

## An Opportunity Came

Mark 6:13-29

Have you ever bought a new vehicle and then noticed how many other people are driving the same thing? It could be that you are a trend setter. People see what you drive and then go out and get one for themselves. Or it could be that you just weren't paying attention. Those cars were already on the road, but you didn't see them because you weren't looking for them. We are much more likely to find something if we are actively looking for it.

What are you searching for? A new piece of furniture? The tool that would make your current project so much easier? A more fulfilling job? An opportunity to get away for a few days?

Herod was looking for a way to get his brother's wife to be his own wife. God had said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife," but he did anyway. His neighbor was his brother, and he found a way to entice her away from him. God had said, "You shall not commit adultery," but he did anyway. He married his brother's wife, breaking their one flesh union.

As God's prophet, John was obliged to say something about this. *John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."*

This did not sit well with his brother's wife, Herodias. She nagged Herod about it enough that he eventually broke down and arrested John. But that wasn't enough for her. *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 – until the opportune time.*

Herodias was searching. She was active looking for something. She was determined to find it. And *an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.*

You heard what happened. In the heat of the moment he made a rash promise witnessed by a large number of people. And so when he was asked to keep his promise and deliver the head of John the Baptist, what choice did he have? He could have swallowed his pride and done the right thing. But he was more concerned about looking weak than he was about doing what was right. So Herodias got what she wanted – the head of John the Baptist on a platter. She no longer had to listen to John pointing out her sin.

I bet that, at this point, you would rather have me talk about what happened to John's head instead of pointing out your sin. It is not fun to be reminded of the times we have ignored what God says and done what He forbids. We can feel perplexed when someone points out how we

have in thought, word, and deed chosen to follow our own sinful desires rather than God's good plan for our lives. Who in the world would seek out an opportunity to be shown how they have fallen short of what God commands?

Followers of Jesus would. You would. You know that after a hymn and the invocation comes the confession of sins. Why would you willingly subject yourself to that? Because you know what follows – absolution – the word of Christ delivering to you the forgiveness of all your sin!

Herodias was not the only one looking for the opportune time. Our heavenly Father watched and waited as well. Then the time came. *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons* (Galatians 4:4-5)

At the opportune time God the Father sent His Son into the world for you. For you were under the Law. Your sins against God and those around you rightly condemned you. But Jesus came at the opportune time to redeem you, to pay for your sins with His blood and earn for you the forgiveness of all your sin.

That last Bible verse I threw at you was from Galatians. This one is from Romans: *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... God*

*shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (5:6-7).

Christ died for you to earn for you forgiveness for all of those times you looked for an opportunity to sin and found it.

Christ died for you, and gives His Spirit to live in you, so that you set your search a bit higher. He creates in you the desire to search for opportunities to serve.

*When [John's] disciples heard of [his death], they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.* Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and laid it in a tomb. Simple acts of service to show their love.

Do you know someone who is hurting, someone who would appreciate a little bit of your time and an encouraging word? If not, I bet you could find someone if you started looking for the opportunity.

That can be your homework. Look for opportunities to serve. Look for a need, and use the gifts God has given you to meet that need.

Jesus has met your greatest need – the forgiveness of your sin – so that you can live with Him eternally. Now you have the opportunity to show how grateful you are by serving others. Look for that opportunity and you will find it. Amen.