**Viral:** A message of Fame

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| 11.22-23.14 | MHC | Acts 12:20-24 | God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. | 30 min |

**Introduction**

Attn: Free parenting advice – there are some stories in the Bible that don’t make the best bedtime stories. Today’s passage is one of those. Tell the story of telling it to chandler.

Relv: Read story with real warning us. (struct) Look at the story, then unpack for us.

**THE STORY OF KING HEROD’S DEATH | Read Acts 12:20-24 pg**

**The setting:**

* After Herod killed James he saw that it appeased the Jews, so he locked up Peter (proud). **When God helped Peter escape** he was very upset, so started a search
* **In his anger**, and perhaps to get away from the stress of fighting with the Christians, **he went to Caesarea** – which was a predominantly Jewish-Roman city.
* Imagine the feelings of the early church: feel small and insignificant in the Roman Empire; overpowered b/c some of the best leaders are killed on a political whim.

**Who was King Herod? – Show family tree**

* **Herod was grandson of Herod the Great**, who killed infants killed in Bethlehem.
* Crown: **ruling king named Herod** in the Acts is "Herod Agrippa I": Christians largely opposing Agrippa but Jews largely favoring Agrippa—**"Agrippa the Great"**
* **His son, Herod Agrippa II** was the 7th and final kind in Herod’s line (Acts 24-26)
* **Herod Agrippa had two main agendas: (1) Exalt Self, (2) Crush Christians**
  + In verses 2–3, **"He killed James the brother of John with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also."** What drove him was his desire to be popular as a powerful ruler.
* Today’s psg is only 4 verses long, but **we have details given to us by a historian named Josephus**, the story is about the same Herod and has verifiable details.
  + Acts explains him as cruel b/c Christians; Josephus calls him great (problem)

**The people involved in this drama**

* **God is the main player**. This story is undoubtedly about God and his (1) power as Lord over all things to give and take life as he sees fit; (2) it also make it clear that there is only one true God—**“no other god’s beside him” … no even self**
* **The people of Tyre and Sidon.** These people were unique in Judea:
  + **They were costal cities** and didn’t have vegetation or dessert like most Israel
  + **They were free self-governing cities** economically independent from Judea
  + **The relied on Judea for food**. Like California relies on Iowa, they needed the breadbasket of Galilee Region (where Jesus did ministry up north) for fish/grain
* **We don’t know what they were fighting with Herod about** but we know it made him angry. They had to do something to appease him or they would lose their lifeline
* **Blastus was the king’s Chamberlain** (any chamberlains here? ☺) –the man who manages the household – lit. “over the bedroom”. In charge of King’s personal life.
  + **I have to wonder what kind of bribery or peaing they did to see the king** in the verse 21 we see it worked and they are given an audience.
* **The people in the town** – there would have been thousands of ppl gathered. Josephus gives a great account of the details of the festivals. We was celebrating the Emperor Gaius (who appointed him King – man crush). Many pwrful people there.

**The backstory – from Josephus**

* Agrippa was thrown in prison years yearly by a ruler named Tiberius.
* He was **in pain and grief leaning against a tree** when a fellow German prisoner asked to go talk with him. There was an owl (Gk. “Brid Bubo”) sitting in that tree.
* **The German man speaks a sort of prophecy over Agrippa** – Your pain will be gone, you will be powerful and have wealth and happiness. But if you see this bird again you will have five days to live. – I read this account my self.

**Let’s fast forward a few years later to Herod in Acts 12:21-23**—The Theatre Scene

* **The “Prophecy” came true** – he was powerful, wealthy and happy. It came true.
* Now on the 2nd appointed day **Josephus tells us they were in the theatre.** The people gathered to hear the king, but see the dispute between Tyre, Sidon and Herod
* **“Put on his royal robe”** is expounded by Josephus to tell us that “He put on a garment made wholly of silver and a contexture truly wonderful. He came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun’s rays upon it, shown in a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread horror over those that looked intently upon him.”
* **“He delivered an oration to them”** that was surely eloquent, but the coat would have been captivating as well. They were superstitious and/or Polytheistic (believing in many gods) so they saw his presence and words as a divine act.
* They started yelling **“The voice of a god and not a man”:** This had to be flattery on their behalf but he welcomed it as worship. Josephus writes two important details:
  + “Presently his flatters cried out from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, “Be thou merciful upon us, for although we have hitherto reverenced thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.”
  + “Upon this the king did not either rebuke them, nor did he reject their impious flattery.”

Herod’s Death: **The account differs between acts and Josephus** – or does it?

* **Josephus tells us that** “Soon afterward [not rebuking the crowd for their flattery] he looked up and saw an owl sitting on a rope above his head, and recognized it as once as a messenger of evil as on a former occasion it has been a messenger of good; and a pang of grief pierced his heart.” – I don’t know if the Owl was the Messenger of God but the Christian’s know God’s presence/wrath was there and so did Herod.
  + In Josephus account, **the pain was immediate but his death came five days later**. He was in his palace in pain for 5 days in his “stomach and bowels” while people worshiped and wept outside his window. – Judgement of God upon him
* Verse 23 says, **“Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.”**
  + The Bible, **also a historical account** (more reliable b/c inspired by God) tell us that the judgment was immediate. It could be that the worms were in his gut eating him alive and he did breathe his last but **was immediately powerless**.
  + Don’t miss Luke’s clear reason fro why this happened: **“Because he did not give glory to God.”** God takes ppl out that try to be God and misdirect glory
* **Ch 12 begins w/ Herod killing James** (v. 2): ends w/ **Lord killing Herod** (v. 23)
  + There seems to be a tie all through chapter 12—if you oppose Jesus, you lose.
  + The truth is (for us and the early church): if you stay with Jesus, you win. So be bold and courageous to spread the Gospel and leave the outcome to God.

**Vs. 24 – “The word of God increased and multiplied**.**”**

* **God turned the tables entirely on all that Herod was trying to do by killing James and arresting Peter**—He made the Word of God grow and multiply.
  + He exalted God not Herod. He made the reputation of Jesus spread, not Herod's.
* **This is the goal of all God does—to magnify his wisdom and power and spread the fame of his Son who saves sinners and glorifies his Father**.

**So what can we learn from this?** The lesson for us is plain:

**“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”**

(Lets’ say this together). We see this passage stated for us:

* + **By Solomon,** who was rich, powerful, had 700+ women and he still wrote that **“[God] mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble” Proverbs 3:34**
* Mock, (NASB) scoff, (KJV) Scorn: Pride is not circumstance, its a state of mind
  + **By James**, the brother of Jesus who certainly had reason to be proud of his sibling, his position and power, but wasn’t. **He wrote, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6 b**
* **Peter**, who some thought was the first pope, but wasn’t and (remember) he acknowledged to the Centurion that he was not worthy of being bowed down to. He wrote, **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5:5**

You may be sitting here saying, **I am not prideful, but consider, are you prideful:**

* **In your comparing** – “At least not as much as so and so” – that is pride.
* **In your marriage** – are you more about your way than serving your spouse? scale
* **In your work** – do you find more significance that you should, not giving glory to God? Do you do things to show power or make up for your own insecurities, all the while not trusting God in the finite details. If you can trust him with your salvation, can’t you also trust him with your significance? (dandelion quote) be humble
  + **Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived: God Cannot be mocked”** Pride mocks God because you are “mimicking” him thinking you can rule better.
* **In your parenting** – are you more of a king or a in the mode of image management than you are a servant to their souls to present them to Christ as whole as possible.

**Two types of Pride:** “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”-

1. **Superiority**: make everyone else lower than themselves. James 4:10
2. **Inferiority**: many of us who don’t struggle with superiority but inferiority.

* **“A prevailing sense of inferiority is just another form of self absorption.”**
* Hating yourself is also prideful: We must give glory to God for what he is due. He created you “Fearfully and wonderfully”.
* If you are holding on to your mistakes, you are acting bigger than God and not accepting the forgiveness he grants you through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

**True humility means that you are free from pride and arrogance. You know that in your flesh you are inadequate, yet you also know who you are in Christ.**

* Explain the difference btwn “self-confidence” and “Christ-confidence” prch the gspl

**GOD IS ABLE TO HUMBLE THE PROUD**

* You and I have been warned today in this passage - “God will humble the proud.”
* **Humble people submit to God’s Lordship, enroll in God’s Service, and give to God’s purposes.**
* If you are seeking the praise of men, you are on a collision course with God.
* **Humble Live for God’s glory.** No one did this better than JC himself.
* **Jesus said, "He who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11; 18:14). Herod's place is to be put down for the treason of his self-exaltation in the place of God-exaltation.**

Hudson Taylor was scheduled to speak at a Large Presbyterian church in Melbourne, Australia. The moderator of the service introduced the missionary in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China, and then presented him as "our illustrious guest." Taylor stood quietly for a moment, and then opened his message by saying, "Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master."

W. Wiersbe, Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, p. 243.

Pride is the dandelion of the soul. Its root goes deep; only a little left behind sprouts again. Its seeds lodge in the tiniest encouraging cracks. And it flourishes in good soil: The danger of pride is that it feeds on goodness. - David Rhodes