

**“Living Your Best Life Now, with John the Baptist, Part 1”**

**Mark 6:12-30**

**January 28, 2024**

**Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service**

*Pastor Nicoletti*

**The Reading of the Word**

We return this morning to the Gospel of Mark. Last week we heard about Jesus sending the Twelve Apostles out to preach, to drive out demons, and to heal.

Now Mark tells us about that news reaching Herod, and with that, we’re also told about the fate of John the Baptist, who had prepared the way for Jesus’s ministry.

With that in mind, let’s hear now from our text: Mark 6:12-30.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s Word for us this morning.

Mark writes:

<sup>6:12</sup> So they [the Twelve] went out and proclaimed that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

<sup>14</sup> King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.” <sup>15</sup> But others said, “He is Elijah.” And others said, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.” <sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard of it, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.” <sup>17</sup> For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.” <sup>19</sup> And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, <sup>20</sup> for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

<sup>21</sup> But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup> For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.” <sup>23</sup> And he vowed to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.” <sup>24</sup> And she went out and said to her mother, “For what should I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.” <sup>25</sup> And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” <sup>26</sup> And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. <sup>27</sup> And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison <sup>28</sup> and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

<sup>30</sup> The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

### **Prayer of Illumination**

Lord, we ask you to work now through this, your word to your servants,  
the very word in which you have helped us to place our hope.  
For our comfort in the afflictions we face in this world,  
is that your promises in your word give us life.  
Though the world may deride us,  
we do not turn from this your revelation to us.  
Teach us from it now, we ask, in Jesus’s name. Amen.  
[Based on Psalm 119:49-51]

### **Introduction**

We have here this story about John the Baptist.

And I want to start by asking: Why on earth did Mark put this story here in his gospel?

Most of this passage is a flashback ... right? Verses 14 through 16 are happening at the same time as the other events in chapter six, but verses 17 through 29 are all looking back at events that had happened earlier. Mark told us about John’s arrest all the way back in chapter one [1:14] ... but he waits until now to come back to tell us about John’s earthly fate. But why here? Why now?

And we can better understand what Mark is doing here when we remember his style and structural choices throughout his gospel, and what those choices usually mean.

It’s been a while since we’ve talked about it, but if you remember, one unique characteristic of Mark is that he likes to tell stories in sandwiches. A “Markan Sandwich” is when Mark begins to tell one story ... then he pauses that story to tell another story ... and then he returns to the first story and concludes it. So one story is split between the beginning and the end, like two pieces of bread, and the other story is in the middle, like the meat of the sandwich. And in this format, the middle story is often meant to help us interpret the outer story that has been split. [Edwards, 11]

There are nine such “Markan Sandwiches” in the Gospel of Mark, and we just heard from one of them.

Now ... this one, unlike most of the others, is a bit more subtle. In fact, it’s so subtle that on a first reading we can easily miss it – especially with how the headings in our Bibles, which were not part of Mark’s original text, divide these verses up. But take a look at the text again. Particularly, take a look at verses twelve and thirteen, and then look at verse thirty.

They seem like they should be together ... right? Verse thirty is part of the same story as verses twelve and thirteen. It's the conclusion of that story. In the previous passage, Jesus sends out the Twelve to do the work of ministry, he directs them and equips them, and sends them out. Verse twelve tells us that they went out, as they were told. Verse thirteen tells us some of the fruit of their ministry, and verse thirty concludes the story, with their return to Jesus. But in-between the last two verses of this story, Mark wedges what looks like a completely different story, about Herod, Herodias, and John the Baptist. Why would he do that?

Well, remember how the other Markan Sandwiches work: The inner story is meant to inform how we understand the outer story.

The outer story here is the one where Jesus sends the twelve out to tell others about him: he sends them out to spread the gospel, to call people to "repent," we're told in verse twelve. He warns them, when he sends them out, that people will respond in a variety of ways. But they go out anyway – they faithfully seek to do what Jesus calls them to do.

But most of us would then like to hear some more details about how things actually went – about what their ministry looked like and how people responded. Because while there are obvious differences between us and the Apostles, even so, the Apostles often serve as models for us. And so, we want to know: How did they go about the work they were called to? How did they handle difficult people? How did they call people to repentance? What should we expect when we faithfully point others to Christ and call them to repent – to turn from their sin – and reorient their lives towards him? These are natural questions that should arise as we read this story about Jesus sending out the Twelve.

But interestingly, Mark doesn't tell us what it was like for the Apostles. He seems to skip right over that part of the story. He tells us they went out, in verse twelve. He tells us they had some positive results in verse thirteen. And then he tells us they came back in verse thirty.

Mark doesn't tell us the details of the Apostles' experience of ministry, or how they handled difficult situations. But that doesn't mean that Mark doesn't answer our questions. In fact, he does answer our questions about what faithful witness looks like, at the exact moment where we might be asking, along with what we should expect in response if we too speak God's truth to others.

But for whatever reason – and I can imagine several, but we're not told what Mark's thinking was – but for whatever reason, it's as if Mark says to us: "Ok. Do you want to know what faithful ministry looks like now? Do you want to know what it looks like to speak God's truth to others rightly? Do you want to know how people might respond to you if you do? I'll tell you. But I'm not going to tell you by describing what happened to the Twelve here. I'm going to tell you by describing what happened to John the Baptist." And that's what he does.

The thematic connection is obvious. We're told in verse twelve that the Apostles went out proclaiming to people that they should repent. And then Mark shifts to a story about what happened to John the Baptist when he called on someone to repent.

And so, by sandwiching this story as he does within another story of Christian witness and ministry, Mark is holding out John the Baptist as a model for us, of how to do faithful Christian ministry, and how other people might respond to us if we do. [Edwards, 177]

All Christians are called to be Christ's witnesses in the world. That will look very different from person to person, but we are all called to that. And Mark tells us here to look to John if we want to learn more about how to do that well, and what to expect when we do.

So with that in mind, I want to consider from this text first how John the Baptist ministers to others here, and then second, how people respond to John the Baptist.

Now ... my original plan was to do both of those things in one sermon. But as is often the case, it got way too long, and so we will spend two Sundays on this passage.

This morning we will focus on how John the Baptist ministers to others – how he serves as an ambassador of the Lord. And next Lord's Day we'll consider what kind of responses we can expect when we follow John's example.

For today though, we will see four elements when we consider how John the Baptist ministers to others.

What we see here is that John the Baptist is speaking the truth in love, with persistence, with a personal focus, and regardless of the consequences.

### **Speaking the Truth in Love**

So, first, John is speaking the truth in love.

First, John is speaking the truth to Herod. He's speaking difficult truths to him: confronting him over sin, and calling him to repent. But with that, it's also clear that he's not speaking that way in hate. He's not seeking Herod's destruction. Rather, he's seeking Herod's redemption. John is speaking these hard truths out of love.

And that becomes more evident by how Herod responds to John. Herod has John arrested, we read in verse seventeen, because John was calling on Herod to repent of sin, and both Herod (and his wife) didn't like that.

But then, we're told at the end of verse twenty that when Herod heard John "he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly." There was something in how John spoke that attracted Herod and drew him to John. Even as John said things Herod hated to hear, John was speaking in such a way, and saying such things, that Herod was glad to hear from him. We learn in verse 20 that Herod had respect and high regard for John. But we also get the sense that Herod had a sense of personal connection or care for John – as we're told in verse 26 that Herod was "exceedingly sorry" over John's death.

Herod, remember, was a brutal man who demanded respect and honor – he didn't welcome criticism. And yet he heard John gladly, he respected him, and he was exceedingly sorry to lose John ... even as John confronted him over his sin.

It's hard to believe that Herod would have felt that way if he thought that John hated him. Instead, it seems far more likely that Herod believed that John cared for him – otherwise Herod's emotional responses to John make little sense.

John spoke biblical, spiritual truths to Herod – hard truths even – but he did it in love, in such a way that Herod wanted to talk with him.

Now ... what that combination of biblical truth and biblical love should look like will be different for different people in our lives. We see this in John's own ministry. John spoke differently to Pharisees and Sadducees [Matthew 3:7-10] than he spoke to tax collectors and soldiers [Luke 3:12-14]. Similarly, we see that how Jesus spoke to a Pharisee and teacher like Nicodemus [John 3] was very different from how he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well [John 4]. Paul too spoke very differently when he was speaking to Jews in the synagogue [Acts 13:13-52], or to common pagans among the Gentiles [Acts 14:8-18], or to Greco-Roman philosophers in Athens [Acts 17:16-34]. Relational, emotional, and spiritual wisdom and discernment is needed to know how to wisely and appropriately speak the truth in love to each kind of person, depending on where they are spiritually, and the state of our relationship with them.

If you want to dig more deeply into navigating those questions, I'd highly recommend Jeram Barrs' books *The Heart of Evangelism* and *Learning Evangelism from Jesus*, as he digs into biblical texts about Paul and Jesus to learn what they model for us in more detail.

But what is universal across these texts, and what we see here in our text this morning, is the call to speak the truth in love.

For Herod, the tone required and described here is more confrontational. Herod desires to be the King of the Jews. He's not really. He's a tetrarch, not a monarch – one of four rather than the sole ruler – and he owes his power to Rome, and is despised by many of the Jews. But he still seeks to be not only a member of God's people, but a leader among God's people. And so John confronts him for the ways he is living inconsistently with that.

For Herod, it is appropriate to start with his sin, because Herod claims to be a member and leader of God's people. But when Jesus speaks to the woman at the well, or when Paul speaks to the philosophers in Athens, they don't begin with speaking of their sin, since those they speak to there aren't making the sort of claims Herod is about their spiritual allegiances. They will get to discussing sin ... but it's not the starting point. But with Herod, it is a good starting point for John.

And so, with that said, we should ask: What was Herod's sin?

To answer that, we need to start by being clear about which Herod we're talking about here. This is Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great. Herod the Great was the one who tried to kill Jesus when Jesus was still a baby. When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided into four parts, under four of his sons – with each son ruling one division as a “tetrarch.” Herod Antipas was one of those tetrarchs.

Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus. Aristobulus was also Herod the Great's son, and Herod Antipas's half-brother. Herodias was therefore the granddaughter of Herod the Great, and a niece of Herod Antipas. But then Herodias married a different one of her uncles, Herod Antipas's half-

brother Herod Philip, while Herod Antipas was married to the daughter of King Aretas. If you're a little confused, don't feel bad, so far in this story we have three Herods plus one Herodias. But that's not the problem John identifies.

The problem John speaks to, is that after they both were married to other people, Herod Antipas convinced Herodias to divorce her husband, Herod Philip, while Herod Antipas himself divorced his own wife, so that he and Herodias could then get married.

This was an act of marital unfaithfulness, which seems to involve both divorce without biblical grounds, as well as breaking the laws of Leviticus that are specifically against marrying your brother's wife [Leviticus 18:15; 20:21]. And that's what John the Baptist confronted Herod Antipas about.

Herod Antipas, who was claiming to be a leader among the people of God, was living in flagrant disobedience to God's Word.

It was therefore appropriate and necessary that John confront him on this issue – that he speak this difficult truth to him, in loving rebuke, calling Herod to repentance. That's what's modeled here.

Now again, as we consider our own lives, what it looks like for us to speak the truth in love to others will vary depending on the circumstances, just as it did for John, Jesus, and Paul. And so, our text is therefore not a call to confront every person we meet about every sin of theirs we become aware of, right as we become aware of it. But it is a call to speak difficult but appropriate and important spiritual truths to people that they need to hear, even if they don't want to hear it – and to do it in love, seeking their good. As we see in Jesus and Paul, this will often be more gentle when we speak to non-Christians. As we see here, it may mean being more direct when we speak to those who claim to be Christians – especially if they are in Christian leadership.

John speaks a difficult, uncomfortable truth to Herod. But he doesn't do it out of hate, or spite, or a sense of superiority. He does it for Herod's good – to call him to repentance and a right relationship with God. He does it out of love. And that is what we are called to as well.

That's the first thing we see here.

## With Persistence

Second, we see that John spoke the truth in love with persistence.

And by “persistence” I don’t mean he was obsessed with one issue so that it crowded out all others. We know from the other gospels that John ministered to a range of people in a range of ways. I also don’t mean that he harassed Herod constantly about this one thing. Rather, what I mean is that John did not tire of speaking the truth in love to Herod no matter how difficult Herod was.

Presumably, John kept interacting with Herod because Herod kept inviting him to. John’s initial words that came to Herod and upset him were not words that were invited by Herod – that’s why Herod sent people out to arrest John in verse seventeen. But then, verse twenty, almost in passing, refers to “when [Herod] heard John.” But once Herod had him in custody, the only reason Herod would hear from John was if Herod invited John to speak to him at that point. And Mark adds that in those times “Herod heard [John] gladly.” As we said, this all testifies to how well John spoke the truth in love.

That said ... stop and think for a moment, of how tiring this must have been. Imagine you’re John. You have an important ministry. Then you’re arrested by Herod. Herod keeps you in prison, keeps you from doing your work ... and then, from time to time, he summons you and calls on you to speak to him alone. Maybe the first time would feel like a real opportunity. But if Herod heard him “gladly” then I would guess it happened several times. Herod did not seem to change though. But he kept summoning John back to speak to him again.

The temptation to lose patience with Herod – to just denounce him, or to refuse to speak to him anymore – to write him off – that temptation must have been great for John. But John didn’t do that. Mark indicates that Herod continued to hear John gladly and so John must have continued to speak to him to the very end. Herod was, after all, “exceedingly sorry” we’re told in verse twenty-six, that John would no longer be available to him.

When speaking the truth in love to Christians or non-Christians, there can be a temptation to lose patience – to try once, or try twice and then give up. From the hints we see here though, it doesn’t look like John gave up ... not even on Herod. He persisted. He kept speaking the truth in love.

So who, in your life, are you tempted to give up on, spiritually? Or who have you already given up on?

Mark holds before us the model of John, who wouldn’t give up speaking the truth in love, even to the brutal tyrant who was holding him in prison. How much less should we give up speaking the truth in love to the people around us?

So John models for us what it looks like to speak the truth in love with persistence.

## **With Personal Focus**

Third, we see here that John spoke the truth in love, with persistence, and with a personal focus.

And what I mean here is that John was focused on Herod as a person.

Now, of course, Herod was a public person, and I'm not saying that John split apart the public and private aspects of who Herod was. After all, marriage among leaders in the ancient world was often a matter of establishing political allegiances, and that dynamic was often at work in Herod's family.

Rather, my point is that here, in this passage, John's confrontation and exhortation to Herod does not seem to treat Herod as a mere means to an end, but it focuses on Herod's personal standing before God first.

To put this differently: We can sometimes want people to grow spiritually or to convert, first and foremost because it would make our lives easier. We want this or that difficult person to repent in this or that way, largely because the sins they are committing are making our lives more difficult.

And a Jew in the first century would have those kinds of sins they'd want Herod to repent of. They'd want him to repent of collaborating with Rome. They'd want him to repent of the self-serving ways he ruled. They'd want him to repent of how he treated Jews under his authority. All of these were things that they might call Herod to repent over for their own benefit. And it's not wrong to do that! We see plenty of faithful examples in the Bible of leaders being called to repent of their injustices and oppression for the good of those they rule over. That can be a noble way to confront people in authority.

But I think it's striking that that's not what gets John in trouble. What gets Herod's attention (through Herodias) is that John addresses something that is spiritually amiss in Herod's life as a person, and it was something that in no immediate way affected John.

If Herod repented of his sinful divorce and remarriage – if he followed John's exhortation on this topic ... then John would not personally benefit at all. There was clearly nothing in this for John. His focus, instead, was on Herod as a person – not on Herod as someone who was making John's life more difficult.

And it's worth assessing our own hearts on this too. Sometimes our approach to people, even as we speak the truth to them in love ... can be a bit self-serving. We are largely driven by the motivation that if this person converted, or repented, or was more virtuous, then it would be good for us – it would benefit us in some way.

And to be clear, desiring such things is not necessarily wrong.

But John models for us that in addition to that – and even more importantly than that – we should approach the salvation and spiritual growth of the other person as a goal for their sake – for their benefit.

We need to see them as a person – not just as a factor or circumstance in our lives, or a hurdle to our happiness. We need to see them as human beings, made in the image of God. And we should desire to see that image cleansed, and restored. We should desire their salvation or their sanctification for God’s glory, and for their good. That will change how we think of our interactions with others. It will also change how we see things if they reject our loving exhortation. We won’t see it first as a personal affront to us. We’ll see it first as a tragic loss to them, and a grief to God.

And so the third thing we see here is that John speaks the truth in love, with persistence, and with a personal focus.

### **Regardless of the Consequences**

Fourth and finally, we see here that John speaks the truth in love, with persistence, with a personal focus, and regardless of the consequences to himself.

And this is maybe the most obvious aspect of John’s approach here.

It was one thing to speak hard truths out in the wilderness. But then Herod’s soldiers came to seize John. If he was interested primarily in his own welfare, then he could, at that point, have backed off, could have recanted or softened the difficult words of truth he was speaking. Surely there must have been such a temptation. It could be reasonably rationalized too! Why risk his life and ministry speaking truth to a man like Herod who was so unlikely to repent anyway? Why risk all the good he could do ministering freely on the outside, all just to continue to faithfully bear witness to this one man who seemed so hard-hearted? Why not back off, in light of the possible consequences?

But John did not back off. The temptation must have returned and even grown as John spent time in prison, and probably even more when the executioner showed up at his cell. And yet, John continued to witness faithfully to the truth, regardless of the consequences. He seemed to take it as a simple fact that faithfulness to the Lord, and obeying his call to speak the truth in love, could cost him deeply, but that it was still what we were called to.

We are sometimes indignant that speaking the truth in love might actually cost us anything. We look back to a nostalgic time in our culture when we believe speaking the truth in love would never cost a Christian anything, and we lament that that is no longer the case, as if something strange has occurred today.

Whether that was true of a brief period of American history is, I think, debatable. No doubt hostility to the gospel has gotten much more overt and much more broadly accepted than it once was.

But the story of John, and the fact that Mark holds John up as an example, should tell us that we should not be shocked or surprised if speaking the truth in love is costly to us. This is how it was from the beginning. And this is how it has been for so much of history. John was beheaded for speaking the truth in love.

That exact outcome is unlikely to occur to us here. But it does happen to brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. And we should not be shocked if speaking the truth for us comes with

risks or costs to our social standing, our relationships, our economic prospects, our career goals, or even sometime in the future with legal consequences. We should work to protect our religious freedom, to be sure. But we should not be shocked when being faithful to Christ costs us something in this world. So it has been from the beginning. Just ask John.

It is a common delusion of American Christianity that faithfulness to God should make us healthy, wealthy, and well-respected in the world. But that's not how it worked out for John. And that's not how it works out for many Christians.

The Lord is gracious and often blesses us in this life. But our true reward is in the next life. In this life, our faithfulness might cost us. John entrusted himself to God – trusting that God would reward him and right all wrongs, if not in this life then at the resurrection, on the last day. If we are to be faithful as he was, then we must do the same – we must entrust ourselves to the Lord, and to the justice he will bring at Christ's second coming, as we accept the costs of faithful discipleship in this life.

Those costs may not be as dramatic for us as they were for John. But they will still feel very real.

When a Christian friend seems to be embracing sin ... or to be blind or indifferent in their sin towards others ... lovingly but firmly confronting them and calling them to repent can be scary, because there is a real possibility of consequences: the friend could be offended, they might respond by lashing out at you, or the relationship might even be broken.

When a non-Christian friend or co-worker asks us what we think of some topic where we know our Christian faith will put us outside of mainstream of secular thought, then we can feel pressure to hide our faith, because if we speak the truth in love even with gentleness, we might feel them suddenly put up a wall between us and them, and the loss from and consequence of such a divide will be real to us.

When we are with others and they are acting or speaking in ways that we know that we as Christians cannot, it can be tempting to join in rather than to step away, because by stepping away, even quietly, our actions will speak a word of contradiction to them – a subtle implicit call to repentance – which they might resent or take as arrogant coming from us, and the loss of our social standing in their eyes can be real.

When a close non-Christian friend or family member has made a decision we cannot agree with or affirm as Christians, even if we stay quiet about it, even if we say nothing in judgment, but just try to continue to love them and support them in the ways that we can – our silence on the issue, our lack of positive affirmation of their decision can be all they hear ... and so we can still feel intense pressure to affirm their actions in contradiction to our faith. In our culture, even faithful silence in love can lead to real loss and consequences for us.

Holding firm to the truth in love in our relationships with others can bring painful consequences into our lives. And we may feel alone in those consequences.

But Jesus reminds us that even when no one else sees, the Lord sees. He reminds us that even when no one else notices what we have sacrificed, our Father in heaven notices. And he will reward us on the Last Day. [Matthew 6:4, 18] Just as he will reward John.

Rooted in that belief, John the Baptist spoke the truth in love to others, with perseverance, with a personal focus, and regardless of the consequences to himself in this life.

## **Conclusion**

John's words of truth in love had an effect on others long after he was gone – we'll say more about that next week.

But for now, we should note that John's faithfulness was rooted in a commitment to please God, and not to receive praise from others.

John knew he might lose some things in this life for his faithfulness. He knew he might lose life itself. But he entrusted himself to the Lord, convinced that the Lord's faithfulness was stronger even than death – convinced that the Lord would, at the last day, raise him up, vindicate him, and give him eternal life.

And we are called to have the same sort of faith that John had.

We do not know how people will respond, or what the Lord will choose to do with our words of truth and love. But the story of John reminds us that we are called to serve as Christ's faithful witnesses, regardless of the costs.

Because long after we have been dismissed, condemned, or judged by other people for our words of witness, Jesus will still vindicate us, just as with John.

And whatever we may lose in this life, we know that the Lord can restore it. We know that he will, on the last day, raise us up, and make us new. Where we have suffered loss, he will bring restoration. Where others have turned away from us, he will embrace us. Where others have heaped on scorn, he will heap on blessings. Despite how imperfect our efforts were, he will reward us. That is how great his love is for his children.

Let's not trade those eternal cosmic blessings for the fickle and passing approval of this world.

Instead, out of faithfulness to the Lord, let us bear witness to his call to faith and repentance. Let us be people who speak the truth in love to those around us, with persistence, with a personal focus, and regardless of the consequences.

Just as John did.

Amen.

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**This sermon draws on material from:**

- Bayer, Hans. Introduction and notes to Mark in *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Horne, Mark. *The Victory According to Mark: An Exposition of the Second Gospel*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003.
- Keller, Timothy. *Jesus the King*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2011.
- Leithart, Peter J. *The Gospel of Matthew Through New Eyes: Volume Two, Jesus as Israel*. Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2018.
- Wright, N.T. *Mark for Everyone*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church's core value of "Reformed Catholicity"), and also (following the Apostle Paul's example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.