Herod's Table and the LORD's

MARK 6:14-29 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Herod set his table for himself; the LORD prepares his table for you.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 9): Psalm 23:5, A Table Before My Enemies. Its big idea: The Shepherd is also the host who welcomes, protects and fills his guests.
- After this passage (day 11): Mark 14:17-26, Jesus' Table. Its big idea: Jesus set his table with his enemy beside him, and gave himself anyway.

Open

Recall last time (Psalm 23:5): the Shepherd becomes a host who sets a table. Today: the first words of that verse, “You prepare a table before me.” Ask: What makes a meal feel as if it was really prepared for you? Read Mark 6:21. Big idea: Herod set his table for himself; the LORD prepares his table for you. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. A Table Prepared for the Guest (Psalm 23:5, about 8 min)

The one thing: In Psalm 23:5 the LORD does the preparing, and the table exists for the good of the guest.

Ask: What does it tell you about God that the psalm pictures him preparing the table himself?

2. A Prophet in Prison (Mark 6:14-20, about 10 min)

The one thing: Herod enjoyed the truth from a distance; he never came to its table.

Ask: What does it tell you about Herod that he liked listening to John but never changed?

3. Herod's Table (Mark 6:21-29, about 12 min)

The one thing: Herod’s table served the host and cost a guest’s life; the LORD’s table serves the guest and cost the Host his life.

Ask: Set Herod’s banquet beside Psalm 23:5. Who is each table for, and who is safe at it?

Close (never cut it)

Read Mark 6:26, then Psalm 23:5. Herod’s guests ruled his table; the LORD rules his, and sets it for his guests. Say together: “You prepare a table before me.”

PROTECT THE ENDING

If the last section starts late, read v21 and v26 and go to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 2, 3, 5, 4, 1 (top to bottom) · Feelings: John in prison sad, Herod after his foolish promise worried, John’s friends sad, A guest at God’s table happy · Code: GOD SETS THE TABLE

Act it out: One child is Herod at a fancy party, showing off to his important guests. Then another child is the host of God’s table, who sets a place for each child and says their name. Talk about which host they would rather visit.

1. A Table Prepared for the Guest

PSALM 23:5 · ABOUT 8 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The LORD is the host, and the table is set “before me,” for the guest.
- “Prepare” is the Hebrew ’arach: to set out in order, piece by piece.
- Israel once asked, “Can God really prepare a table in the wilderness?” (Psalm 78:19).

Psalm 23:5 is a table the LORD prepares for his guest. Mark 6:21 is a BANQUET Herod held for himself.

Herod’s guests were his nobles, military commanders and the leading men of GALILEE.

Discuss: What does it tell you about God that the psalm pictures him preparing the table himself?

In Psalm 23:5 the LORD does the preparing, and the table exists for the good of the guest.

MUST COVER

- Psalm 23:5: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”
- ’Arach is used for laying out bread in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:23) and for armies drawn up in lines.

IF THERE'S TIME

- The Greek translation of the psalm uses the verb of Mark 1:3, “Prepare the way for the Lord.”

Illustration idea: Arriving at a friend’s home to find your name on a place card and your favorite dish on the table.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Someone else did the work.
- Listen for: The meal is for me, not for the host’s image.

If it drifts: If the talk turns to hospitality tips, bring it back: the psalm is about what God does for his guest.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The LORD sets the table, and he sets it for you.

Short on time? Drop Psalm 78:19. Keep “before me.”

Bridge → Mark shows a king who set his table for himself.

2. A Prophet in Prison

MARK 6:14-20 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Herod hears about Jesus and fears John has come back from the dead.
- John had told Herod his marriage to his brother's wife was wrong.
- Herod feared John, protected him, and listened to him gladly.

"It is not LAWFUL for you to have your brother's wife!"

"He was greatly perplexed; yet he listened to him GLADLY."

Discuss: What does it tell you about Herod that he liked listening to John but never changed?

Herod enjoyed the truth from a distance; he never came to its table.

MUST COVER

- v14-16: Mark tells this as a flashback, prompted by Herod's guilty conscience.
- v17-20: John said plainly what the Law said (Leviticus 18:16), and Herod both feared and protected him.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Herod Antipas was a son of Herod the Great; Rome called him tetrarch, not king (Luke 3:1).
- Josephus also records that Herod killed John, at the fortress of Machaerus.

Illustration idea: Someone who loves watching cooking shows and never eats a proper meal.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Hearing the truth is not the same as receiving it.
- Listen for: Herod was afraid of the very man he imprisoned.

If it drifts: If the conversation turns to debates about marriage and divorce today, acknowledge it and return to v20: Herod heard the truth and stayed at a distance.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Herod liked to listen to the truth; he would not come and eat.

Short on time? Drop the Josephus note. Keep v20.

Bridge → Then comes Herod's birthday banquet.

3. Herod's Table

MARK 6:21-29 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Herod gives a banquet in his own honor for the most important people in Galilee.
- He makes a reckless oath in front of his guests, “up to half my kingdom.”
- Sorry but unwilling to lose face, he has John killed.

“On Herod’s BIRTHDAY, her opportunity arose.”

“Because of his oaths and his GUESTS, he did not want to refuse her.”

Discuss: Set Herod’s banquet beside Psalm 23:5. Who is each table for, and who is safe at it?

Herod’s table served the host and cost a guest’s life; the LORD’s table serves the guest and cost the Host his life.

MUST COVER

- v21-23: the guest list is the powerful; the oath is made to impress them.
- v26: “because of his oaths and his guests”: the room decides, and the host protects himself.

IF THERE'S TIME

- “Up to half the kingdom” is also the Persian king’s promise to Esther at her banquet (Esther 7:2), where God’s people were saved.
- Isaiah 25:6-8: the LORD will prepare a banquet for all peoples and “swallow up death forever.”

Illustration idea: A party thrown to impress the right people, compared with a meal cooked for a friend who is grieving.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Herod was ruled by the room.
- Listen for: God’s table is set for the guest’s good.

If it drifts: If people dwell on the gruesome details, move to v29: John’s disciples honored him, and turn to the table God prepares.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Herod set his table for himself; the LORD prepares his table for you.

Short on time? Drop the Esther note. Keep v26 beside Psalm 23:5.

Bridge → So hear the psalm line again beside Herod’s banquet.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with a meal. Ask: What is the best meal anyone ever prepared just for you?
2. Read the psalm. Read Psalm 23:5: “You prepare a table before me.”
3. Read Mark. Read Mark 6:14-29 together.
4. Two tables. Herod’s banquet was for Herod, and a prophet died for it. The LORD’s table is for the guest.
5. Leave the question. Ask: Which host would you trust with your life? Leave it with them.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Which Herod is this?”

Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. He ruled Galilee under Rome as a tetrarch.

“What does “prepare” mean in the psalm?”

The Hebrew ’arach means to set out in order, with care. The LORD arranges the table himself.

“Why didn’t God rescue John?”

Scripture does not explain it. Jesus called John the greatest born of women (Matthew 11:11), and God honors those who are faithful.

“What does this mean for me?”

Jesus is the Host who is the opposite of Herod. He gave his own life so that his guests are safe at his table.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).
If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.
If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.
If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.
If you've taught for years: Don’t lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.
If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.
If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn’t serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).
If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?
If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Make it concrete

Mark names the guests and the setting.
If you're new: Write two guest lists side by side: Herod’s banquet (Mark 6:21) and God’s feast (Luke 14:21).
If you've taught for years: Use the exact words from each verse.

2. Let the Bible do the talking

The psalm line and Mark 6:26 explain each other.
If you're new: Read Psalm 23:5 and Mark 6:26 back to back, without comment.
If you've taught for years: Let the class name the difference between the hosts.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

It is a dark story that ends in burial.
If you're new: Do not rush to a happy ending.
If you've taught for years: Let v29 stand before you turn to the LORD’s table.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you’ll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: What makes a meal feel as if it was really prepared for you?

- use an object: Set one place at a table with a name card, and ask who prepared it and for whom.
- raise a problem: What happens to a host who cares more about the guests' opinion than the guests' good?

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: Herod set his table for himself; the LORD prepares his table for you.
- call back to the opening: Return to the meals people remembered and read Psalm 23:5 beside them.
- pray the text: Thank God for preparing a table for his people, and for John's faithfulness.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone has lost a loved one to violence or injustice.: Be gentle and do not explain it away. Point to John's disciples, who honored their teacher, and to Isaiah 25:8: God will swallow up death and wipe away tears.
- Someone feels guilty about a time they went along with the crowd.: Herod's story need not be theirs. The Host of Psalm 23 welcomes those who come to him.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- Isaiah 25:6-9
- Luke 14:12-24
- Ezekiel 34:1-16

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/mark/6-14-29/lesson

Herod's Table and the LORD's

MARK 6:14-29 (BSB) · THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “You prepare a table before me” Psalm 23:5

THE BIG IDEA

Herod set his table for himself; the LORD prepares his table for you.

1. A TABLE PREPARED FOR THE GUEST · PSALM 23:5

- The LORD is the host, and the table is set “before me,” for the guest.
- “Prepare” is the Hebrew ’arach: to set out in order, piece by piece.
- Israel once asked, “Can God really prepare a table in the wilderness?” (Psalm 78:19).

Psalm 23:5 is a table the LORD prepares for his guest. Mark 6:21 is a _____ Herod held for himself.

Herod’s guests were his nobles, military commanders and the leading men of _____.

Discuss: What does it tell you about God that the psalm pictures him preparing the table himself?

2. A PROPHET IN PRISON · MARK 6:14-20

- Herod hears about Jesus and fears John has come back from the dead.
- John had told Herod his marriage to his brother’s wife was wrong.
- Herod feared John, protected him, and listened to him gladly.

“It is not _____ for you to have your brother’s wife!”

“He was greatly perplexed; yet he listened to him _____.”

Discuss: What does it tell you about Herod that he liked listening to John but never changed?

3. HEROD'S TABLE · MARK 6:21-29

- Herod gives a banquet in his own honor for the most important people in Galilee.
- He makes a reckless oath in front of his guests, “up to half my kingdom.”
- Sorry but unwilling to lose face, he has John killed.

“On Herod’s _____, her opportunity arose.”

“Because of his oaths and his _____, he did not want to refuse her.”

Discuss: Set Herod’s banquet beside Psalm 23:5. Who is each table for, and who is safe at it?

Read this week: Isaiah 25:6-9 · Luke 14:12-24 · Ezekiel 34:1-16

For Kids: Herod's Table and the LORD's

MARK 6:14-29 · NAME: _____

Big idea: God gets the table ready for us.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

☐ Herod puts John in prison.

☐ Herod has a big birthday party.

☐ Herod lets John be killed.

☐ Herod makes a foolish promise.

☐ John tells Herod he did wrong.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

John in prison: happy · sad · worried

Herod after his foolish promise: happy · sad · worried

John's friends: happy · sad · worried

A guest at God's table: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

C	B	H	B	D	R	K	J	H
N	N	R	R	U	V	P	O	H
P	B	U	A	N	P	V	H	E
R	U	G	V	D	T	D	N	R
O	P	U	E	R	A	K	F	O
M	G	E	B	P	B	I	S	D
I	Y	S	K	H	L	N	Y	C
S	S	T	O	S	E	G	C	D
E	O	C	P	A	R	T	Y	B

HEROD · JOHN · PARTY · PROMISE · TABLE · BRAVE · KING · GUEST

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=B 3=D 4=E 5=G 6=H 7=L 8=O 9=S 10=T

___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
5	8	3	9	4	10	9	10	6	4	10	1	2	7	4

5. DRAW IT!

Draw two tables: Herod's fancy party table for himself, and God's table with a place set for you.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"You prepare a table before me" Psalm 23:5 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

God gets the table ready for _____. _____