

✠ Mark 6:14-29 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

Would that God our Father grant that all His saints be baptized in the blood of martyrdom. Nothing else is such a strong witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else so completely gives a picture of the Christian life than martyrdom. Gather together all the good works done by all the Christians in all the world, and they pale in comparison to the bright light of martyrdom. Nothing else requires total devotion and absolute resolution. Nothing else is so demanding and so unforgivingly final. Works can be improved upon, forgotten, redone, and done again, but martyrdom, dying in the name of Christ, is the *crème de la crème* of confessional statements. It is easier to say, "I do this for you because of what God has done for me," than it is to say, "Go ahead, cut off my head, for Christ is risen!"

But, then, we often take the easy road rather than the high road. It is easier to ignore sin than to confess it and ask for forgiveness. It is easier to overlook doctrinal impurity than to correct it. It is easier to have men respect you than to denounce lies, expose false teachings, and hold men accountable for their words and deeds. It is easier to fulfill sinful and wicked oaths promised to sinful men so that we save face and look good to our friends, than it is to endure ridicule and mockery because we bear the name Christian.

It is easier to dance to the tune of popularity and ease of living than to march to the beat of God's truth and word. It is easier to be Herod than to be John. Repent. Of all our sins, idleness is the worst. We revel in being lukewarm because we can claim orthodoxy while hiding behind the eighth commandment, not wanting to offend anyone. We know the Law as Herod knew it, afraid of God's wrath, but not so afraid that we would rather obey God than our own petty desires and lustful habits.

Relationships, friendships, church buildings, cars, homes, and cell phones have become more important than desiring the Body and Blood of our Lord. Repent. Would that we were content to live in the desert, dressed in camel's hair and eating locust, pointing to the Lamb of God, rather than living in the lap of luxury pointing to our neighbor's possessions wishing they were our own.

The things of this world are fleeting; gone in the blink of an eye. But our Lord feeds us His martyred, living flesh that cannot die. He ushers us into His kingdom that is not of this world and that will never pass away. He gives us the crown of life and the treasures of heaven that do not rust and decay.

This is what John the Baptist believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Oh, that we would believe as John believed. That we would stand up to heretics and liars, fornicators and self-worshippers, false prophets and false doctrine, instead of hiding behind our cultural allowances and societal faux pas. That we would call down the judgment of God on the sin of this world, pointing to the Lamb of God who takes away that sin and in its place gives life and righteousness.

John was one who fulfilled prophecy, yet he counted it all as loss that he might gain Christ.

“I must decrease and He must increase” (John 3:30). It must be that you die so that you may be raised in Christ. He is everything and we are nothing. The death of the martyr is the death to be expected. It is the death to be sought after and cherished. Not because we disdain life or desire death in any friendly way, but because to die in Christ is to gain Christ (Philippians 1:21).

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠