

## **Sermon Summary**

**7<sup>th</sup> after Pentecost**

**15th July 2012**

- Mark 6:14-29 interrupts the sending out of the disciples, and the accounts of their return.
- Mark often inserts passages like this to flash up some additional warning.
- Here we are told of the fate of John the Baptist
- Its a puzzling story as many of the details just do not fit with the customs of the time.
- It is hard, for example, to imagine a Jewish princess dancing at a dinner party.
- The ancient historian Josephus tells us that the Baptist was put to death because he was seen as a potential troublemaker
- Here, it is criticism of the behaviour of the king ( most of the complicated details of the Herod's soap-opera lifestyle are also muddled) which are identified as a major part of the Baptist's fate.
- Mark has inserted the passage here as a warning to his readers that they should not think of the Church's mission as all glorious or easy.
- They might well have come to understand this, living after both official and unofficial persecutions of the Church.
- There are times when Christians, like the Baptist, need to proclaim the lifestyle and behaviour demanded by God.
- We live in a time when such questions are to the fore as our nation engages with the issues of same-sex unions.
- The Baptist reminds us of our duty to contribute to such debates, even if this will bring criticism.
- We are unlikely to suffer the martyrdom of the Baptist, but must be prepared to proclaim what we believe to be the essential truths of the gospel in the face of being, ridiculed or slandered.
- The irony is that this is the behaviour of 'liberal' debate as much as strict ideology- a liberalism which is, in many ways, shaped by the place given by Jesus to respect and dignity.

15<sup>th</sup> July 2012