

Mark 6:14-29

What good is a body without a head? Herodias couldn't have cared less about the body of John the Baptist. All she wanted was his head. That was her prize. His body was left to rot in the dungeon cell. But John's disciples were of a different spirit. After John was beheaded, they *"came and took his body and laid it in a tomb."* They cared for his body even though it was missing its head.

Herodias displays an attitude that is completely different from God's. When you and I were missing our head, God cared for the body. In Eden the executioner came in the form of a serpent, and he cunningly, just like Herodias, cut off the Head of our human race. Christ is our head. But in Eden we were beheaded when our race fell away from God. We became a lifeless body. And Satan was laughing, just like Herodias, as he claimed our head for his prize.

But God did not despise our lifeless body, leaving us to rot in hell's dungeon. He restored us to our Head with His gracious promise of the coming Savior. And the day that you were baptized is the day that God reattached your precious Head to your lifeless body.

What good is a body without a head? It's no good. It cannot rise up and live before God. It can only lie there helpless and hopeless, fit only to be tossed into the grave forever. And this we once were. But no longer. You, the baptized, are back in place under your true Head. He gives life to His body. He enables you to live with joy and hope, for your destiny is not the eternal dungeon of hell, but a mansion prepared for the body of Christ in heaven.

Now do you think that Satan, who once cut off our head, wants us to live back under our head? Of course not! And so he deceives us into thinking that we are still a lifeless body without a head. Sometimes we laugh at ourselves saying things like, "Where is my head today? I'm so out of sorts!" or "I must have lost my mind!" But then there are days when it gets worse; when we fall for Satan's deception. We doubt whether our true Head really is in place over us. We look at how sinful we have been and we believe the devil's lie that no one who has Christ as their Head would ever act in such a way...so we really are not the body of Christ; we are a lifeless body without hope, without a head.

And there are also days when we would rather not have Christ as our Head. We act like our first parents in Eden. We turn away from God. We do not want Christ leading us. We follow a different head. We put an idol up where God should be. We follow our flesh and its desires, and not our gracious and loving Lord. This is more serious than we are willing to admit. If Christ is not in place as our rightful Head, then we are not His body, and then we will not follow Him in this life, nor into the life to come.

We must repent. God does not, in any way, despise you as a lifeless, headless body. He who brought you under Christ as your Head in your baptism, is always seeking us and calling us back to Christ.

God did not create us to live without a head. What Herodias did to John was unnatural; an abominable act in God's eyes - just what ISIS is doing today to those who profess the name of

Christ. But in severing John's head from his body, Herodias could not sever John from Christ. Nor can any terrorist today remove Jesus from His dear children of faith simply by removing their heads.

And friend, nothing that you have done in your past; nothing that the devil has led you to do; nothing that you have done that was so wickedly evil can prevent Christ from coming again to His rightful place as your loving Head.

He gave up His head and body on the cross for you. They pierced His head with thorns. They spit on His head. They despised His head. And in great anguish, Jesus' head dropped down to His body in death. But on the Third Day He rose victorious. Your Head journeyed through death into life. And you, His body, therefore, will follow Him through this dying world into the life to come.

Just as you were born from your mother with body and head, so it is God's desire that you live every day of your life as the body of Christ, and He as your Head. What do you do when you injure a toe, or break an arm or a finger? Do you get rid of it? No! You take care of it. You put on medicine. You do what is necessary to heal that injured part of your body.

This is what Jesus does for you every time you and I act in a sinful manner. You are His body. He loves you and cares for you. So you've gone out and injured the body of Christ by your sinfulness. So have I. Jesus does not despise you for it. Maybe your life is broken and you no longer see yourself as an essential part of the body of Christ. Friend, you are precious to your living Head. Jesus does not ever reject any part of His body. That's why He died for you.

Here is the medicine for you...God forgives you. For whatever evil you have done, you are forgiven. Here in the Sacrament is the medicine for Jesus' body. Jesus' body is sinful, marred, injured, broken. This is why His Supper is here for you. Here is real forgiveness for His broken body. He does not despise and reject you. He forgives you, and He takes His place again over you as your loving Head. Jesus is no Herodias. She delighted in severing head from body. Jesus is just the opposite. He is always drawing His body back to its head. In mercy He is always calling you back to Himself.

And that's where we want to be. The more we know Jesus' love; the more we see His grace in our life, the more we want Him, and nothing else, as our Head; the more we want Him to lead us. And He does. Where the head goes, the body follows. Our Head went through suffering and death, and so must we. But as our Head entered into the glorious life, so we too must follow. And we will, by His grace. Amen.