

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

John the Baptizer is a hero of our faith, his mother Elizabeth was kinswoman to Jesus' mother Mary, he leapt for joy while still in the womb when the pregnant Mary came to visit the also pregnant but further along Elizabeth. His mission in life was to be the voice of one calling out in the wilderness, preparing the way for the coming of the one whose sandals John himself said he was not worthy to untie. He baptized Jesus in the Jordan river, hearing the voice of the Father proclaim Jesus his Son, while witnessing the Holy Spirit like a dove lit upon Jesus. He wore strange clothes and ate a somewhat odd diet, and lived, preached and baptized in the wilderness. Most of us probably wouldn't be too excited about living where he lived, eating what he ate, wearing what he wore, and especially, dying as he died. John lived and died as the last of the OT prophets, not as a Christian, he was Jewish, and he died before Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. As you heard me read, John the Baptizer was beheaded. He was beheaded because he spoke to the truth to all, not just to tax collectors and soldiers, not just to Pharisees and Sadducees, but to those in power, including Herod the King.

After divorcing his own wife, and angering her father in the process, Herod had taken his brother's wife Herodias to be his wife while she was still married to his brother. Got all that? There's more, his former father-in-law who was a king himself had subsequently gone to war against Herod, and won. At any rate, John the Baptizer spoke out against such things, Herod was a Jew, although I'd describe him as pretty nominal in his faith, and everything he had done had broken the Law of Moses. John publically called him on it, was put in prison, and you know the rest of the story. But John had done what he had to do, he had spoken out against what Herod had done, and he ended up losing his head over it.

Now as long as we're around here, you and I probably don't have to worry too much about losing our heads, not literally anyway, but we, you and I, are still called as Christians to speak out on issues from the vantage point of our faith. Now there are those who will tell us to keep our faith private and out of public affairs. But being a Lutheran Christian is as much about