Herod he's called, Agrippa the Second, King Agrippa. Paul stands before him, as you remember, with Festus and Felix and he appeals to Caesar and he goes off to Rome and what we've called in our New Testament survey the fourth missionary journey of Paul, the journey to Rome. Blah blah blah blah blah.

All that to say what? All that to say that you need to keep the Herods distinct because they all have different roles in the Scripture and respond differently. Herod Antipas is the one that... Well, let's read about him here. He hears about Christ, look at verse 14, Mark 6:14, and he hears about the things that are happening, if you glance back up, Jesus is doing these healings and that's going to certainly be splashed in the headlines and so everyone knows about Jesus at this point, his name is getting out. As it says in the middle verse 14, "For Jesus' name had become known. Some said 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'He is Elijah,'" which has messianic overtones, the forerunner to the Christ, which of course, he was the Christ, not the Elijah, who was to come. And others said no, "He's a prophet, like one of the prophets of old," even like Elisha was doing miracles. Miracles may be rare in the Bible in terms of these miraculous signs that break natural law, but there were other guys who did them so maybe he's just one of those prophets like Elisha.

"When Herod heard of it," Herod Antipas that is, Antipas, "he said, 'John, whom I've beheaded has been raised.'" That was one of the things they thought he was, he's John the Baptist. Well, John the Baptist, Herod knew very well, is no longer alive, but maybe if he's doing miraculous signs now, which we have no indicators in the historical record that John the Baptist did any miracles, but nevertheless, he's thinking, well maybe he's risen from the dead and now he's doing miracles. Well, how did that all come to be? Well, flashback, verse 17. Now we have the story, as we look back in time, chronologically, the historical flashback in verse 17. So let's read that to get a sense for who Herod is.

"It was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias. Who's Herodias? I mean they're not buying those baby-naming books and getting a variety of names here. Herod the Great has two sons named Philip by two different wives, I guess the wives were deciding on... Anyway, Herodias, right? So, we're back to Herod again, which is quite confusing. Nevertheless, speaking of Phillip, that was Philip's wife. And if you read a little bit of the history behind all this Herod Antipas had done a lot to steal Philip's wife, who was also his niece. It was just all messed up.

But anyway, he marries her and Herodias, why would you be mad about that? Here's why, verse 18, because, "John," John the Baptist, "had been saying to Herod," Herod Antipas, "saying, 'It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'" I mean, you divorced your wife and married another gal, that's bad enough, but you stole this other wife from your brother. And not only that, she's a close relative of yours, I mean this is a bad scene. So this isn't a very pleasant evangelistic

encounter. Verse 19. "And Herodias had a grudge against him," as I think a lot of people would. Right? You're bashing my moral choices in marriage here. And she "wanted to put him to death," because she's the kind of gal that comes from the kind of family if you don't like someone you can kill your opponents and that's what she wanted.

But, middle verse 19, "She could not." Why? Because she's got her husband here and her husband wasn't going to sign off on it. Her husband feared John. He had a great respect for John. He was afraid of what John might do or what the crowd might do if John was killed at his authority. "Knowing that he was a righteous and holy man kept him safe," kept him safe in this case from my wife who wants to kill him. OK? "And when he heard him," he heard John, "he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly." And that is an interesting... that's a whole another sermon. But what an interesting thing we see when the powerful, forthright preachers are perplexed by these guys who are getting a hearing. They're not preaching the tune that they so often are used to. Right? People love the preacher who preaches the soft words, peace, peace when there is no peace. Well, here you had a guy who railing on the sin, on the people and yet people are coming and flocking because it's the work of God.

And just like we saw even when Paul is in prison in Caesarea before he goes off to Rome, I mean these officials, some of them wanted to see this guy. Even in the book of Acts they want to see who this guy is because they're hearing stories about him, they're perplexed, they don't want to buy it necessarily like King Agrippa the Second, another Herod at the end the book of Acts, but they're perplexed and intrigued by it all.

But, an opportunity. Big conjunction there. This is sad. Right? Now I want to hear him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and his military commanders and the leading men of Galilee, which by the way, we're going to see in our passage today, that's where Herod lead. Now his dad, Herod the Great, lead the whole of ancient Israel, but Herod Antipas got to rule this northern part. And we saw others who had various parts that they ruled. But Herod had a firm grip of leadership as kind of an administrator for Rome across the Mediterranean and he was ruling in the northern part of Galilee. So, he's got all these Galilean, you know, head honchos and all the brass of Galilee, and he's having this party.

Verse 22. "When Herodias his daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, 'Asked me for whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you.'" Right? I often say there's got to be alcohol flowing at a party like this. I mean, that's a nutty thing to do. It was a great dance and you're saying, "Whatever you want." Right? Now, this is family so you're not thinking, I mean, this may be a safe request, but that's an ancient kind of way to say it. We saw in the book of Daniel, "Up to half of the kingdom." We saw it all the way back in the book of Genesis. So it's kind of a way to say, "I'll give you whatever you want as long as you're not going to take my job away."

"And he vowed," verse 23, and he vowed. So here's a commitment. Much like Darius with Daniel. He got himself into a promise, a covenant here, if you will, and he bound himself to his word in front of everyone. "Whatever you ask me, I will give it you up to half of my kingdom." Verse 24, "And she went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?'" So Herodias now, who hates John the Baptist, has got dad on the hook in front of all these people. He's promised whatever my daughter wants I'll give it to her. Right? The daughter of Herodias. So, she goes out with mommy and mom says, "You know what I want? I want John the Baptist dead, the preacher that I hate."

So immediately, she came in and with haste she ran into the king, tiptoeing in her dance shoes, and said, "Hey, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And he kind of gets, as we see a lot of in the Scripture, kind of feeling this pressure to keep his name and his reputation and all the rest, he kills John the Baptist and cuts his head off. But just a real shot in the arm for a party, I guess, to bring in the decapitated head of John the Baptist. So morbid and gross and terrible.

That might explain, if in your Bibles, you have in the margin a passage from Luke Chapter 13 verse 31 when Jesus is kind of wrapping up his Perea and Galilean ministry and he's moving down to Jerusalem. The Pharisees are trying to hustle him along, "Get out, get out, get out." They say, "Get out of here because Herod," Herod Antipas, "wants to kill you." Now, that's what they're saying. We even learn, you know, elsewhere, as we are going to see today in Luke 23, that I'm not sure that they really wanted to kill him. He certainly had killed John the Baptist and Jesus knew that and grieved over that. But nevertheless, the Pharisees were going to use the fact that, "Hey, this might play in the ears of Jesus. We can get him out of here. Get out of here. Herod Antipas wants to kill you." And his response was, he says in verse 32 of Luke 13, "Go tell that fox," which is a descriptive word that wasn't used as it was used with you in the 7th grade. This was not a compliment in any way. You know, wavy locks of hair, what a fox. No. This is, on several levels, it's an interesting statement of deprecation, he's insulting him. A fox.

Even in a lot of ancient literature comparisons of the lion and the fox, you know, the lion, the conquerors, the fox eats the fox, all the rest. Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah. I don't know if that's poetically on the surface of all this but certainly a motif that we see, the fox is nothing compared to the lion. But the point is a fox is cunning and deceptive and out to spoil, as it says in the song of Solomon, the vineyards and all the rest. They're pests, they're big sneaky pests and so that was the picture. You're deceptive, cunning, deceitful, evasive, kind of pain in the neck. But listen how he responds. "Go tell that fox, 'Behold,'" look is the biblical word, "Look, I cast out demons and perform miracles today and tomorrow, and on the third day I'm going to finish my course." "I'm going to go to Jerusalem. I'm going to be the ransom for many people. Basically, go tell him to shut up. I'm not interested in what Herod says." So Jesus has this frustration with him, of course, because he killed, he decapitated at some stupid drunken party, John the Baptist, the greatest preacher, that Jesus says is the greatest prophet that's arisen. So, that Jesus' view of Herod Antipas.

Now Herod is in town because, in Luke 23, as you turn there now, is the Passover. The Passover is one of the three pilgrimage feasts of Israel, they're all coming together. It's crowded, the hotels are all filled. Everyone is completely jammed into this city and Herod, who always wants to ingratiate himself as he's leading over the Jews, he is leading over the Jews just like his dad did, he wants to make sure that he's seen as, you know, as an observant Jew, even though he's not ethnically Jewish. Matter of fact, Herod Antipas didn't have a single drop of Jewish blood in him.

So, they're there. Pilate, as you saw last week as I tried to uncomfortably put you in his sandals, I want you now to think about Herod who he's trying evasively to say because Herod's in town maybe Herod can deal with this. Because he learns, if you look at our passage, now Luke 23 verse 5, people were saying, after Pilate wouldn't give them the thumbs down to execute him, "Hey, he's stirring up people. He's a mess. He's a controversial figure, he's teaching throughout Judea," that's down south where Jerusalem is, "Galilee," up north, "and even to this place." Well, when Pilate heard the word Galilee he's going to go, "Oh, let's learn more about this Galilean connection." When Pilate, the Roman prefect who's ruling here over Judea for Rome, he's now kind of taken over Herod's jurisdiction in the south, you know, Herod the Great's jurisdiction because he's long since

dead, he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, that's Herod's son, Herod Antipas who's up north. Well great, let's go send him over to him.

He sent him over to Herod Antipas who himself was in Jerusalem at the time which you would expect because it is the Passover. Now when Herod Antipas saw Jesus as he comes in, roll the tape forward, it's the morning, we've been through all that kangaroo court in the evening, and Annas, the high priest, at least the kind of respected high priest, Caiaphas, the reigning high priest. You had all the punching and the beating and all the things going on. We had the Sanhedrin gather together at sunrise and now we're going to take Pilate, have his little court and now we're going to send him over to Herod.

So Herod is now seeing Jesus. It doesn't say he wants to kill him here, it says he's happy to see him. Right? So, I don't think the Pharisees were telling us the truth. The point is, he's like, "I finally want to see this guy." Why? Well here's why. "For," here's the purpose clause, "he had long desired to see him," I want to see him, "because he had heard about him, and was hoping to see some sign done by him." Well, what had he heard about him? Well, he heard that he's doing miracles. We saw that over and Mark 6. We saw that throughout the book of Acts. He's familiar with Jesus and he knows he's a miracle worker. Jesus doesn't like him. Right? Call him a name and said, you know, he's a cunning, conniving, deceptive, bad leader. But Herod wants to see Jesus anyway. "I want to see this guy. I'd like to see a miracle done by him." And wouldn't you? Right? I mean, if you're a non-Christian, "Well, I'd like this guy raising the dead and healing crippled people and blind people. Let's see him. Bring him on. Let's get that. I want to see a miracle in person."

Verse 9. "So he questions him at some length." I don't know how long this took, but it's some length there. It wasn't just one question, one answer. But Jesus stood there silently, even as Peter refers to, he was like a lamb led before the slaughter. Or even as Isaiah 53 had prophesied, he's going to sit there and not open his mouth. He's going to just go through this process. He knows he's here to be crucified and executed. "He made no answer." "The chief priest, the scribes, stood by." They didn't like all this. They were the ones who wanted Pilate to give him the thumbs down. Now they wanted Herod to give him a thumbs down and "they vehemently accused him." Strong word, only used twice in the New Testament. They were just intensely mad. Angrily accusing him.

"Herod, with his soldiers, treated him with contempt and mocked him and arrayed him in splendid clothing." Maybe you've seen the Renaissance pictures of him like in a purple robe. We don't know what color it was. As a matter of fact, most historians think it was probably white, as often that's what these officials wore. Nevertheless, a bright and splendid, that's what the Greek tells us, some kind of... something that a carpenter's son would not be wearing. It came out of the walk-in closet of Herod there in the palace, and they put this on him to mock him, obviously. "You say you're some kind of king. I can't even get an answer out of you. I didn't get a miracle out of you. Well, send you back to Pilate then, Pilate can deal with you." Verse 12. "And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that day for before they had been at enmity with each other."

Now a few things here, as uncomfortable as it may be, I want to think through what's going on in verses 6 through 9 to start. Pilate sends him to Herod and Herod wants to see him. I just want to make that kind of weird connection to where we are as a people and not just us as a culture, and more than that as an evangelical culture. There are a lot of people who are pitching a Christ that people want to see. There are a lot of people that want Christ, they want to connect with Christ. They have an attraction to Christ. But notice the subtitle of the sermon this morning. "Unmet Expectations." Clearly the passage, if anything else, depicts for us people who are not happy with

what they get when they get the real Christ standing before them. They're not happy. This is not what they wanted.

In this case, to be very specific, Herod wanted it, said he, "Desired to see him because," verse 8, "he'd heard about him and was hoping to see some sign done by him." "That's what I want, do a sign for me." Well people in the crowds had asked Jesus that before. "Do another miracle, do another sign. We want to see it. I brought my cousin. He's with me now. Tell him to do it again." And Jesus never responded well to that. He's certainly not there to do some kind of magic trick for you. But it's not just that. Everything about this person was being rejected by the chief priests and the scribes and by the Sanhedrin and even by Pilate, no one is happy with Christ. And yet, in this text, we have someone who says, "I'd like to see him. I want to see him."

We live in a culture when a lot of people would like to have some kind of, at least, exploratory interest in Jesus Christ. And all I'm saying is the reason they have unmet expectations is that they want some kind of experience with Christ for all the wrong reasons. And so I would warn you and I would warn myself and I think we should warn our culture, especially our Christian culture, number one, "Don't Seek Jesus for the Wrong Reasons." It won't end well, you won't get what you want out of it, so you better test your motives.

Now, this gets a little complicated but let's follow this a little bit, if I can be a commentator on our culture for a while. We're living in a Christian culture that unfortunately has aided that problem of seeking Jesus for the wrong reasons. If you look at the Bible and you basically just boil it down, what is the issue here? Jesus came, as we've quoted a lot in this series, not to be served, at least not in his first coming, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. So he's going to make a payment, as John the Baptist said, "Look, behold the lamb of God, he's coming to take away the..." What's the word? "Sin of the world." Give his life as a ransom, certainly implies that we've got a problem that has enslaved us and we need to get out of that problem, we need freedom from that problem, we need some get a payment to get out of the problem that we have. And the problem is: S-I-N, its sin. That's the problem. From the very beginning of the Bible the first three chapters give us the picture of perfection and God making everything right and then sin. And from Chapter 3 of Genesis on, sin, that's the problem, sin. We need to fix the problem and the problem can't be fixed by us. So we need God to intervene into space and time and fix the problem for us. That is the problem.

From time to time I'll quote, or not quote in the sermon, I'm not big on quoting in sermons, but I will certainly reference on the back of the worksheet books by David Wells, the scholar who did a lot of work out of Gordon Conwell. And in the one book I think I put on the back this week, "Courage to be Protestant," he deals with something that is a theme in all of his books. The problem of us not understanding the issues that are foundational to what we're doing as Christians in our evangelical society. In other words, we're supposed to be presenting the Gospel, the Gospel is good news. Good news from what? That I am a sinner, deserve God's just punishment, but Christ is going to come and solve the problem. What's at the core of the problem? My sin, the sin problem. That's why it's no surprise that when John the Baptist, the greatest preacher, Jesus said, ever has a chance to deal with someone like Herod Antipas, he immediately goes to Herod Antipas and Herodias who's sitting next to him saying, "You got a sin problem," and he has no problem pointing it out. I mean, this is like shooting fish in a barrel, it's too easy. "I know what your sin is, everyone knows what your sin is, you need to identify your sin and you need to repent of your sins."

Paul did the same thing when he stood before his Roman officials. He had a great opportunity. He

didn't go to banquets, he didn't take photo ops with the Roman officials. He sat there and said you have a sin problem and it needs to be fixed. He sat there in discourse with these Roman leaders about self-control, about righteousness and the coming judgment. That doesn't win friends and influence people. That's certainly not a Norman Vincent Peale approach to ministry. That's a problem. It's a problem because we know it will polarize people. It will rebuff them. So, we need to understand that when it comes to Christianity we're offering a solution to something that is not really the felt need of most people. David Wells, I mentioned him, because in the book he deals with the issue of sin, which I think is so insightful. He quotes his research. and he's done a lot of it, about Americans today and their understanding of the basic problem that Jesus comes to solve. And of course, they'll identify it under the rubric or the title or the umbrella of sin.

But when he explores what these people, in his extensive research, what do you mean by that, as they define it in all the different ways that they define it, he comes down to this stat: there are only 17% of the people, 17%, who see that the problem of sin is in some way related to God. Think about that. They don't see that, over 80%, that the problem relates somehow to God. OK. Is that a big deal? It's a huge deal.

From the very beginning in the Bible, the Bible starts and presents to us a sin problem because someone is rebelling against the authority of God. It's not that they had an achy tummy, it wasn't that they had loneliness, it wasn't that they didn't have purpose, it wasn't that they didn't have a wonderful life, it's that they did something that was insubordinate to their creator. Only 17% of Americans see any connection with this thing that they know Christianity is supposed to solve, the sin problem. They don't see it as a transgression against a person, they don't see it as an act of opposition against their creator, they don't see it as a rejection of his truth or his authority, they don't see it as insubordination, they simply see it as, "I got a problem and Jesus is supposed to be the answer."

And sociologists, for the last 30 or so years, have liked to, and I don't usually like to quote these labels because usually they're not all that useful, but I think it's telling to at least bring it up in this context, that they've tried to understand that under a descriptive, sociologically, in terms of what evangelicals are offering, as something, at least two-thirds of their definition is this: they call it a "therapeutic deism." OK? Now the Deist don't like that because there's theological overtones to what deism should mean, but nevertheless, it's something that's caught on. You read sociologists or even theologians or people who are into looking at the problems of evangelical culture today, they'll say, this is certainly a problem.

Deism. Deism of what? This kind of distant, undefined, not sure I can define it, God, but he is a greater power and that power out there wants to help me, there's the therapeutic part, fix my problem. Same reason you might say, "Here's a card, go see my therapist. You got an issue, you got a problem. You're lonely, you're frustrated, you're down, you're depressed. So God, this God that we don't want to define to carefully, deistic, it wants to give you this therapy." Now, they'll attach in front of that a moralistic therapeutic deism, and I don't even think that's even all that hot anymore, because I don't even want to deal with your morals, I just want to deal with this therapy of a God that will help my problems. So, I think in that regard, therapeutic deism is helpful in thinking through the fact that people today will flock to churches all over Orange County, all over California, all over Western society, certainly in America, and say, "Christ might solve my problem. I'm interested to hear from Christ." They have an expectation.

Now, Herod might have just had some, you know, perverted interest in seeing a miracle, which I

don't know if that is all that perverted. We'd all like to see a miracle. That's all we learn about it here. But your friends and my friends might come to church with you to hear the Bible taught, to hear about this Jesus person, because they think it's going to solve my problem.

And again, the church has been a party to the deterioration of the real problem by holding out phrases that, though they might have made sense back when they were created, they don't make sense anymore in the current context. For instance, "Jesus loves you." Or let's add to that the phrase that became very popular in evangelism, "Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." You can see where moralistic deism certainly will help understand why that can be defined today much differently than when your great-grandparents might have heard the fact that God, this God of the universe, loved you so much that while, in your own sins, you were yet sinful, Romans 5:8, he died, he sent his Son to die for you and he has a wonderful life for you. He will not punish you at the tribunal of the Great White Throne judgment and cast you into outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. That's a wonderful plan for your life. Someone might have understood it that way. I don't think that's how the average person understands that anymore.

And the church is saying, "Hey, if you don't have purpose? I got a Christ for you. He'll give you purpose. You don't have meaning? I've got a Christ for you. He'll give you meaning. You're lonely? You don't have a family? Hey, Christ and his family we'll support that. You have a problem, you have an ache, you have a pain? Fix it. Here's my therapist card, his name is Christ and he will help you." That interesting Christianity Today thinking, and I hate to say it, but go look at websites of all the churches and see how many of them really are appealing to a kind of this amorphous, cloudy definition of how Christ is somehow going to fix your problem. And they're bringing people in and people are very interested to hear how Christ might make my life better.

Now, will Christ make your life better? Well sure. In many ways. Maybe not the ways you think. Will he give you purpose? Well, sure. It may not be the purpose you're thinking when you hear the word purpose. Will he give you meaning? Well, of course, it might not be the meaning that you're think you'd have if you just out of the blue say that. Will he love you? Of course, but not with the love that you might be thinking when you imagine about a God who you don't really know who that God is and what love would be like. Will he give you a wonderful plan? Sure, if you wanted to define that biblically. But that's not how people think. When we say to them, like any commercial that they've been conditioned to think about, in terms of his will be for you something helpful. So they pursue this Christ, but unfortunately, it is pursuing Christ for a lot of the wrong reasons.

You want to find some Biblical examples of this, we don't have time for this, but study on your own, John Chapter 6, after Jesus in John 6 has the miracle of the feeding the 5,000, the bread and the fish, which there was no little folder they came up with and who's going to pay for this. Everyone got it for free. Jesus leaves after that. And, of course, that attracts a crowd and now they're going to tell their brother, their sister, their friends, everyone in the village to come check out this Jesus who is handing out free meals. I'm sure that the fish that Jesus makes on the spot are fantastic and I'm sure the bread is perfect and so everyone is going, "This is awesome. This is great," and they seek Jesus and they find him.

And in John 6 Jesus responds to those guys, "You're not seeking me because of the signs." And I'm thinking, if you read that too quick you think, "Well, yeah they are. That's the whole point." Yeah, but signs have meaning, signs have words, signs have direction, signs have arrows. "You're not really seeking me for this sign and what the sign is pointing at. You're seeking me because you have misinterpreted the sign, you want the thing itself." The breaking of bread and feeding 5,000 people

with a small sack lunch was for a purpose for you to see that Christ is the one who can quantitatively and qualitatively solve your problem. "I came to give my life as a ransom for many." You are struggling. You're going to starve to death, spiritually speaking, without God, without his kingdom, without his presence, without his grace, without his goodness. "You need me. You need to trust in me. I'm your only hope." And they just said, "But you were giving out free meals, weren't you?" Jesus says, "You're seeking me because you had your stomachs filled. You want something temporal, you want something that's going to make you happy, you want something that's just going to satisfy you between now and the next day."

And notice interesting the psychology, if you will, of that passage where they come back and start quoting Scripture. "Well, wait a minute, you're not going to give us a free lunch?" No. "Wait, wait, wait. Hey, didn't Moses give free meals to people, that manna thing? Why don't we do that?" I'm quoting Exodus now. "Let's do that stuff. Won't you do that?" Jesus said, "No, no listen. Moses didn't give manna, the kind of manna I'm talking about. Really, I'm talking about me. What you need is me. I am the Bread of Life." That's where that passage comes from, that statement from Christ in John 6. That kind of debate and Jesus has to clarify with people who are coming to the right person, they coming even based on the right signs, but they're not reading the sign and not seeing the problem and they're not coming to Christ to solve the real problem. That's people looking for a Christ for all the wrong reasons. Does Jesus love you? Yes. Does he have a good plan? Yes, but those things need to be properly defined biblically speaking.

Herod had a lot of things he wanted out of Christ, but as the subtitle of our message this morning says, he had a set of expectations and presumptions about Christ, but he sorely missed the mark. He was disappointed. He got no answer out of Christ. So what's his response? In verse 11, he is going to "treat him with contempt and mock him." Intervene, verse 10, the chief priests and scribes are going to stand by and they're going to ramp up their angry, shouting and vehement accusations of him. So everyone's now mad at Christ. Pilate didn't get what he wants out of him, he kicks the can down the road to Herod's palace. The Sanhedrin doesn't like him, the chief priests don't like him. These are all people who understood that Jesus was some big deal and the Pharisees of all people knew the Bible about the Messiah, he has claimed to be the Messiah, they didn't like him so they mocked him they arrayed him in splendid clothing, and here Herod sends him back to Pilate. Their reaction to the real Christ was negative.

Now here's the danger that I have. I can say to you, you and I should be concerned deeply about the state of current evangelical Christianity, because they're holding out an image of a Christ, offering a solution to something that's not even the real problem. And they're doing it often with Bible verses just like the people in John 6 could quote Bible verses, just like Satan can quote Bible verses in Luke Chapter 4 in the midst of a temptation. But they're not getting the whole picture. And so Herod and Pilate and Caiaphas and Annas and all the rest had an image of Christ and it was wrong. The real Christ stood before them and they got mad about the real Christ because there was a distance between the real Christ and their presumption about Christ. What they wanted out of Christ was not what Christ was there to offer, just like in John 6. So there was a conflict and the conflict was diagnosed by what? Their reaction. What was their reaction? Vehement opposition, vehement accusations. They were mocking and they were like, "Forget it then. Yeah, you're some kind of king? We'll put you in a robe, we'll send you off, you're no king."

I cannot take your view of Christ and say, great, you come with me. Take everything you know about Christ, what you think you know about Christ, and we're going to go over to an apartment over here in Aliso Viejo, and he's up on the second floor, and come on and sit down next to the



coffee table on the couch. I'm going to go into the back bedroom, I got Christ back here, we're going to bring him out. Your vision of Christ now can be corrected by the real Christ, look into the brown eyes of the real Christ and he will tell you exactly how far the distance is between your presumptions and your presuppositions and your ideas about him and what you think you can get out of him. Here's the real Jesus and he's going to try and close that gap. You can now test your views of Christ with the real Christ. I can't bring you to that apartment because he's gone. He's not here. Right? He sent his spirit, we're not alone, I get all that. But he's not here for me to introduce you to the real Christ.

All I can do is bring you to the Christ who has been revealed to us in Scripture, which is, we trust, and that's a whole another set of sermons, but that is the real Christ because he's accurately presented to us in the Scriptures. So the only thing I can say is I can't have you go look at the real Christ based on your theology about Christ or your presumptions about Christ and have you fix that. All I can do is have you look at the Scriptures, the whole of Scriptures, and say, here's how far off I was in my understanding about Christ.

So number two, I put it this way. You want to diagnose how you're doing in that regard? I put it this way, you need to "Monitor Your Reactions to the Truth." Put an asterisk by that because the truth is not going to be found with you sitting on a rock imagining what Jesus WAS like or IS like. It's about you researching the only book God ever wrote, it's called the Bible, opening it up and seeing what it says about this Christ. That becomes the benchmark, the standard, the calibration, the ability for me to look at my view and say here's the real Christ and here's my idea of Christ, let's close the gap between those two. And if what I see from the real Christ doesn't match my presumptions about Christ, then if I find myself getting angry or mad, maybe like Herod and the Pharisees and the chief priests, then I realize I'm expecting the wrong things out of Christ.

A couple of ways we respond. Let's start before we ever get to vehemence and anger. Let's talk about how the average person deals with it. The average person, here's what I would say, they avoid the truth. And by that I mean the asterisk next to it, they avoid the Bible, they avoid the Scripture itself. Even the guys leading a movement away from the Bible are leading the movement away from the Bible, like Marcion of old, what they're doing is trying to find a canon within a canon. And by that I mean, they're trying to find a source of authority within the Bible, but it's not the whole of the Bible, so let's either unhitch Christianity from the Old Testament, that would be good because there are a lot of things in the Old Testament I don't like, or they're like the Red Letter Christians, are you familiar with those guys, where, you know, guys like Brian McLaren and Tony Campolo and, you know, we've had some Catholics jump in on that, and all the rest, who we say, "Well, we're red letters, and that means we're going to go to our Bibles and only find the red letter part and read about what Jesus said, and thankfully he didn't say anything about homosexuality. Wooh! He didn't say anything about a lot of things, so I can just be copacetic about that Christ, but all that other stuff on both sides: Paul, I'm not interested. Old Testament, I'm not interested. So I'm just going to deal with these red letters of Christ and I kind of like him and I think he'll fit in with my Bible study I'm having at Starbucks and it'll be good. I can work with that Jesus." Right? Well, a couple of responses I have. Number one, the Red Letter Christians rarely read all the red letters. Now I know Tony and Brian and those guys certainly do, but they are not fair in presenting the red letters of the Bible. Because if you read all the red letters in the Bible, the things that these guys don't like, including teachings about hell for instance. You think any of those guys like the teaching about hell? I don't think so. You got to do some really difficult mental gymnastics to get out of what the Bible says regarding hell just from the red letters. But worse than that, I would just say this, when it comes to these people who are trying to truncate, this reductionistic Christianity, where they're just



trying to find the right passages that they like, as I often say jokingly from the platform, they want their 12 favorite passages of the Bible to really inform the whole of their theology. But they're missing the idea of what Jesus said.

Now jot this down if you're taking notes because it is important when it comes to what Jesus taught. Here's a verse for all your Red Letter Christians. OK? John Chapter 14 verses 7 through 11. John 14:7 through 11. Jesus said this when he's having a conversation with Philip. He says, "If you had known me you would have known my Father also." Philip says to him in the next verse, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough." Jesus said, "Have I been with you so long, you still don't know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? And the words that I say to you do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me, I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on me on account of the works themselves." "I'm doing the work that should prove to you, like the creative works that the Bible attributes to the Father, I'm doing all those things. I'm giving life just like the Father gives life. I do it at my own will, I raise who I want."

Those are the issues that should lead you to say everything about the God of the Old Testament, the 39 books, should not be unhitched from our view of Christ. Why? Because Christ says, "I am the embodiment of that." In other words, your theology proper about who God is, the God that you don't like who kills Canaanites in the Old Testament, the ethnic cleansing and genocide that you don't like, that's the God, the Father of the Old Testament. This is who I am. To put it in the words of Hebrews Chapter 1 verse 3, this Christ "is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature."

So a reductionistic kind of Marcionistic, I'm going to find a canon within a canon here, you want to go to the red letters, well read the red letters that say, "Everything that I am is the whole God that you've read about in the whole of the Bible." Therefore, I know this: that Christ is not in any way saying, "Hey, let me just reduce all of this to a palatable kind of Christianity." Because the same God who condemns the sexual sins and perversions of the Old Testament, that do it in great detail in paragraph form, is the same Christ who sits there and says, "Hey, I am the embodiment of that. I am. You want to talk about this? I am God. And all my attributes are now in me. You see me, you see the Father."

That picture of a Christ who is giving us, and this is very important now because here's the problem with modern Christianity, is a picture of the whole of Scripture. I want to be a biblical Christian who believes in the whole counsel of God, not just part of it. And so I need to realize that when I'm reading parts of the Bible that aren't my favorite parts or the red letter parts or the, you know, the 12, you know, most quoted passages in the New Testament or the Psalms that I really like that seem poetic and cool, you know the things that are quotable on teenage girl's Twitter feeds. I'm thinking I'm outside of that now. I don't want to think to myself, "Well, if I get upset about this part of the Bible it's okay because I'm still cool with this part of the Bible."

See, Satan trafficked in that stuff. He quotes Psalm 91 to Jesus in Luke 4 when he's being tempted. "But look at this passage. You can do what I'm saying from this passage," and Jesus has to respond with what? Other passages. Why? Because it's the whole counsel of God. We're not here with irreconcilable passages. We just need the whole picture and you're misquoting that passage. And so we can say about everyone today with a reductionistic view of Christianity who wants to take our Christianity and say, "Don't look at the whole thing. I don't want to look at the whole of it. I just



want to look at this part of it because this part of it seems to go pretty well with our modern culture, at least better than the rest of it. I don't want to be a Bible-thumping Christian who starts quoting Leviticus in the middle of a conversation at the lunch table." Well, be really careful with that because what you're doing is what is so often the case within modern Christianity. The first reaction to the truth is this: we avoid the truth. And I mean that because there's the Bible that sits there revealing the whole of who Christ is and the whole of who God is. And we avoid it.

Did you know this? A lot of just extensive surveying done about how Christians relate to the Bible. Here's a scary thing. Let's just make sure I get the numbers right here on this. 20%. Let's invert it. 80% of all the people claiming to be Bible-teaching, Bible-believing, I trust in Christ, I am a Christian, Jesus on my t-shirt people, 80% do not read their Bibles regularly. Think about that. They don't read it regularly. They don't read their Bibles every day, they just don't read it. That's the number one way to avoid having a vehement response to Nahum Chapter 1. I just don't read it. Right?

Crossway Publishers, the ones who published the English Standard Version that we use here at our church. They did a survey of 6,000 respondents about their Bible reading habits. This one's worth looking up at some point on the Internet. I think if you look for infographics and Christians response or Bible reading habits and Crossway you'd certainly find that on a search. They create a colorful chart, which I think is helpful, of the 66 books of the Bible with the very probing set of questions. They ask, "Tell me when was the last time you been in this part of the Bible," and they break down the 66 books of the Bible and they do it in various shades of like, "OK, have I read it recently, have I read it in the last six months, have I encountered it and read it in the last year, and then have I read it ever? Right? So they create this colorful chart, which is kind of pretty, I suppose, but it's an ugly picture that emerges and that is that people avoid sections of the Bible that don't match their preconceptions of a Christ who they would like to be really cool and fitting in with our culture.

In other words, they're not going to read Nahum Chapter 1. They might start to read it and it stings their eyeballs and they go, "Oh, I don't like that." Then we move on to something else. "I don't want to read about the people being killed in Canaan. I don't want to read about the conquest of the land. I don't want to read about God punishing his own people in Israel and calling them spiritual prostitutes. I don't want to look at the Babylonian captivity, the Assyrian assault. It's not just that it's boring and a bunch of genealogies. It's that it really grates against my preferred view of Christ." The avoidance.

"All right, well Mike trying to slip me in the shoes of someone like that. I don't think I'm that person." Great. I don't think you or I would want to put ourselves on the same par as John the Baptist. Right? Jesus said he's the greatest. I mean there's going to be a long line waiting to see John the Baptist and hang out with him. I mean his appointment calendar for lunches in the New Jerusalem is going to be long. He's a big guy and I'm not here to throw him under the bus. But there is one scene that I learn about in the Gospel of Luke that we studied in depth.

When he was in a prison, and Herod had put him there, it was before, obviously, he got beheaded. And at one point he sends two of his disciples to Jesus and he says, "I just need to know. Are you the Christ or should we look for someone else?" Does that startle you? That's a concerning passage isn't it? You are the number one promoter, you are the number one preacher of this Jesus who you said I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. And now you're wondering, did I have this thing wrong the whole time? I mean, I've heard that preach in a lot of weird and bizarre ways, but I got to stand back

and say you've got a point here. John, this is not his best day. Why is that? Well, he's in prison. I mean there is a dark cloud hanging over his head. A lot of the people who should be on the top of society here as they usher in the Messiah and the kingdom, now they're being persecuted and put in prison and in stocks and some people are going to start to die because of this.

Now you can look at all the stuff that he could have read. Let's just start with Isaiah. Isaiah 30, Isaiah 33, Isaiah 40, Isaiah 44. All the passages that speak of the coming Messiah in terms like "the beauty of the Lord," "the Lord is going to come," "people are going to see his beauty." "We're going to see him come with a strong arm of judgment upon his adversaries and bring recompense to his people, "he's going to come and deliver us and save us." You have all these positive images of the Messiah. And, you know what, John the Baptist is going, "I love those passages of Scripture. That's great. That's what I'm looking for."

But turn a few pages or scroll down a little bit on Isaiah and you end up hitting passages like this, speaking of the beauty of the Messiah. "He had no beauty, no majesty with which we should look at him." Isaiah 53. As a matter of fact, "he was despised. And he was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. He was like one from whom men hide their faces."

I mean, he was afflicted and the chastisement of us all fell on him. This Messiah figure now, all of sudden, goes into the into the garbage tank. I mean, he's the scum of the world to people in that passage. Well, what's the deal? Do you think that John the Baptist didn't know that passage? Of course he did. Now I'm not here to throw him under the bus. He's a way better guy than I'll ever be, I understand that. But I look at a guy who does something that I think if he's prone to do it then I'm prone to do it and that is this: you can have passages of Scripture that you know, but you can in one way, I don't know if you're actively suppressing those passages, but you're conveniently forgetting those passages and your view of Messiah has to only be this side, and I don't like that side.

Just like you will go to work and you'll talk to your non-Christian friends about the love of God. And you don't want to talk about the justice of God. In his case, I want to talk about Messiah coming and doing all these things over here, but, you know what, I don't want to come and talk about Messiah doing all those things over there, because those are kind of negative here. Had he had the full-orbed picture of Scripture, he would have said, I guess somehow, God's going to work this out that the Messiah can come and both be a suffering servant and also be a reigning monarch. I don't know how he's going to figure that out, but I know this: I believe in both of them. And if he's going to be a suffering monarch and he's going to take the heat of a culture and a nation and be crucified, I guess if I'm sitting in a prison, everything's right on schedule and just fine. And as a matter of fact, he could see himself as the privileged martyr to do, as later in the New Testament they said, what a privilege for us to suffer for Christ. I count it an honor. Right? John wasn't there. Why? It wasn't because it wasn't in the Bible. It's because his focus was naturally drawn to the more affable, the more positive, the more optimistic, the more generous, the more, I don't know, palatable parts of Scripture.

So "Monitor Your Reactions to the Truth." And this all comes down to, for our day, because I can't take you to an apartment to have you sit down with Christ, to the Scripture, what does it say? What parts of it do you avoid? What parts of it do you see and it turns your stomach? Speaking of our friend or, you know, these bestselling books, you know, he's not our friend, but these people who say I wrote this book to try and take this whole part about hell, Rob Bell writes in his book, because, "It churned my stomach. I didn't like it." See?

If you're a Bible-believing Christian, let's just commit today, we're going to be about the whole counsel of God. I'm going to have to change my views in my heart and my perceptions about what is good and what is right to that God who has revealed himself and his monarch, his Lord. I'm going to have to have that be the benchmark and I'm going to adapt my heart to that truth. I'm not going to adapt that truth to my heart. And that's the problem we have in modern evangelicalism and it's a problem that I think is on display in Herod's and the chief priests' and the scribes' lives, who say, "Hey, we didn't get what we wanted out of Christ. He didn't meet all our expectations. Let's just reject that stuff, that part." For them, of course, when you reject part of Christ you reject all of Christ.

Well, let me just quote this at the end of that discussion in Luke 7 that I was referring to, alluding to, the last verse when Jesus sends those two disciples of John back to that prison. He says this, "Tell John this, blessed is the one who is not offended by me." Offended. "Skandalizo," Scandal. Doesn't see me as the scandal that gets you upset, that angers you. Someone who charges you with wrong.

Man, how blessed is the person who can take the whole counsel of God and say it is all good, the Word of God is right, all the bad things that happen in the Bible, they are for some wise, intelligent, just, holy meaning. A bunch of sinful people trying to stand in judgment of parts of the Bible that we don't like. That is no place for us to be. Let's let the Scriptures speak for what it is. Let's the image emerge, of not only theology proper, but Christology and soteriology and eschatology and we stand back and say, if this is God's plan I adapt myself to that. As I told you that story many times, my haircutter saying at one time, not my current haircutter, my old haircutter saying, as I shared the Gospel with him, he says, "If that's God then I don't want anything to do with the God." And I said, "it's the only God there is. Right? That's it. There's only one God."

And the God of the Bible, as Francis Schaffer used to say, has revealed himself, he has spoken. I can't actively suppress the text of Scripture. I can't avoid them, I can't ignore them and I dare not be angry at them. Matter of fact, Jesus beckons me to say, "You'll be blessed if you're not angered, stumbled, upset, by the passages of Scripture that don't sit well with your preferences and proclivities, your sensibilities." That's hard. That means we change. We're full of a culture right now trying to change the Christ of the Bible.

Well lastly, verse 12, as Herod sends him back to Pilate, it says interestingly here, Herod Antipas and Pilate, the prefect from Rome here over Judea, they became friends with each other that day. Before this they had been at enmity with each other. Maybe in the margin of your reference Bible or your study Bible, you might have Luke 13. Perhaps that's the reason, we don't know. Historically, we don't have any extra-biblical information or any biblical information, except that maybe it was some kind of situation, as it says in Luke 13:1, when Pilate did something to have these Galileans killed. Well Galileans, that ought to be "bing, bing, bing." That's Herod's jurisdiction and so maybe they were mad because of what Pilate did, maybe he stepped over the line and exercised some kind of jurisdiction in Herod's world that he shouldn't. Whatever the reasons are, it doesn't tell us. But the interesting point that is there for our taking is that those two guys who weren't friends that day became friends. Why? Because they unified in opposition against Christ. They didn't like him. Christ wasn't what they wanted him to be. Because the enemy of my enemy is my friend. That's how it often works. "You don't like him? I don't like him either. Hey, high five, fist bump, great. We're against him." The bedfellows of people against the biblical, historical Christ of the whole council of God's Word is very interesting. It's amazing how those factions, whether it's political,

philosophical, theological, whether it's the cults, to see them draw together. And it's funny how they put their arms around each other as long as we can attack the biblical Christ. And here's the forecast: that's only gonna get worse.

Number three on your outline, let's put it this way, we need to "Expect More Coordinated Opposition," coordinated. It's coordinated. It's almost like a conspiracy. It is a conspiracy. I'm not a conspiratorialist, I told you that before, not of the Alex Jones variety you understand. I am a conspiratorialist in the Ephesians 6 variety and that is this: that I don't wrestle against flesh and blood, whether it's a politician, whether it's a philosophy professor at a University, whether it's a liberal theologian, or whether it's a cult leader. I don't wrestle against flesh and blood. It doesn't mean I don't have the problems with those people. It's this: that I know behind that there are cosmic forces and powers and they are all about extinguishing and opposing the truth. The truth.

They'll put up with an imitation, a Jesus of my own imagination, but they're not going to put up with the Bible's Jesus. So I know this: I'm going to expect that kind of unification against biblical Christianity. Expect it. It's going to happen. It's going to get harder, according to First Timothy Chapter 4. "The Spirit expressly says," 4:1, "that in latter times you're going to see people devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons." It doesn't mean there are going to be more witch, you know, shops at the Irvine Spectrum. It means that you're going to have things that are driving the marketplace, the politics, the academia of the world, that are all going to say, let's pitch and chisel away and reform that biblical view of Christ until we can make it palatable. They're attacking Christianity, uniquely so. And it's going to get worse. Second Timothy 3:1, last days, difficult times, we're in them. Don't freak out. Just note that it's here.

And I just went back and looked at this week's news. European Court of Human Rights. Let me just set this up as a stage, not to make a point, but to make the point that comes from this point, so follow me on this. Maybe you read about the ECHR, the European Court of Human Rights, that heard that case against the Austrian woman who stood up and said in her lecture series that Mohammed, of course, now we're already on shaky ground, you're talking about Mohammed, uh-oh, a lot of Muslims are going to be very concerned with what you say next, talked about the fact that he married a 6-year-old girl, which is a point of historical fact. And the way she said it wasn't all that respectful, which is hard to make that a respectful statement. "I married a 6-year-old." I don't know how that's respectful, but nevertheless it caused some waves and in Austria they reported her, she went to trial, she got convicted. Convicted for what? For offending people. Right? Now we're not talking about a Sharia law suburb in Afghanistan. Right? What are we talking about? We're talking about a European court in Austria.

Well it finally went to the European Court of Human Rights and I think finally, someone is going to stand up for the freedom to be able to say something, even if people don't like it. Right? It will be about free speech and all the rest. They did not dismiss it. As a matter of fact, they didn't vindicator her, they did just the opposite. They upheld the ruling and her conviction was stayed because they, in their statement said this, "We have to carefully balance the right of freedom of expression," her saying what she wants to say about Islam, "with the right of others to have their religious feelings protected." Now we've reached a really bizarre world we're living in, where right now we're going to rule against people because you said something that hurts my feelings. And unless your heads in the sand, I guess that's no new motif for the modern world. You're hurting my feelings, that should be against the law. Well, when it comes to Islam, of course, there's a lot of pressure. And so it is that this religion right now is able to say in a court in Europe of all places that that woman should not have said that. And it is a matter of fact. Go to the Wikipedia page. You'll find, I mean what,



19-18 wives of Muhammad that are laid out, and Aisha, the one that was the youngest, they'll try to say and even those that are very amiable toward Islam and apologists of Islam, will say, "Well, they didn't really consummate the marriage till she was 9-years-old. Nevertheless, that's an appalling thing for most people in our day to say someone marries a 6-year-old and has sex with her at 9. That's a problem. And people are going to gasp at that.

So when that happens, here's the thing, she's now convicted and I'm thinking great, if you're going to make a policy that people cannot hurt religious people's feelings, I'm thinking great, I guess we're in that group because aren't we religious? We're Christians. Right? I'm setting the stage now. You think that's happening? I don't know. I just started looking back at all the things. I looked at the most extreme examples, which some of them, I'm sure you've heard about. Remember that artist who put together a picture of Christ at the pinnacle of his redemptive work on a cross, and as an art piece the artist put him in a vat of urine, a clear Plexiglas glass container of urine. And that was a piece of art. Now, of course, that's going to hurt Christian's feelings I'm thinking. Right? The Christ encased in urine. Oh, I think that's a problem. So that was banned, of course, when it went before the European Court of Human Rights. Right? No. That piece in that museum won the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Awards in Visual Arts competition, which, by the way, was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts from the United States of America, underwritten by your tax dollars. That was an award-winning piece of art. "Pastor Crushed by Meteor." It was a sculpture, it was an artist's piece. It wasn't banned because we're bashing pastors and putting them in the ground crushed by rocks, wasn't outlawed. Matter of fact, Christie's auction house, I looked up this week, estimates that piece of art right now is worth \$500,000.

There was a work of art in the Sensation exhibit in London and Berlin called the Holy Virgin Mary. Now we're not Catholics here and we didn't canonize Mary as some kind of venerated place of worship, but you and I recognize, she's a key and valued and virtuous character in the Bible who is upheld, and you and I, man, we see her as a hero. Well, she was in this piece of art that was presented and toured around Europe, bare-breasted depiction of her, the mother of Jesus, molded out of excrement from elephants. That was the picture. It's hurting my feelings at that point. Right? But, of course, everyone's going to step in and protect Christianity like we're protecting Islam or a lot of other world religions.

I could go on and on. The transgender Jesus paintings passed off as art. Naked women dressed up like a man, this is Christ. Jesus urinating on people passed off as tasteful expressions of higher sophisticated highbrow art. Mary being strangled by Jesus, people applauding as great artwork. One commentator put it this way in an article that ran, of course it ran in a conservative periodical. It said today's people love anti-religious art. Here's the headline: "They Love Anti-religious Art. As long as it's Anti-Christian Art."

And if you start to think about how often so many people's religious feelings are protected, whether it's Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam. Even Islam of all of all religions. And then you look at Christianity, particularly Bible-believing Christians, who believe in the whole counsel of God, you start to think it seems like there's a conspiracy here, a coordinated effort to say all these rules of people being catered to and coddled to, it all applies until we're talking about Bible-believing Christians.

"Well, you know, just yesterday they shot up a synagogue and, you know, that was happening in Pittsburgh." No, you're right. I understand that. A lot of people hate a lot of people for a lot of different reasons. But I would say, frankly, a lot of that is a lot more about ethnicity than it is about

religion. Nevertheless, it happens and clearly I'm not letting people off the hook for being anti-Semitic. It's happened all over the world. It is egregious and it's awful, it's horrific, it should never happen.

But when it comes to Christianity today, let's take picked Pittsburgh for instance. They're going to have the kids marathon next year in 2019. Think this through. A kids event for children, to promote positive things in the community. Well, they have sponsors obvious that step up, t-shirts and banners and stuff. People need to support it. Someone's got to pay for all this stuff. And so the leaders of this event, directors, got together and they had a title sponsor generously underwriting the kids marathon. Just happen to be Chick-fil-A. Dun, dun, dun. The directors said, "Not Chick-fil-A?" Yeah, they make chicken sandwiches. "Yeah, I know but..." But what? The directors responded, "But Dan Cathy, of course, he's the owner, he said some things about homosexuality." Like what? "Like, well, when it comes to marriage, at least, he says he thinks it should be, the way it's been for millennia, that you've got to have a man and a wife, you know, like a scientific man and a scientific wife, and I know that's really crazy talk, but he says that should be what marriage is. And he said that." Oh, my goodness, on record he said that? "Yes, he said that!"

Now, he's not stringing up homosexuals in his basement and killing them. He's not hate mongering and yet you had, let's just get this straight, nine city council members in Pittsburgh, read about it this week, signed a letter to remove Chick-fil-A from this event, "because of their bigoted, hateful beliefs." OK, Christians. I think Islam's against homosexuality too. I recognize that. But it's amazing. Look at the conspiratorial nature of this. This is not human conspiracy, this is a spiritual conspiracy that's taking place in our country and in our culture.

And it wasn't just the Pittsburgh City Council, speaking of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Public School Board joined together in threatening against this kid's marathon to ban employees who would even participate in it. Right? I can't even imagine. If I work as a janitor at the school district I can't even go to the kid's marathon. No. Why? Because a chicken sandwich president actually said in a newspaper interview that he would really want to stick with this ancient definition that just happens to be biblical, oh, and he calls himself a Christian, who thinks that homosexuality really might not work out for this whole marriage thing and procreating and creating families. I just don't think that's right. But you're a Christian. See that's the problem.

Maybe it had something to do with last year the school board unanimously approved the transgender resolutions for the school district. Petitions everywhere popping up against this ridiculous story of Chick-fil-A sponsoring a kid's marathon, that can't happen, that cannot happen. See, we are now in a post-Christian America that is becoming a pre-Christian Rome. We are in a post-Christian America. Right? It's not your grandparents America anymore.

That's much like the pre-Christian Rome, I know in Rome we finally got around to a fact where we legalized Christianity and made Sunday a holiday and a lot of things happen to made it very easy for churches to own property and all the rest. But before that they were hostile against Christianity. And I already mentioned this but in Acts 28 when Paul was in prison under house arrest waiting for the Caesar trial that he had he deferred to and he was waiting in a situation where leaders came to him and at one point in the middle of Acts 28, it says in verse 21, "Hey, we've received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers here have reported or spoken anything evil about you." So we can't find anyone that has a charge that you're some kind of bad person, immoral person, a pedophile. I mean, you're not some kind of insurrectionist. We don't understand even why you're in prison, "But," verse 22, "we desire to hear from you and what your views are with regard



to this sect, because we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

In other words, I don't understand it. At least these objective leaders were saying, "Why is it that everyone hates your religion? You seem to be a normal guy. I don't see any problems with you. So we'd like to hear what's so scandalous about your theology." Well it is scandalous. Because what we're preaching is that you have a sin problem you can't fix. It is so serious against the personal God, God himself had to step into space and time and do the fixing for you. You've got to repent of your sins, call yourself a sinner, put yourself under the protection of the cross and say Christ is going to pay my sins 2,000 years ago and I need to become a follower of that Jesus. That is scandalous to our world. You cannot say that in mixed company today.

It is absolutely unbelievable the world that we live in, and a message like this on a Sunday morning in a county that doesn't like this kind of story, I think you're saying, "I'm so glad it came to Compass Bible Church this morning. That's so encouraging. Go take on the day."

I'm not here to discourage you. I know it can make you mad. I get that. Looking at the problems of opposition, looking at our culture, trying to weed out in our own lives the selective cafeteria Christianity and saying no I want to be a biblical Christian who believes in the whole counsel of God and I need to stand firm on this and be resolute. I understand that is going to make you mad at a world that's going to attack that. We feel like we want to torch this world, just throw it away. Don't torch the world.

Speaking of torching, I read that story, maybe you did this week, about the guy up in Fresno who was trying to kill spiders in the house. I read that story, I come home at night and I see this big spider up on the wall. And I get up literally on my tiptoes on the dresser and I got up and I squished that giant spider with my Kleenex between my finger and then cleaned off the wall because his guts went on it. Gross, right? And when I did that I thought about this guy and I thought, I get it, man, I get your frustration with these spiders. I want to get it before my daughter walks in this room. I want to kill it.

Well, this guy in Fresno, if you read the story, you know he had this aversion to spiders but it really clouded his judgment because he decided to kill them with a blow torch. And he went around the rooms with his torch trying to kill these spiders. I've wanted to torch a few spiders in my life. I wanted to torch one on Friday night. But understandably, as you might expect, he burns the house down. He burned the house down. Maybe you saw the headline, maybe you heard the story, maybe you didn't read enough in the story to find out the real kicker to this story. The kicker is this grown man torching spiders, he was doing it in his parent's house. He was house-sitting for his parents. "Hey dad, I'm here on the curb watching the firemen. Your house is burning down slowly. You know I'm really sorry. I was just trying to kill some spiders in the house." What a bad conversation to have with your dad.

I know you're mad at this stuff crawling around in our society. I am. At least you should be mad, I think you should be indignant about it. But you can't torch your Father's world. You can't. He can torch it when he wants and he's getting to that, it's all going to be destroyed by fire. My job isn't to torch the world. My job is to make inroads in that world with the light of the Gospel. Nothing really is more poetically satisfying than seeing the gates of hell batted back, because in this horrible world that is so anti-Christian and getting worse by the month, that we're making inroads because people, individuals, are getting saved. The Bible says nothing makes heaven cheer like one sinner who repents. One sinner who repents.

One of the ironies of this scene when Jesus is standing before Herod Antipas is a gal, that I'm sure was there somewhere in the entourage, who was the wife. Her name was Joanna. Her husband was Chuza. He was, according to Luke Chapter 8 verse 3, the trusted lieutenant in Herod's household. Some suppose that he was actually the Chief Financial Officer in Herod's house. Joanna is described in Luke Chapter 8 as being a supporter of Christ and the Apostles. She was a convert. She was pro-Christ. In a world that was frustrated with Christ and saw him as a magician doing some magic tricks, this was classic irony here. Right? Here is a gal who is standing for everything that is against what the whole mob here is against. That's satisfying.

If you do a search on Antipas, you keep calling him Antipas, in your Bibles you'll find a ton of references in your Bible dictionaries or whatever, that will pull up the Herod I'm talking about. But if you do it in your Bible, you do a Bible search on your phone and just look for Herod, you're going to only find one reference to Antipas and it's not the Antipas that we've been studying today. It's the Antipas in a city called Pergamum in Revelation Chapter 2. Pergamum.

Jesus write seven postcards to seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 and in Chapter 2 he addresses Pergamum, and he talks about a guy named Antipas. Antipas, who is in that passage, he's called, Jesus says, "my faithful" and then here's the Greek word, "martys." My faithful "martys." Listen to the context of this: he says to Pergamum, "I know where you dwell. I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is." Oh man. "Yet you hold fast to my name." Oh it's bad where you're at but you're holding fast to my name. "And you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful "martys," my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."

Pergamum was a bad place, in part because of all the paganism that took place there. It was the home or the shrine or the temple, I should say, of Zeus, in Greco-Roman world, that was the kingpin. Then there was not only that there was a shrine to the snake god, if you will. It was seen as the depiction of medicinal healing and people would come there and give their sacrifices to this snake god. It was also a Roman colony and there was a ton of emperor worship going on where these emperors were starting to exalt themselves to deity, which had been going on for a while, but people had to come and give their respects to deity as though he is God or Lord. It was a bad place. Talk about a dark culture.

And yet I love this, that some guy named after Herod Antipas that probably, as Bruce Longenecker says in his fiction, and I don't read much fiction, but I've talked about this book before, "The Lost Letters of Pergamum." He's a great historian who tries to tie together how in the world a guy named Antipas ended up in Pergamum as a "martys." That's a great story and it's worth reading. I didn't put it on the reading list, but "Lost Letters of Pergamum." It's so interesting that guy's name bears the name of Herod, Herod Antipas. I got to think there's some connection there. Not necessarily to his lineage but certainly to the family. You're not going to name your son Antipas unless you're like super pro-Herod. And he becomes a Christian, not only a Christian, but the first "martys" in Asia. That's an amazing thing.

And I think to myself there are some Antipas' in your life, in your neighborhood. You can get mad at this world that's increasingly anti-Christian and all I'm saying is don't torch the world. Matter of fact, go in with the light of the Gospel and share the Gospel. Be motivated this week to make a difference for Christ. Because one person at a time we are pushing back the gates of Hell. Are we going to win this battle? Are we going to usher in the millennium? Not because we're post-millennial, not because we're going to somehow convert and Christianize the world. We're not.



Matter of fact, it's going to go from bad to worse, but it will be Christianized when Christ comes back. And until then we're collecting people for his throng and his citizenry. So, give yourself to this great task. Don't be part of the group with unmet expectations. Believe, trust and worship the Jesus of the Bible.

Let's pray. God, help us in our culture to be more like Joanna who's willing to step out and be counted with Christ. Even when she's working for, at least her husband is, Chuza, working for Herod Antipas who ends up kicking the can back the Pilate and giving his tacit approval to the crucifixion of Jesus. Let us care more about the souls of the people around us, not discouraged, but evangelistically optimistic about the fact that you can save souls, you can change people's hearts. God, we can be too tied to the news and the headlines. If all it does is raise our blood pressure, it's not doing what it ought to do. It ought to remind us that this post-Christian America is like the pre-Christian Rome when Christianity flourished because people were zealous to share the Gospel with people. So make this church like that. Understanding where we're at in our culture, but more importantly, where we are in terms of our assignment as ambassadors of Christ.

Let us be diplomatic, loving, caring. And most important, forthright and unyielding, uncompromising about the truth of the whole counsel of God. God protect this church, strengthen this church in the midst of the struggles we face as individuals that just reflect the broader conflict that we have with our culture. So, God, let it be much like it was in Acts 8 that they say, "I don't see anything wrong with you as a person. I just don't get why there's so much opposition to this message." And maybe we can explain that with loving, kind diplomacy that it's about admitting our sin and seeing the real problem and reaching out for the grace of God in Christ. Let that be our song, let that be our constant refrain to this world as we hold out the words of life.

In Jesus name. Amen.