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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Sunday closest to July 13 |
| Year BProper 10RCL |

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| ***Track 1*** |  |  |
| 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19Psalm 24Ephesians 1:3-14Mark 6:14-29 |   |  |

**The Collect**

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.*Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19**

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of theLord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before theLord. When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

**The Response**

**Psalm 24**

1 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, \*
the world and all who dwell therein.

2 For it is he who founded it upon the seas \*
and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

3 "Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? " \*
and who can stand in his holy place?"

4 "Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, \*
who have not pledged themselves to falsehood,
nor sworn by what is a fraud.

5 They shall receive a blessing from the Lord \*
and a just reward from the God of their salvation."

6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, \*
of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

7 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; \*
and the King of glory shall come in.

8 "Who is this King of glory?" \*
"The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle."

9 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; \*
and the King of glory shall come in.

10 "Who is he, this King of glory?" \*
"The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory."

**The Epistle**

**Ephesians 1:3-14**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

**The Gospel**

**Mark 6:14-29**

King Herod heard of Jesus and his disciples, for Jesus’ name had become known. Some were saying, “John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.” But others said, “It is Elijah.” And others said, “It 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 Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.” And he solemnly swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.” She went out and said to her mother, “What should I ask for?” She replied, “The head of John the baptizer.” Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Sex, lust, power, corruption— and no, I’m not talking about today’s political headlines, although I could be—instead I’m talking about the Gospel reading this morning. It’s, you know, one of those situations where a person in power chooses his honor and looking good to his constituents- those who put him in power, even at the expense of someone else’s life. Think that doesn’t happen today? Think again. It may not be as out in the open, but that does not mean it doesn’t happen.

But John the Baptist was a holy man, a devout man, but an expendable man none-the less. Being holy and devout sometimes only get you so far, often times they get you in prison, and as we well know, many times it gets you killed. This story, the passion of John, presages the Passion of Christ, another holy, devout man, imprisoned in clear sight for political gain, by Pilate, a man in power who struggled and similar to Herod seemed to want to do right, but just couldn’t seem to let the power grab go. One could argue that Herod and Pilate both sense something beyond themselves, something bigger than their own worlds. They both seem to know they should pay attention and learn from these men. They, at least, recognize they have something to learn from them.

Herod and Pilate were alike in another way as well. The power they possessed was intoxicating; it was intoxicating to the point that they didn’t realize when their world was in jeopardy because of the power. They clearly thought they were all powerful, but both Herod and Pilate get played. Herod very much gets played by the woman of the story who felt called on the carpet for bad behavior and thereby insulted by John the Baptist and so they enact retribution. Similarly Pilate gets played by the Sanhedrin. The very reason they are played has to do with not realizing that power makes you a target many times. This is the way it works with power given by or taken from the world. The world’s power is a slippery slope.

Sometimes it can feel like a car driving 100 mph and someone else just grabs the steering wheel. And so what is it that makes us as people think we have control of worldly power? What makes us think that somehow we can be immune from the intoxication? that it won’t effect us if such power happens to land upon us? What if you play the lottery, do you think that somehow you will be different from anyone else if you happened to win? If you are the ruler of an army or of a city or a nation? even still, let us move to something much smaller, because in all honesty most of us will never be rulers of a country or army.. , how does one in the small sense of the world work in a family or a group of people without ending in shouting matches? or manipulating to get one’s way? how does one not let one’s emotions get tied up in whether you win? how does one live a life that doesn’t have these pitfalls? How does one live a life that doesn’t matter if your side is right or wrong, and that is not trying to dominate or get one’s way? how does one do this?

There is only one way, the way. The way of Jesus is about living the life of God. It is about doing right, without concern for the ego. It is not about getting your head straight first in order for you to do the right thing. Whether your head is straight or not is secondary. Christianity has always been doing… doing for the least, bearing others burdens, helping those who need help, without questioning whether they are worthy to receive the help. This is what draws Pilate and Herod to the men of God, John and Jesus have all the power, because they have God’s power. It is not the sort of safe power, it is not power that will protect you when things get crazy. Pilate and Herod both recognize this is power they don’t have, they want it, at least a little bit, they at least want to come close. God is fascinating— Jesus as God, and disciples and prophets, all those people who walk close to God, there is a sense about them. Sometimes it may be mistaken for being pious. If it were so easy… to act pious and then be graced, but it goes the other way around, we are called by God, we answer, and we answer in our hearts… This answering in our hearts is what changes us, and it is when we are changed that we become a little bit like those who walk close to God, we get a little bit graced. This then makes us adopted children through Christ.

And the beautiful thing is that it isn’t hard to find God, because God is always looking, beckoning and searching for us, we don’t need to try to get our thoughts all together right, we just need to do as we are commanded, to love God and neighbor as ourselves.