

Jesus' Name had become known

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 6:14-29. In last week's gospel Jesus had been rejected in his home town. But he kept on healing and teaching. He also sent his disciples out and they, too, healed and taught.

Jesus had been doing his and his disciples' work in Galilee which was Herod's ruling territory. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod's suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist.

The world into which Jesus sends his disciples is a place filled with troubling spirits. Jesus called his disciples "that they might . . . have authority to cast out demons." He sends them out to do that divine work within the fallen world. Yet such work is dangerous as John is one of a long line of prophets who will be killed for speaking God's Word. It also foreshadows the death of Jesus, as well as that of his followers.

The story of Herod and John the Baptist offers us a picture in miniature of what it means for God's saving Word of Law and Gospel to enter into the world. God will work through his Word. Though it may bring death, God will use it to bring life.

Isaiah 42:2 says of the coming Suffering Servant Savior: "*He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street.*" The lesson here is that the message of Word of God will carry itself.

Jesus often shunned publicity, even though His aim was to carry His gospel to all men. His name became known because his message did not come back empty. We, too, don't have to go through all sorts of gyrations to share the Word. We have the comfort of knowing that the Lord will use us to help share the hope of salvation that is within us.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that your holy name made itself known even when opposition was fierce. Thank you that Your Word carries itself. Assist me to help that Word shine forth in my life. Amen