

Luke 23:6-12  
3<sup>rd</sup> Midweek Service in Lent  
Sermon Series: Ironies of the Passion  
He Had Been Wanting To See Jesus

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**<sup>6</sup>On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. <sup>7</sup>When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.**

**<sup>8</sup>When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. <sup>9</sup>He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. <sup>11</sup>Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup>That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.**

Our text tonight takes us to Good Friday. Jesus had been arrested and was put on trial before the Jewish leaders. They accused Him of blasphemy which was a crime punishable by death. The problem was, *they* didn't have the authority to put anyone to death, only the Romans had that kind of power. So they led Jesus to the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. When Pilate found out that most of Jesus ministry had been spent in the region of Galilee and that Jesus was Himself a Galilean he decided to send Him the ruler of Galilee, a man named Herod, who also happened to be in Jerusalem.

Maybe it's best, first, to clear up which Herod this was. You probably remember that when Jesus was born there was a King Herod who was ruling over Israel. That was the man who ordered the infants in Bethlehem to be slaughtered. When he died, his territory was split between his sister and his three sons all of whom took that same name, Herod. One of those ruled over Judea the territory around Jerusalem until Jesus was about seven which is when the Romans took him out of power and started placing governors like Pontius Pilate in charge of that area. The second of those second generation Herods ruled over Galilee up by Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee. That's the one who arrested John the Baptist and had him executed and he's the one we're talking about tonight.

So Pilate sent Jesus to Herod and that's where this evening's lesson picks up. Luke tells us that when Herod saw Jesus he was pleased because he had been wanting to see Jesus. What a wonderful thing! Here was a very influential man who had heard about Jesus and His ministry and was longing to see Him! Tonight's irony of the passion, though, is that Herod wanted to see Jesus for all of the wrong reasons.

Back in Luke chapter nine, we find out that as Herod started to hear about the amazing miracles Jesus was performing he arrived at the conclusion that Jesus must be John the Baptist back from the dead. Rather than be terrified that the man he had executed had come back from the grave, Luke tells us that he started trying to see Jesus, and now we find out why. **When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some**

**sort.** So here's Jesus, the one person who could've made a difference in the life of this blood-thirsty, power-hungry man, standing right in front of him, and all Herod wanted was to see some magic tricks. He wanted Jesus to entertain him!

That's kind of the way of the world, isn't it? There's really only one thing that any of us need, the salvation that comes through faith in Jesus, but how often is that the one thing we're looking for? Americans in general, and I believe that includes most of us here, spend an awful lot of time, money and energy chasing after whatever the newest, best thing is. If an artist we like puts out a new song, we want to be able to listen to it. When a new movie comes out, we want to go see it. In fact, it's gotten to the point where the entertainment industry in America is so bonkers that we're actually willing to spend our time and money just to find out how those entertainment icons are spending their time and money!

On that fateful Friday morning, Herod had the latest and greatest standing right there in front of him. Jesus was the best thing that had ever happened to this world. And Herod missed it. Jesus is still the best thing that has ever happened to this world. And how often do we miss that too? It's easy to get distracted and let other comforts or perhaps more entertaining venues take priority over coming to church. And when we do come, we still aren't immune to being distracted. "What did you think of the service today, hun?" "Well, I don't know, some of those hymns were kind of weird." Or... "yeah, the pastor's message was kind of boring." Now don't get me wrong, we do want to pursue excellence in our worship services, and if you have ideas for improvement, I'd love for you to share them with me. But we don't want our need to be entertained to become greater than our need to hear the gospel.

Jesus never said being His disciples was going to be easy. It takes discipline to pay attention in church. It takes commitment to study and grow and understand the difference between the gospel of Jesus Christ and what our society passes off as spirituality. There is so much that can distract us from what's truly important, and we need to watch out for that.

There is no defense for hearts that aren't committed to hearing the Word of God. We can make no excuse for minds that wander and wish we could be doing something more entertaining. And again, don't get me wrong, there have been many times when we were satisfied with God's Word, when we focused on it and made it our priority. But we haven't been perfect.

The good news is God isn't going to judge us based on our track record. He's going to judge us based on Jesus. And what did Jesus do? Luke tells us that **Herod plied Him with many questions, but Jesus gave no answer.** Could Jesus have played ball with Herod? Could He have pandered to his plying, perhaps even have performed some quick little miracles? Could He have stood up for Himself against the accusations that the Jews were calling out against Him? Could He have? Absolutely, but He wasn't about to.

Jesus was not there to entertain Herod, nor was He there to fight back against the Jews or the Roman soldiers as they started to mock Him. Jesus was there to pay for their sins. In fact, just two short hours later, He was going to do just that, as nails pierced through His hands and His feet full weight of the guilt of their sins pierced into His heart. And not just their guilt, but yours and mine as well.

He didn't have to go to that cross. He didn't have to stay silent in the face of accusation, or let this Roman puppet ruler and his men abuse and insult Him. Had Jesus chosen to defend Himself or offer up a defense for Himself, there was no one who could stop Him or condemn

Him. He's the holy and almighty Son of God. But His number one priority was to carry out His Father's will and His Father's will was that He would go to the cross to pay for our sins.

Had Jesus ever wavered in that resolve, my how different our situation would be! Had he ever, even once, allowed comfort or entertainment or personal friendship to be elevated to a higher place in His heart than obedience to His Father, then His death on the cross would have counted for nothing.

But He lived His life in perfect obedience to God, and then He willingly gave it up so that the guilt of our sins would be washed away. May the peace of that forgiveness fill your hearts. And may the Holy Spirit use that peace to fill you with a desire to see Jesus and the ability to see Him for whom He truly is. Not an entertainer, but a savior. And not just any savior, but your Savior, who gave Himself to take away your sins.

Amen.