

Choices have Consequences

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Date: 14 August 2022

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship now by singing to God's praise in Psalm 93. It's the Sing Psalms version. You'll find it on page 123 of the Psalm book, Psalm 93.

We're going to sing from verse 1 to 5, the whole Psalm. The Lord is King, His throne endures, majestic in His height. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might.

The world is founded, firm and sure, removed it cannot be. Your throne is strong and you are God from all eternity. We'll stand to sing to God's praise the whole of this Psalm.

The Lord is King, His throne endures, majestic in His height.

The Lord is full in majesty and armed with strength and might.

[1 : 13] The world is founded, firm and sure, removed it cannot be.

Your throne is strong and you are God from all eternity.

The seas, O Lord, have lifted up, He lifted up their voice.

The seeds have lifted up their weight, and made a mighty noise.

The Lord, in throne of highest strong, more powerful is He.

[2 : 42] And thunder all the oceans' waves are breakers of the sea.

Your royal statues, hearts and firm, unchanging is Your Word.

And holiness adores Your hearts for endless days, O Lord.

Well, we've come to God in prayer now. We'll just bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, our God, our Father in heaven, as we unite our hearts together in prayer at this time, we thank You that You are a God who has not turned His back away from His people, but indeed who we have the assurance through Your Word that You look down upon us and that You seek to meet with us this day as we come, to offer up our prayers and our praise to You.

As we join together to hear Your Word and to come to seek understanding from it, we thank You that we have every promise in Your Word to lean upon, as well as every warning that Your Word gives us as well, that we are to be a people who listen.

[4 : 30] And so we thank You that we can come and meet with You anew today and seek Your blessing on all that we do. We thank You for this, Your day, a day that has been set aside for this very purpose.

There is a day that in the week that is different to all the others, a day that we are to honour and to obey Your commands in, to rest from our work, but also to come and to praise and worship You according to Your Word and to Your truth.

So we ask Your help, Lord, as we come to do that, that from the youngest to the oldest here, our hearts will be enlarged by You and touched by You, and that we will know that You have met with us through Your Holy Spirit that promise that He is always near to us.

That we do thank You for each other and for all who are here today. We thank You for the young children, Lord, and we pray for them. Giving thanks again for the holiday club and for all that was done in that week.

Giving thanks for the creche and the tweenies and Sunday schools will resume in the next few weeks as well. We do pray for children and leaders alike to know Your blessing and Your peace upon them.

[5 : 45] We remember them, our young people, especially in this coming week as they go back to school. We pray for teachers and staff as they return. We pray that they will feel refreshed after their holidays and be ready for a new term.

And that children will come back, Lord, helped by You and encouraged by You. Whether it's starting P1 for the first time, whether it's moving up a class or going into a new school, whatever the situation may be, Lord, we ask that You will be with each and every one of them to lead them, to guide them, and to encourage them every step of the way.

We thank You for every home and family. And we know, Lord, that there are many different needs around us. There are many who are ill at this time. Many are in hospital and homes. Many who are mourning and grieving in our midst.

And we do pray for Your comfort to be upon each and every one as they have need. May You draw near to us in that way. May Your Word be blessed to us here throughout this day.

And whatever is preached and proclaimed today, may You be in the midst of it all to bless Your people near and far throughout our land, throughout our nation, throughout nations of the world.

[6 : 56] We pray that You will send Your Word out with power to convict, to convert, and to bring people close to You and to know especially the love of Jesus and to put their trust in Him.

May You guide us all in His name. Lead us, O Lord, into Your Word. And in all that we do today and in all the days ahead, may we seek to walk closely with You. And all we ask, we ask for the forgiveness of our sins.

In Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to say a few words to the young ones. Some of you will be going out in a wee minute. Others will be staying in the service. It's good to see you here today.

Sometimes we might have conversations with each other, other young people, or maybe with your parents, or people you meet in school. And sometimes we can have little silly conversations sometimes and maybe try and think about things that might be very different, things outside the norm for us.

And one of the things I was thinking about this week and I read this week was somebody asking a question. And the question was this. If you were to be an animal, what animal would you want to be?

[8 : 07] You can think about that for a wee minute. If you were to be an animal, what kind of animal would you want to be? And there's maybe all kinds of answers that will come to your mind.

Maybe if you've got a dog at home, you'd want to be a dog. So you can just chase a ball all day or just run around and then go for a wee sleep and eat your food and go for walks and do things like that.

Or maybe you've got a cat at home and you see the cat. The cat just wants to be the boss in the house and to have everybody do other things for it. Maybe you'd want to be a cat or maybe you want to be something more exotic.

Maybe you want to be a giraffe. To be really tall and to be able to reach up high. Or to be a lion or a tiger. Somebody that's an animal that's feared by people and other animals as well.

So we can always think about maybe different kinds of animals we would want to be. But I wonder if any of you would want to be a sheep.

[9 : 04] Anybody put your hands up if you'd want to be a sheep. I doubt if there's many hands going up. Well, there's one. One hand's going up wanting to be a sheep. Because I don't know if you want to be a sheep.

Anybody wants to be a sheep. Because sometimes you look at sheep and you think, my goodness, they seem to be just quite stupid sometimes, don't they? They always get themselves stuck in a fence or stuck in a bog or going off in the wrong direction.

And yet the interesting thing is, when you think about a sheep, the Bible often describes us as sheep. And it's one of the best used illustrations by Jesus and by others in the Bible to describe people to be like sheep.

But how are we like sheep? Well, there's a few different ways. Sheep aren't very smart. Sometimes, like I was saying, they maybe go into a tight space.

And instead of trying to just turn around and go back out, they try and keep going and force themselves through. They're stubborn. And so are we. We can be stubborn sometimes as well.

[10 : 12] And sheep, they'll often follow other sheep. It doesn't matter where they're going or what they're doing. Even when they're going into a dangerous place, they'll follow other sheep. And so we can be like that as well too.

We can just follow other people. It doesn't matter where they're going or what they're doing. We just keep following them. But fortunately, sheep have a shepherd to look after them.

And if a shepherd is good and he loves his sheep, he'll always make sure that his sheep are taken care of. And that's the way we are as well. We have a shepherd, a good shepherd who looks after us.

So even when we go off in the wrong direction or we get stuck or do something wrong, we have a shepherd that looks after us. And that shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the one we find described in the word as the good shepherd. In a psalm we know so well, Psalm 23, that psalm reminds us that the Lord is our shepherd. And that's the shepherd we want to know.

[11 : 16] So when you think about being like other animals, what kind of animal you would like to be, maybe think about the sheep and how we are like sheep.

We can do the wrong things. We can go the wrong way. But we have a good shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to bring us back on the right path and to go the right way, to help us and to save us.

May God bless these thoughts to us. Well, we're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. You'll have it on your sheets. We'll repeat the Lord's Prayer together.

Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[12 : 17] For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing together again to God's praise now in Psalm 121 in the Scottish Psalter version.

You find it on page 416 of the Psalm books. Psalm 121. Again, we're going to sing the whole of this Psalm.

I to the hills will lift mine eyes. From whence doth come my need? My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made. We'll stand to sing the whole of this Psalm to God's praise.

I to the hills will lift mine eyes. I to the hills will lift mine eyes.

From whence doth come my need? My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made.

[13 : 37] Thy foot, thy foot, thy foot, thy will. His slumber that he keeps.

Behold, he that keeps Israel. His slumber that he keeps.

He slumber's not, nor sleeps. The Lord he keeps. The Lord thy shade.

On thy right hand thou stay. The moon by night, He shall not smite, Nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul. He shall preserve thee from all else.

[15 : 05] in thy Emmanuel things.

We're going to turn now to read God's Word in the Bible. We're going to read in the Gospel of Mark, reading in chapter 6.

And this is on page 1014, if you have the church Bibles. Mark chapter 6. We're going to take up our reading at verse 7.

Mark chapter 6, reading at verse 7 down to verse 29. Let's hear God's Word.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

[16 : 20] And he said to them, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you, and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. King Herod heard of it, 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.

And others said, He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. But when Herod heard of it, he said, John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.

For it was Herod who had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.

[17 : 29] For John had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to put him to death, but she could not.

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

But an opportunity came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his nobles, and military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. But when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, and she pleased Herod and his guests.

And the king said to the girl, Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you. And he vowed to her, whatever you ask me, I will give you up to half my kingdom.

And she went out and said to her mother, For what should I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

[18 : 44] And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.

He went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

And so on, and may God bless that reading from his word. And before we come back to look at some of that passage, we're going to again sing to God's praise in Psalm 32.

In the Scottish Psalter version, it's on page 244 of the Psalm book. Psalm 32. And at verse 7.

There art my hiding place, thou shalt from trouble keep me free. Thou with songs of deliverance about shalt compass me.

[19 : 52] I will instruct thee, and they teach the way that thou shalt go. And with mine eye upon thee set, I will direction show. We're going to sing from verse 7 to the end of the Psalm, verse 11, to God's praise.

And again we stand to sing. The Lord my hiding place, thou shalt from trouble keep me free.

Thou with songs of deliverance, a bird shall compass me.

I will instruct thee and be teach, the way that thou shalt go.

And with mine eye upon thee set, I will direction show.

[21 : 21] Then be not like the horse or mule, which could not understand, whose mouth lest they come near to thee, a bridle must command.

And to the man that wicked is, his sorrows shall abound.

But him that trusted in the Lord, mercy shall compass round.

Ye righteous in the Lord be glad, in him that upright, in him he rejoice.

O he that upright, in heart, for joy lift up your voice.

[23 : 08] O he that holy is. But before we turn back to look at the Gospel of Mark, we'll bow our heads again in a word of prayer.

Let us pray. Lord our God as we continue in our worship as we seek your help as we turn to your word we thank you that it is a living word a word that ministers to our hearts and to our souls and may you bring it alive in our own hearts today to bring that joy of salvation into our hearts whether it's to know it once again or to know it for the first time that we would find in your word the beauty of Christ and the love of Jesus shown to us the one who came who into this world who you sent into this world for the salvation of our souls the one who gave his life as a ransom for many so we thank you that your word instructs and teaches us and we pray that it will do that for us anew today we continue to remember Lord all that goes on around us we know the many needs that surround us and even in this past week the many things that have maybe shocked us in a sense we know that in life there are many troubles and yet Jesus says to be of good courage for he has overcome the world and so we pray that we will remember that and that others will be able to take hold of that message and even to share that message of hope found in Christ as Lord we prayed for congregations near and far but in this past week our minds have been filled with events close to home for us in the island of sky with a tragedy that unfolded there and we do remember all the families grieving at this time and concerned for loved ones the many who are troubled in their hearts and in their spirits we pray Lord for your comfort for your peace to be upon a people there and for those who minister into that situation we pray for you to give words of wisdom of help to know what to say and how to say it we can feel like helpless comforters at times but we thank you that as we lean upon you and trust in you you assure us of giving words that we need as and when required so Lord may you minister into that situation as well as the many needful situations around us too we thank you that you are a God whose eyes are always upon the whole of your creation that even as the psalm that we sang together at the beginning psalm 121 it reminds us that in our troubles in our days of wondering where we are to look to for help that we can lift our eyes to the Lord so may you help us even now to lift our eyes to you and to see that you are a God who is near and near to help guide us then into your word now as we come to it help us that we will hear from it and recognize our own need in it too to choose wisely and to follow the paths of life as found in Christ so Lord hear our prayers and continue with us now we ask we ask in

Jesus precious name amen we can turn back to our reading in the gospel of Mark chapter 6 and we're going to look in particular at this event surrounding the life of King Herod and all that took place in verse 14 down to verse 29 King Herod had met with John the Baptist many times he'd heard John the Baptist speaking to him about the gospel the good news of Jesus and as we read there in verse 20 Herod feared God John knowing that he was a righteous and holy man and he kept him safe when he heard him he was greatly perplexed and yet he heard him gladly so John the Baptist was someone who had ministered to King Herod a great privilege to be able to minister to him but King Herod was in conflict in his own life which way he would go which way he would choose and that's the theme of our service this morning the choices we make and the consequences that they have we're going to look in particular at the choices that King Herod made and how we can learn lessons for ourselves because our lives are full of choices every single day we make choices some with great significance others less so but all of them combining into our life and the way we are living and the direction that we are going in we chose today whether we would come to church or not we might choose later what we will eat or what we won't eat our life is always full of choice but the most important choices we make and should or should make are based on what we find before us today in the Word of God and in the instruction that the Word of God gives us the Gospel of Mark as you read through it you find the ministry of Jesus going through different towns and villages meeting with different people all the time and all the time people being presented with a choice are they going to listen or are they going to shun this teaching are they going to follow Jesus or are they going to keep going in their own paths their own direction the beginning of this chapter as Jesus comes in to Nazareth his own hometown he's ministering there and the people are presented with the Gospel and yet so many of them just turn their back on it and here we are gathered together under God's Word once again I'm sure most of us maybe majority of us have been here on many occasions hearing the Word of God and the question is still do we accept it do we believe it or do we ignore it what are we going to do today with the Gospel that we hear what have you done with the Gospel you've heard in the past what choice have you made with it well in these verses before us today we hear how John the Baptist the one who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ the one who who went to prepare the way for him who was telling others that greater than him was coming after him we read of him here and we see how his life came to an abrupt end how King Herod had it had him beheaded and this was the result his death was result of the choices made by this man King Herod he chose whether to have John killed or whether to spare his life and as you read there in verse 20 for a long time he had spared his life he had kept him safe but he found himself now in a very

difficult position where he was under pressure and what choice would he make in the midst of this pressure the scripture is full the whole of the Bible is full of seeing people making choices from the very beginning when you go back to the book of Genesis you find Adam and Eve presented with choice in the midst of the garden would they obey the voice of God who had told them what they could and what they couldn't do or would they listen to the tempter who had come into their midst and told them not to listen to God but to make their own choices to do their own thing you see there they chose wrongly and sin came into the world and all the consequences that that brought now we recognize as we're talking about choices that we're always seeing God as sovereign and overruling in all our choices but we also see our own responsibilities God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is always before us but as you read through the scripture you see we're always presented with the choices that we are to make but here in this passage King Herod after the events of the beheading of John the

Baptist has now heard something that's leaving him troubled he's hearing all about the work of Jesus and he's hearing some who are saying John the Baptist has been raised from the dead and this leaves him troubled John the Baptist has come back it's causing him a great fear and this passage before us as well as speaking into the present situation of Herod brings us into the past and the choices that he made and I want us to think of these choices together those in the past seeing the choices he made seeing the consequences of it and the pressure he was under and then bringing it into the present where King Herod is now reflecting on his life and the choices that he has made and thinking of the consequences of it so first of all we think of the choices that King Herod made and the choices that we make ourselves somebody once said our outlook on life is not best expressed in words it is expressed in the choices we make in the long run we shape our lives and we shape ourselves the process never ends until we die and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility our lives are shaped by the choices that we make as well as the Lord's sovereign will in our life and as we read in this passage we see that Herod he didn't just make one choice that impacted his life he made a series of choices at different points in his life that affected his whole life and when you look at the many wrong choices that he made here you look at verse 17 and there we're giving an insight into the choices that he's made in the past and the wrong choices that he's made in the past we read in verse 17 that Herod had had John seized and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias his brother Philip's wife he was under pressure from his wife his wife didn't like John the Baptist and what he was saying about their marriage and it being wrong and he was under pressure so he had him arrested and sort of try to just push him away to the side but at the same time trying to keep him safe he didn't have to do this he didn't have to put him in prison but it was the wrong thing to do it was the wrong choice and the basis of this is on another wrong choice he made in his life he had married Herodias his brother's wife he had made an unwise choice there it wasn't the right thing to do but he had a choice in it and it was this choice that was really at the heart of everything that was going wrong in his life he was enjoying hearing John the Baptist at one point perplexed and yet heard him gladly as it says in verse 20 but now with Herodias in the midst of it she was trouble for him and that's the reality of life for Herod here he's in the midst of the mixture of all the different choices he's made in life and being pulled in different directions and so often it's the case for ourselves too the choices that we've made maybe in the past are continually affecting our lives some are good choices some are wise choices and have helped us go on the right way others we maybe

[36 : 22] look back and think they were the wrong choices I've made they've had a maybe a lasting impact on my life in a bad way but what we see as we look at Herodias and as we look at our own lives no matter the wrong choices we've made there is always opportunity to come back and find the right path you think of people who are in prison they're there because very often they've made a wrong choice taking a wrong decision and there are consequences to these choices they find themselves now entrapped in prison but the reality is prison isn't always walls and bars and locked gates we often find ourselves in prison in this world because of the choices we have made we're not put locked away but we feel imprisoned in our lives we feel like we're compressed in our lives under pressure in our lives because of the choices that we've made but the scripture is there to help us and to guide us out of the sense of being in prison to the freedom that is found in Christ and for Herod this was something that he'd been hearing about again and again again as verse 20 just shows to us there is this enjoyment he had of meeting with John the Baptist of hearing about the works of Christ he heard him gladly but pulled away in a different direction because of the wrong choices that he made he feared when he was hearing about Christ but at the end of the day he chose to ignore him and not to accept him the greatest choice in life he got wrong and what about for ourselves today how are we choosing with this gospel how are we choosing with this Christ who we hear about so often are we choosing to follow to trust to believe with all our heart or are we turning away Joshua in the old testament that says these great words as he's surrounded by people who are choosing many other different gods in life he says to them choose this day whom you will serve but he says as for me and my house we will serve the Lord Joshua chose wisely but for so many things it's an unwise choice we come to we reject or we turn away from the Lord

Dwight L Moody the great evangelist of many years ago he tells a story of a young Christian man who went to university in England and he was studying there studying diligently but he was surrounded by people who didn't believe in God and would often debate with him about how God is not real or we don't need the Lord Jesus in our lives and this one day he was discussing debating with another student discussing faith in the Bible and they were battling back and forth this Christian student he felt he wasn't as well educated as eloquent in his language as this other student who was seemed to be more advanced in his knowledge than him and he wasn't getting anywhere no matter what he said in this debate he wasn't getting anywhere he was always getting an answer back that seemed to just push him further and further away and in the end he said look I'm not as eloquent as you I'm not as good as debating as you but he said what if I could prove to you beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ is who he claims to be would you be willing to acknowledge him as Lord and as your Lord to prove without a shadow of a doubt that Christ is real and who he claims to be would you believe immediately the student he was debating with said no certainly not it didn't matter what he would say what he would show of the reality of Christ this man was unwilling to believe and you see that's often the problem with the knowledge of God it's not that the facts aren't there it's not that God cannot be known it's that the natural desire of our heart is to reject and to push God away our natural choice in life is to shun God to push him further and further away

Herod is an example to us of that of choosing wrongly in his past he has made all these wrong choices and all they have done is pushed God further and further away but we're thankful that the scripture is full of others who remind us and show us that we can come to Christ no matter the choices that we've made in the past and find with him one who is willing to forgive to heal and to help just think of the gospel of Mark itself it's full of accounts of Jesus meeting people who have made so many wrong decisions and yet they come empty-handed with nothing left they come to Christ and they come to Christ and they find in him one who gives him everything that they need the opposite is true of King Herod he came with maybe everything he needed but he left with nothing because he rejected Christ Herod chose unwisely and so many times in his life how will you choose today how have you been choosing to live your life how will you choose to live your life as you go on our choices are always before us the second thing we see of Herod though is he's surrounded by people who are putting pressure on him and this is something we can often feel in our own lives to today the sense of peer pressure you can maybe say well it wasn't all Herod's fault everything that happened here and the consequences it brought it wasn't all Herod's fault you could blame it maybe on his wife or his wife's daughter you can say well it was their fault just in the same way as you go back to Adam and Eve where the blame is seemed to be passed Adam blames his wife Eve blames the serpent the buck is passed we can always try and pass the blame off to somebody else so was Herod here was he just in a situation where it was somebody else's fault peer pressure was to blame for the choices that we made that he made no he made the choice he chose everything that we see before us here he made that final choice and he had to live with the consequences of it we all make our own choices we can always try and blame others for the choices that we have made but at the end of the day the choices are in our own hands Herod's wife Herodias had put pressure on him she had been almost constantly putting pressure on him so so Herod had put John the Baptist in prison to try and get her off his case but it wouldn't go away and she was still wanting more she wanted John the Baptist put to death he was saying the relationship was wrong he wanted to keep his wife happy and he was in the midst of this pressure what do I do who do I try and please and in our own lives we can come under pressure from other people as well we will often have that sense of who are we going to please it could be a husband or a wife it could be children or parents it could be our bosses at work it can be our friends so often in our life there is this pressure coming upon us from all different directions we have an abundance of peer pressure and it can keep us from doing what is right with God and this is something we have to be so careful about the most important thing for us to do is not as our

friends want us to do the pressures to do the wrong things in life or to go to the wrong places but the the pressure we should feel most is to do what is right with God to do what is right in following the Lord Jesus and his commands something that Herod had heard so much about and was gladly hearing and yet perplexed with and now just pushing away in verse 26 we are given a great insight into the choice that Herod made in the pressure he was under when you read in verse 26 it says the king was exceedingly sorry he'd found himself in this situation where he had to choose under pressure what am I going to do am I going to please my wife or lose face with the important people around me here these people had come to his birthday party who he'd tried to impress and he'd said to Herodias his daughter I will give you anything you ask for up to half my kingdom she asked for John the Baptist's head on a platter now what's he going to do he's torn in different directions he's feeling this pressure he's greatly distressed he's torn in different directions he knew what he did was wrong the choice he made was wrong but because of the important people around him he decided losing face with them it was more important not losing face with them was more important than having John the Baptist beheaded do you feel that kind of pressure today when it comes to the things of God when it comes to following the Lord Jesus peer pressure starts from a very young age and in many ways it can sometimes seem just harmless things going along with what others are doing having the same things that other people have it'll follow us into our teenage years into our working life into our old age there's always a sense of pressure the danger is that we let that pressure control every decision we make and especially when it comes to the things of God to feel a sense of pressure that you're going to be different if you become a

Christian that your life is going to lack all joy if you become a Christian that you're going to have nothing if you become a Christian that is going to affect the choices you have in the workplace or even the work you're able to take to live for Christ brings with its other pressures but it brings the promise that he is with us and he will honor us to be a Christian today is being in the minority in so many places but does that make it wrong no because God is always calling us to himself Herod didn't follow the advice of John he didn't listen to the gospel that John proclaimed to him because if he had he would have been in the minority would have cost him in the short term he would have lost face with so many but the greatest loss was in the long term and he lost or the danger was of losing his soul and that is the pressure that we are under today ourselves we're torn maybe between doing what is right with God giving our life to the Lord Jesus and keeping others who are close to us happy not losing face with others that's the decisions that we're always faced with in the midst of it we are to choose wisely maybe today you're finding yourself you doubt if God is real you doubt if it's going to make a difference in your life maybe today you're angry with God because of something that's come into your life into your experience you're finding yourself in a rage against God well sometimes these are not the right moments to choose to reject God but instead to come and ask questions about God to ask can he be real is he real can he help me to put yourself in the right place with the right people who are able to guide you on the right path sometimes when we're at our lowest or our darkest point

[50 : 28] God can come in the midst but at other points like you see with Herod here and the pressure he is under he pushes God away a man told a story about his father his father who was struggling to keep the house warm during winter and they had run out of firewood and they were struggling and he was wondering what will I do but he knew there was this tree out in the garden and in his eyes the tree was dead it had died in the winter no leaves, nothing and the coal just made the branches so brittle that if you could just snap them with your hand in his eyes the tree was dead and so he decided to cut it down and he used it as firewood but come the spring to his dismay he realized that the stump that was there was now sprouting new shoots there had still been life and the tree, a tree that had provided so much fruit for them in the summer months was now gone because of a rash decision that he'd made thinking there's no life in this tree and it would take years for that tree to come back to bearing as much fruit as it had once done and he said to his son don't forget this lesson never cut down a tree in the winter time never make a rash decision in the low times in your life never make these kinds of decisions in your worst mood wait be patient the storm will pass he said and the spring will come in our own low points in life or when we're angry with God that's not the time to just push him away it's a time to draw near to him even more to realize the life that is in him to surround yourself with people who are able to guide you and to help you to show you the way to Christ the life that is found in him that he is the one who is able to save we are surrounded by those who will tell us otherwise there's peer pressure all around us and Herod had all these people around him he didn't want to lose face with but they became more important than his own life and his own soul so for ourselves today make sure we see the precious nature of our soul and above all the beauty of Christ who is able to save our soul and to choose wisely and the final thing just briefly we see with Herod here is the consequences of all these choices we come back to looking at Herod now in his present situation he's reflecting on the decisions he's made in the past but here he is in his present situation and before we see that in verse 14 to verse 16 and what he's hearing about Jesus there in verse 14 is that he has been doing amazing works

King Herod heard of it for Jesus' name had become known some said John the Baptist has been raised from the dead and this is what strikes fear into him and the reaction to this news of Jesus being John the Baptist raised from the dead strikes fear into him his conscience is still affected even though there's some time past since John the Baptist was put to death it hasn't left his mind and this just brings that fear back to him he thinks he's going to come face to face with the one he had put to death the one he now thinks is raised from the dead and this is a time for reflection for him but it's a reminder to us too that we hear of one who is raised from the dead one who we will come face to face with one who we must appear before not John the Baptist raised from the dead but the Lord Jesus Christ the one who was put to death because of our sin but the one who we are reminded in scripture on the third day rose again who has ascended to the father who is coming back to take his people to be with him the one who we must all appear before in a sense of judgment

Herod King Herod was afraid of meeting John the Baptist raised from the dead what's your thought of meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ raised from the dead does that put you fear into your heart or does it fill you with a sense of joy if you don't believe if you don't trust him it will be fear but if you believe with all your heart that he is Lord and God of all it will fill your heart with joy to know that you will see him C.S. Lewis in his book Mere Christianity says this when the author walks onto the stage the play is over God is going to invade all right but what is the good of saying you are on his side then when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else comes crashing in this time it will be God without disguise something so overwhelming that will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature it will be too late then to choose your side that will not be the time for choosing it will be the time when you discover which side we have we really have chosen whether we realized it before or not now he says today this moment is our chance to choose the right side we are presented with choices all the time and we are to choose wisely what does it mean to choose wisely well it was a message that struck fear into Herod that this Jesus had come and if you look at verse 12 it says his disciples went out and proclaimed that people should repent this is what it means to choose wisely this is the opportunity that Herod himself had and passed by and it's your choice today no matter the choices you've made in the past and maybe we've all made many wrong choices and they've led us into many wrong places today we have the opportunity to choose wisely to choose Christ and to serve him and to follow him and to know that that choice is the greatest choice of all to know him who is our shepherd who is our Lord to say with Joshua but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord choose this day whom you will serve that is a choice before us the choice before Herod the choice we all face may we all choose wisely and follow

Christ as Lord let us pray our Father in heaven your word reminds us of the need of the choices that we make in life our greatest need of all is to know Christ as Lord and we pray that your word and your spirit will guide us in making that wise choice this day for we know that the time is short and that now even today is the time to choose the right side and so Lord we help we pray for your help your guidance your instruction to take away the often pressures we feel and to know the love of Christ that's greater than all so may you bless us and help us to that end as we ask it all in his precious name Amen we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 85 sorry

Psalm 65 in the Sing Psalms version page 82 of the Psalm books Psalm 65 we're going to sing verses 1 to verse 5 in Zion praise awaits you Lord to you our vows will pay to you all people will come near you hear us when we pray we'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise and we stand to sing in Zion praise awaits you Lord to you our vows will pay to you all people will come near you hear us when we pray when we were overwhelmed by sins and guilt upon us lay you pardoned all our trespasses and washed our guilt away how blessed are those you choose and bring within your courts of grace we're filled with blessings in your house in your most holy place with awesome deeds of righteousness you answered us

[61 : 59] O God our Savior full of far the sea and all the earth abroad after the benediction I'll go to the door to my left here we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with us all now and forevermore Amen thank you thank you