

Matthew 13:53–14:12

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[0:00] 13, 53 to 14, 12. 13, 53 to 14, 12. And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there. And coming to his hometown, he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, Where did this man get his wisdom in these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?

Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household. And he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, and he said to his servants, This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had been saying to him, It is not lawful for you to have her.

And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people because they held him to be a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she may ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter. And the king was sorry because of his oaths and his guests.

[2:02] He commanded it to be given. He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl. And she brought it to her mother.

And his disciples came and took the body and buried it. And they went and told Jesus, This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be. Well, let me add, warmest of welcomes. I'm sure I'm not the first to greet you if you're visiting this morning.

Thank you for choosing to spend your morning with us. Well, we are continuing. It's going to turn out to be 18 months, something around there, in the gospel of Matthew.

I don't even know what month we're in, but I do know what chapter we're in. and so please keep your Bibles open but let me just pray for us Father we we have just sung how worthy how worthy the king in all his beauty and so Father by your spirit and your word may you give us a sense of your worth may you give us a glimpse of your beauty may we behold the king in all his glory in these next moments we pray we ask these things for Jesus sake Amen this morning I want to speak to you about rebellion rebellion I don't know what comes up in your mind when I say the word rebellion there may be a small rebellion going on in your household right now between parents and children perhaps parents and teenagers there are certainly rebellions all across our world within nations between nations there's rebellions in movies in shows and this morning we will find there is an ongoing rebellion in our text we're coming off a long series of parables or teachings from Jesus it's enunciated in verse 53 after Jesus and when Jesus had finished these parables his words and his teachings largely frame the entire gospel of Matthew his instruction and words tell us the heart of his ministry his mighty works show us the heart of his ministry it's really a show and tell Jesus has going on yet Matthew is sure to remind us that Jesus is not universally received some hear but don't understand some see but don't perceive some plagued by dull hearts and stubborn disbelief and this morning's text sits really in two parts and we're taken into two different settings or occasions there's a homecoming and a birthday party a homecoming and a birthday party candidly put we see a prophet without honor and then we see a prophet without a head together they show us the rebellion of the human heart against the rule of heaven this morning my hope for you my hope for myself is that I am reminded of the ongoing rebellion of my human heart against the rule of

heaven

[5 : 57] I've titled or tagged this sermon our rebel heart we are to understand that the world did not roll out a red carpet when Jesus arrived no since his entrance the world has been filled with great opposition and hostility Jesus is ushering in the kingdom of heaven one that is in contention the kingdom on earth and it continues to this day as human rebellion continues to reject heaven's son see rebellion is this resistance to established rule and it's manifested in our rejection of God's rule and God's ruler two things I want us to see this morning a hostile homecoming and a brutal birthday I had to alliterate hostile homecoming and a brutal birthday there you see it a hostile homecoming verses 54 through 58

Jesus has been ministering in the Galilee region traveling from town to town operating both on the seashore calling disciples or the lake shore and surrounding mountainous regions teaching and healing he returns home in verse 54 the other gospels tell us it's his hometown Nazareth one would think that the return of Jesus to his hometown would be filled with acclamation and celebration there he would be presented with the keys to the city you see Jesus put Nazareth on the map if you talk to modern historians Nazareth was kind of this backwater town it was completely unknown prior to Jesus it was insignificant and irrelevant Nathaniel one of the initial 12 disciples when Philip comes to find Nathaniel he says Nathaniel we found the one the promised one the Messiah hope for our nation and Nathaniel says well where is he from well he's from Nazareth and Nathaniel replies well can anything good come out of Nazareth nothing comes out of Nazareth royalty comes from Rome Messiahs come from Jerusalem nobodies are from Nazareth and his homecoming is memorable or Jesus' homecoming is memorable not for his reception but for his rejection when Jesus returns home instead of being met by fervent faith homage and honor he is met by suspicion skepticism disbelief hostility and scandal the word our bible translates offense it's where we derive our english word scandal and though amazed the town and his family his homecoming demonstrates that those who were nearest to him did not attribute to him anything special though they're astonished by his wisdom and his works he was just one of them their questions are rhetorical and their emphasis is on Jesus' humanity oh he's no big deal he's the carpenter's son oh

I know him I've been over to his house he's Mary's son I know all his I go to school with all his brothers James Joseph Simon and Judas I even know his sisters he's no big deal and you see he's here he's being identified by his human relationships he was identified by blood lineage he was defined by earth's categories all which are true but our text shows us the inadequacy of simply identifying Jesus with our human categories yes he's certainly fully and truly human but he's also the incarnate son of God he is the carpenter's son but don't forget he's also creation's son Nazareth was ready to acknowledge his humanity but here in this text they failed to recognize his divinity see the people are able to acknowledge that he's from Nazareth but Jesus himself acknowledges that he himself is from

God he self identifies as a prophet according in verse 57 I'm a prophet prophets are those sent by God to the people of God with the message of God and Jesus proceeds to recite a common saying it's only at home where prophets receive no honor in the history of God's prophets they experience rejection and dishonor and it was the same for Jesus rejection and dishonor and Matthew doesn't make it explicit like what offended them what bothered them about Jesus well perhaps it comes immediately after the section of parables because it's the words of Jesus that might have offended them perhaps it's his apparent slight of the family toward his family in a culture where family was everything Jesus had diminished it and made it appear as nothing and here we find that proximity and exposure to Jesus words and works were not enough to bring about belief were shown the truth that one commentator says real faith is rare and in

[11 : 37] Jesus being home Matthew reminds us that the kingdom of God has redefined and redrawn family lines Jesus has already defined his mothers brothers and brothers and brothers not by human criteria but by heaven's criteria his brothers and his sisters and his mothers would be whoever does the will of God according to the end of chapter 12 he states that don't think this is Jesus speaking don't think that I've come to bring peace to the earth I've not come to bring peace but a sword for I've come to set a man against his father a daughter against her mother in law and a person's enemies will be those of his own house and here we find Jesus' own family is stumbling over him both his hometown and his household took offense at him Jesus experienced the very division he predicted now

I haven't lived long but I've lived long enough to witness this reality play out in the lives of those around me Christ has divided some of your households perhaps it's the unbelief of a teenage child a mom and a dad love Jesus with all their heart and their teenage child is estranged because of faith in Christ I've counseled students who have come to faith at the University of Chicago only to be unable to tell their mom and dad out of fear it goes something like this I can't tell mom or dad I became Christian they sent me to get an education not to find salvation you see it all around us and this is why the people of God are so vital when one's earthly family is in shambles it is this faith family that must demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God it is here where family must be felt and shared it is here where hospitality must be demonstrated and received it is here that sacrificial love must be extended and experienced well because

Nazareth rejected his witness Jesus would refuse his works it is astounding their unbelief resulted in Jesus withholding himself from mighty works here we are shown that unbelief will actually stay God's hand we are shown that rejection will restrain God's mighty hand and before I proceed to the second section I want us to consider this one of our natural inclinations in reading the Bible is to see ourselves in the story it has a powerful way of doing that and we want to identify who we are in the story we readily want to say well which character is me in verses 53 to 58 who am I am I the rejected one I'm just like Jesus no one wants a part of me or am

I supposed to identify with the Nazarenes as the one who is rejecting see my tendency is to read myself as a hero even a victim in this case on the favorable side of the story I want to be like Jesus despised dishonored disparaged but it's actually a positive view of myself and if I'm honest I'm actually far more of a rebel than a hero and these verses are to show me how rebels react to Jesus how I by nature respond to Jesus that my rebel!

heart identifies not with Jesus but with his family and with his neighbors I want to say well Jesus you're I like that you're there and sure you could reside in me but and make your home in me but don't rearrange things in this house in here don't reorder things or remove things I have a seat right next to my throne for you Jesus you can sit by me you could stand by me you could be my Robin as I'm Batman of course and I'll lean on you from some moral accountability I'll look to you for some ethical standards I'll rub your lamp and ask for a wish when things get difficult I'll listen to you when it sounds good but certainly not when it's costly and what we find here is the rebel it's a heart that refuses to receive

[17:01] God's words and it's worth asking the question as we proceed perhaps there's no mighty works being done here because my rebel rejecting heart is relegated to unbelief it's a hostile homecoming and it's followed by a brutal birthday party ironically as Jesus' mighty works are restrained in Nazareth word gets out about his fame Herod the tetrarch now hears of his popularity Herod is a regional ruler and he hears of these miraculous powers and he bizarrely attributes them to the resurrected John the Baptist it's unclear how he reaches this conclusion it seems that Herod had some superstitious response to Jesus perhaps out of fear for what he had done to John the Baptist Mark records that Herod feared John and held him in high regard because he was a holy and righteous man see

Herod needed some explanation and the only thing he came up with was the apparent resurrection of a rejected prophet and beginning in verse three there's this flashback to the death of John the Baptist I don't want to rehearse the account in detail it's recorded here and additional details are found in Mark chapter six but there are a few things that should be pointed out we shouldn't observe the sensuality of the Herodian court it's gross we should see the rashness of a foolish oath we should see the wickedness of an adulterous wife the lack of moral fortitude by a powerful man and the tragic fate of an imprisoned prophet but what needs to be highlighted in verses one to twelve is this is that we find another prophet being rejected John like Jesus is being rejected the thread that actually binds these verses together is rejection as Nazareth took offense at Jesus

Herodias takes offense at John Herodias' plot is quite wicked it's clear that John the Baptist is in prison because of Herodias' displeasure it's also clear that John the Baptist is beheaded because of her sinister desire and the underlying reason is found in verse four Herodias had left her marriage to Philip to wed Herod Philip and Herod were brothers it was unlawful according to Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20 the office here we find the prophet John the Baptist was sent from God really often all prophets are sent from God to declare the word of God or uphold the law of God often to declare the judgments of God prophets seldomly came with good news they often came to God's people with a declaration of God's displeasure whether it be for the nation's idolatry or the nation's injustice

or exploitation or religious indifference and this was

John's message repent for the kingdom of God is at hand and here we find a passionate prophet condemning the political regime for its loose moral living you have John the Baptist condemning the powerful and confronting their conduct the powerful wouldn't be exempt from the law of God no judgment falls on young and old alike men and women poor and rich wise and foolish the judgment of God we find is indiscriminate overlooks no one but Herodias wanted nothing of the sort and so she finds a way to silence the law of God by putting to death the prophet of God this is the rebel's heart the rebellious heart our rebel heart hates being condemned for all its ungodly conduct and it will go to great lengths to silence the call for repentance and so

Herodias plotted and took advantage of an opportunity and off with the prophet's head was the verdict see I can't help but wonder if this was also at the heart of Nazareth's rejection turn from your wicked ways repent from your unlawful living correct your course both Jesus and John declared it repent for the kingdom of God is at hand you can imagine Nazareth is in upheaval with the same summons dad repent for what you said mom repent for what you're thinking James repent from how you've mistreated others Joseph Joseph repent from how you've lied repeatedly Simon repent from your wayward living Judas repent from your pride and the corporate response from his family and Nazareth was this who do you think you are to come and judge us and pronounce judgment on us how dare you come home and speak to us in this way you're just like one of us do you think you're actually better than us and as

[22 : 42] Jesus comes home to my heart I realize that attitude sits here as well that my defensiveness goes up when someone pronounces judgment on me my anger flares up when you accuse me of sin my devious mind conceives of some sinister plot when confronted in judgment my heart is far more like Herodias than it is like Jesus no individual delights in the law of God naturally no we naturally all detest it and hate it the rebel's heart refuses the laws of God and rejects the prophet who dares to pronounce it and yeah it's probably easy to apply in this context it's evident in our North American culture wars we can call out our politics and our economics we can speak up against government policies institutional behaviors corporate practices the church's prophetic voice must speak up and speak out but before we go out on this reckless vendetta out there we must tame the rebellion in here our hearts are deceptive they're corrupt they're strongholds for sin it's easy to condemn what's out there it's entirely different to condemn what's in here we see we see a hostile homecoming and a brutal birthday and let me conclude in this way the text presents to us a prophet who is dishonored and a prophet who is decapitated collectively they show us a picture of how stubborn the human heart is and how great the opposition is to the kingdom of God certainly we see two kingdoms in conflict we must also see that our hearts are in rebellion unless we repent and are rescued from our sinful nature through faith in Christ see you and I we are determined to refuse the call to repent and turn to God and the text illumines this for us the death of John the Baptist foreshadows the death of Jesus of Nazareth both their bodies were taken by their disciples and buried after their executions both their messages were repent for the kingdom of God is here both their executioners probably thought that the message and the messengers had forever been silenced it must

I read this over and over it must be the irony of ironies that Matthew gives us the opening verse of chapter 14 Herod's mind had somehow convinced him that the man he executed John the Baptist had returned via bodily resurrection the rejected prophet had somehow returned via resurrection Herod was wrong in what he believed to be true of John the Baptist it was not John the Baptist returned back to life and it's a far fetched claim to think John would come back from the dead because dead prophets don't rise or do they little did Herod know there would be another hasty sham trial that would come through another ruler instead of a devious plot of an adulterous wife it would be a devastating cries of an adulterous nation

Herod was unable to withstand the peer pressure of his friends Pilate was unable to withstand the peer pressure of society and there before him was a man certainly a prophet allegedly a king and as blows were landing upon him you remember the shout prophesy who struck you you're a prophet you're a king where are your soldiers some in your armies you're a savior oh please you saved others you cannot even save yourself and that prophet was mocked and jeered at they laughed and lauded him with insults and on that other day a prophet was slain Jesus of Nazareth another prophet buried by his disciples some would say it's no big deal I know his dad he's the carpenter's boy I know his mom it's Mary his brothers are James Joseph Simon and Judas his sisters

are here with us and on that day what the world largely saw was the execution of a mere human from nazareth well you know where this goes yet on the third day the crucified one despised and rejected returned and resurrected you see the son of mary turns out to be the son of god you see the prophet of nazareth they said happens to be the prince of heaven the alleged king of the jews turns out to be the very king of all kings it's the most ironic verse chapter 14 verse 1 that a man would come back to life and his return jesus's return back from death certainly renews the call to repentance but do you know what it also demonstrates prophets are put to death because our hearts are rebellious but what if a prophet can't die and won't die what does that tell us well it tells us this it tells us that your rebellious heart is no match for relentless love you kill me and i'm still coming after you you slay me and i will pursue you that the love of god for the reject for the rebel even though they harassed him beat him sent him away crucified him he does not quit he comes back from the grave passionate to save people and this divine relentlessness is such good news because for the rebel we have to be captured by a love greater than ours by a desire greater than ours and it's a kingdom in which you've been invited into a kingdom ruled by a king compelled by love seeking the lost rescuing the perishing ransoming the rebel that you and i may experience a kingdom without end well may your rebel heart encounter god's resurrected relentless son well let us pray father the world in which we live is suspicious skeptical hostile hates all that this your kingdom brings it will behead your prophets it will crucify your son it will outcast your very servants and yet the fact that you resurrected from the dead shows us your relentless pursuit of rebels that you will not give in you will not back down you will not relent you will not forsake those who are your very own and so father as the war as the battle between kingdoms rages on we ask that your love would capture the rebel heart oh may we sing to you with great delight for you found us took hold of us rescued us we ask these things for jesus sake amen