

***“A Faith that Goes Beyond Doubt”***

Text: Mark 6:14-16

At the age of seven, he had to go to work to support his family. At the age of nine, his mother died. At twenty-two, he lost his job as a store clerk. By the age of thirty-five, he had been defeated twice in running for a seat in Congress. At age thirty-seven, he was elected but was defeated two years later. Twice in his forties he was defeated in attempts to be elected to the Senate, as well a nomination for Vice President. Finally at the age of fifty-one he was elected President of the United States, but shortly after his re-election he was assassinated. His name has gone on as one of the greats in American history, we know him as Abraham Lincoln.

One time a man brought his son to Jesus who had been possessed by an unclean spirit. The spirit had made him mute and often threw him to the ground. The man had brought him to the disciples, but they were unable to do anything. The man said to Jesus: “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus replied to him: “If you can! Anything is possible for one who believes.” The man said: “I believe; help my unbelief!” Jesus then proceeded to cast out that spirit. (Mark 9:22-24)

Our text for this day is about faith as well. It tells of life after John the Baptizer of Baptist is gone from the scene. King Herod is still stinging from John’s words to him as well as the reputation of John among the people. With his murder at the hands of Herod some may have wondered about the work of John and God’s plans for his people. Through it all we can see God’s hand in His working that gives to us-

## **A FAITH THAT GOES BEYOND DOUBT**

- I. God always keeps His word**
- II. We have no reason for worry**
- III. There is a promised future for you**

### **I.**

**A.** Throughout the gospels we hear such expressions as “This took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.” (Matthew 1:22) God makes promises through his prophets and He keeps these promises that He makes. We have an outstanding example of that in our Old Testament lesson in the life of the prophet Amos. He boldly spoke God’s word to the people of his day. In a similar way, John had done the same thing regarding the adulterous relationship between Herodius and Herod. This ultimately led to his beheading as our text points out later.

There was fear on the part of Herod when he considered the things that Jesus and the disciples were doing. He was sure that John the Baptist had raised from the dead. What about John’s disciples and the disciples of Jesus? The days were pretty bleak with this event. Behind all of this was the promise of God’s word. God says of it that it always accomplishes what He desires and serves His purposes. Because of this it is authoritative in our lives and also has great power.

**B.** John did not shrink from bringing God’s word to Herod. What he was doing in taking his brother’s wife as his won was clearly wrong. John said to him: “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” The world in that day or in ours does not want to hear what God has to say about life and behavior. In Amos’ day the people wanted him to go back home and prophesy there. Amaziah told Jeroboam that the land could not bear what Amos was saying.

In all ages there is rejection and persecution of those who bring this message. John's persecution was his death, yet he brought that word with courage and conviction. As you bring that word today you can expect rejection and ridicule from people. Sometimes our own doubts and fear may be the greatest obstacle we face. God goes with us and gives us strength. Through the sending of his Son as our Savior he gives us the greatest gift of all. It is there that we find our joy in no matter what we face.

## II.

**A.** Persecution may not be our greatest concern of today. We have other legitimate concerns though. The economic woes of our day worry many people. Job stability makes many uneasy. Locally what are we to do in the face of threatened cutbacks and layoffs as a result of budgetary problems? Our text is not one about giving and economic conditions, but the God who provides for our financial concerns has first of all completed the plan of our spiritual life.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus said: "Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25) He then went on to point out that the birds are fed by God and that the lilies' beauty is unmatched and that we are much greater in the scheme of things than they are. The same God who carried out the plan of salvation in his own Son has your interests in mind as well.

**B.** Through the difficulties that face us each and every day we may be filled with doubts or may question if we have been forgotten. When God approached Gideon to fight the mighty Midianite army, Gideon responded: "Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?" God responded: "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" (Judges 6:13-14) The rest of the story is history as

they say. Midian defeated the mighty Midianite army with a handful of men and no weapons. Regardless of doubts, God is still at work in your life.

### III.

**A.** The purpose of John the Baptizer was to prepare the way for Jesus. In a sense, he needs to have his work come to and end for the work of Jesus to be fully done. Other prophets had promised the coming of Jesus, but they were many years before the birth of Christ. John was a contemporary of Jesus. He had said earlier: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)

John prepared the way for the coming of our savior into the world. His death did not destroy that working, but paved the way for it. His work and life were prophetic, for as his death ushered in the work of Jesus, so the death of Jesus ushered in eternal life for the entire world. This is God’s plan for your salvation. It cannot be stopped and it is always successful for that is the promise of God’s word that you believe.

**B.** Martin Luther said of faith: “The great art and power of faith consist in seeing that which is not seen and in not seeing that which is nonetheless felt.” Faith goes beyond what we see and feel. Events in all of our lives stop us from time to time, but our faith based on what Jesus Christ accomplished will always be victorious. It is that way because it is God at work and not us.

St. John writes: “For everyone that is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” (I John 5:4) The victory is yours in your Savior, of that you can be assured. This is the message you can firmly believe and boldly speak to others. Amen.