

## Sermon on Sunday, March 13, 2022

Growing up, I was told that if I tried hard enough, I could do anything. I honestly believed it. So, when I went to college as a music major, I had a class called ear training. The whole point of the class was to teach the ear how to hear different aspects of music. For example, here comes the bride-perfect fourth, star wars fifth, somewhere over the rainbow is an octave but when it came to intervals and no I will not go into what intervals are, you're welcome, when it came to intervals I couldn't hear the changes. Friends, I spent over 200 hours in the ear training lab trying to hear intervals but I couldn't do it. What is happening? I worked so hard and yet, I couldn't do it. I thought I could do anything if I worked hard enough. I had to surrender to the possibility that I was not cut out to be a music major. As I continued down that road, I discovered that it was definitely true. Music was important to me, but God had another path for me. I had to surrender to God and what God wanted. I gave up my dream of being an opera singer and I know that sounds sad, but it's not. Looking back, it was the right decision but at the time, it was rough. Often, surrendering our way for God's way hurts.

“If I just try hard enough, I can make it work. I can make it work. In that statement, we have left out a very important thing; God. I can tell you, when I was in the ear training lab listening to intervals and failing to be able to recognize them, I was empty. I fought and I fought and yet, I couldn't do it. What is wrong with me that I can't do this? Nothing. I was trying to be something I wasn't. I forgot to pray and ask God if this is what I was supposed to be. God was trying to tell me music wasn't my path. God was trying to tell me to surrender to God's ways. But God, I can do it.

Often, what we want and what we need are not the same things. Herod wanted to be king. Before we get into that, I want to give you some history about King Herod Antipas. His father was King Herod the Great. Herod the Great ruled over all Israel. Now remember, Herod doesn't own this land. It is a part of the Roman Empire. Herod was chosen by Rome to lead as a vassal state for the Roman Empire. On this slide, you can see the area which Herod ruled. But he was also paranoid. He is best known for his building projects such as the port city of Caesarea Maritima. Though a building genius, Herod was also a brutal ruler. He killed a wife and two sons because he thought they might be plotting to take his power. So, when Herod knew he was about to die, he decided it wasn't good for one of his sons to have all the power. He decided to split Israel into what was called a tetrarch. Three of his sons got three different areas. Herod Antipas ruled Jerusalem. He, like his father, wanted power. As a result, Herod compromised his

faith. Herod was Jewish, which is one reason why he and his family were chosen to rule. They were Jewish to rule over the Jewish kingdom of Israel yet they were faithful to Rome. It's the perfect fit...for Rome. Herod then appointed people who were like him, Jewish and more loyal to Rome than God, to important political and religious positions. Such positions were the elders, chief priests, and Pharisees. However, I can't stress this enough, not all elders, chief priests and Pharisees were more loyal to Rome. Many were trying to do what is right by God and their faith and these are Pharisees we meet today. They warn Jesus not to go to Jerusalem because there are people there who are plotting his death, most especially Herod.

But God has given Jesus a task and that is to heal the sick and preach God's word. No one and nothing is going to stand in his way. He says he will continue to do what he knows God wants him to do. Jesus has surrendered himself to God's purpose. I always wonder if it's hard for Jesus to go to Jerusalem first because he knows he will die there and second, because he has to leave work unfinished. There are always more people to preach to and more people to heal. We will read that Jesus often had to leave work undone explaining he has to go to Jerusalem. Often what we want and what God wants for us are not the same thing. Herod wanted power. He wouldn't surrender his wants to God because that would mean he no longer could put his ambition before his faith. He could no longer take advantage of the people to his gain. He could no longer turn a blind eye to the injustices of Rome. Surrendering to God would have had a huge cost for Herod and his family.

When we surrender to God, there is a cost but Paul explains the cost of *not* to surrender to God is worse. It causes us to be selfish, putting our wants and needs above God and others. Paul says if we surrender to God our joy and crown will be found in God. When we try to do it by ourselves, when we think we are in control, when we fight to make it work, we are left empty. We try over and over to fill ourselves but we can't. It's only when we surrender to God and God's ways that we begin to feel filled.

But how do we know that we need to surrender to God? That we are fighting to make something work? Because we fight and fight and try and try and still feel empty. We get to a point and ask ourselves, what are we fighting for? Is this really what we want? We are empty, tired, and burnt out. Or, perhaps in our gut, we know what we are doing is not right. Herod, sitting and listening to Rabbis teach about the Holy Scripture had to know what he was doing was wrong. When we have faith yet choose our own selfish interests, deep down we know we're wrong

and that leaves us empty. It's only when we surrender our selfish ways and our wants for what God wants are we filled completely.