There are dangers in speaking the truth. Can you think of a situation where speaking the truth would be dangerous? Does this dress make me look fat? Is it as bad as it looks? When your boss has a bad idea. We can all probably think of a time where we held our tongue because there was a danger or consequence in speaking the truth. Just think about the danger in speaking the truth against the king. And yet that is exactly what happens in our readings. The prophets speak God's truth no matter what the consequences may be. In fact. part of why I think this story is interjected here is because it gives us a glimpse into Jesus future. He like John, will be killed because they spoke the truth and they held their leaders accountable.

And it is the teaching of Jesus and the calling out the leaders of his day that cause his popularity to grow and have caused the people to think that Jesus is a prophet. Jesus is so popular in fact, and his teachings are so effective that even king Herod has heard about him.

Some are saying he is John the baptizer risen from the dead, or Elijah, or a prophet from old. And this is interesting if you understand what has happened in Israel during the intertestamental times, that is the time between the testaments, according to first Maccabees which is in inter testimental book says, “so there was great distress in Israel, the worst since the time the prophets ceased to appear among them.” from the time from Malachi to Jesus, prophecy has ceased to exist. They believed God had stopped talking to them and so for John and then Jesus to pop up on the scene is incredible. No one alive had witnessed a prophet speaking.

And why is this significant, because for the people to believe that Jesus and John are prophets are a big deal. They have two prophets in their midst, and they see it and they are beginning to understand this fact. And so, it’s amazing that after all this time the people are believing that Jesus is a prophet. And the reason they may be saying he is a prophet of old, is because they were not expecting a new prophet to come around after the quietness for years.

What’s important is not necessarily what they call Jesus, its why, they call Jesus a prophet of old, Elijah or John risen from the dead because he does what they did. They speak the truth about God’s kingdom. They teach people the way of God, and God’s expectations. They call out the leaders of their day. John called out Herod. Ezekiel called out jezebel and the King. Amos called out the king. And Jesus called out the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And this is important because if you read through the book of Mark one of the important questions that keeps getting asked is who do you think Jesus is. And these folks think he is a prophet because of what he speaks. And the Gospel of Mark is written to answer this question.

And as such, you read through Mark, what the writer is hoping for is for you to understand is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who lived the life we couldn’t, died for our sins, and was raised from the dead to give us eternal life. One of the ways in which Mark gets this message across is to tell us about the actions of Jesus, about his teachings, his parables, his work as a prophet, his declaring truths about the kingdom of God, the proclamations that Jesus makes about himself, and the revelation from Peters lips.

And Mark ties all this together to paint the picture of Jesus, and say, do you see, this Jesus is the Messiah. And intertwined in this story that unfolds is our Gospel reading where we learn about the death of John the baptizer. And I think this is here because it’s a warning to the reader, its setting up the rest of the book. We see the dangers of telling the truth for John and it gives us an expectation that something similar might happen to Jesus who keeps calling out the leaders as well. And if it got John killed, then it might get Jesus killed too.

So, let us look at why John is in prison, and why the girl’s mom is mad at him. John called out Herod, Jesus called out the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Jewish leaders. John is busted for preaching openly about the moral life of a political leader. For pointing out four things.

1) Herod was already married when he got together with Herodias who was the daughter of the king of navateia. And him leaving his current wife, he sends her away and it causes a war with the countries.

2) Herodias was also married, and she left her husband to be with Herod.

3)The husband she left was Herod’s half-brother Philip. That is also wrong especially to the Jewish mindset.

4) she was his niece, and her father was killed by Herod the great.

This is very wrong. And we may think that this does not relate to us today. But it does because we are called to be like John and Jesus. We often hear that in political leadership, we are not looking for a pastor. And I get that if I need a plumber, I’m not going to just try and find the most spiritual person to fix it, I want a plumber and if they are spiritual great.

And when I am looking for a plumber, I want one with good character. I do not want one who is going to lie cheat and steal and over charge me. And the same is for our leaders, we look for good character and do exactly what John did and when he spoke publicly to hold Herod accountable. If Jesus, John, and Amos were here, what would they be doing? What would they say about our leaders?

Honestly, it’s not about republican or democrat, it’s about character and hoping that our next election we have some high character people we can choose from while also holding leaders accountable the way that John did, Jesus did, and Amos did, who spoke the truth.

Amos, is being approached by a man named Amaziah and he is telling Amos, “Go, flee to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary.” And why is he saying this because Amos has been calling out the leaders of the northern tribe for some time now and is telling Jeroboam, the king that the sanctuaries of his nation are going to be laid waste and they are going to be taken into exile, not just because of what the king has done, go back and read the book, it’s because of what the leaders have done and the injustice that has run rampant in the land. The leaven of the leaders and King had trickled down into everywhere.

Let us look at Amos. Amos is speaking truth and prophesying in public just like John and he is now being warned, because the truth is, it is dangerous to hold people accountable and preach about the truth of the kingdom of God and God’s kingdom economy, which is counter to the world, where greed seems to be winning.

Character matters, telling the truth matters, holding true to your message about God in the face of adversity is important to. Look at Amos’ response, Amos says I don’t want to do this, I am a herdsman and a dresser of Sycamore trees, I am no prophet. It was the Lord that took me from following the flock and said to me Go prophesy to my people Israel.” He is saying essentially, if I could avoid this trouble, I would, I did not ask for this, but it is part of my calling, and part of our calling as prophets is to do as Jesus, John, and Amos did and speak the truth about the kingdom of God, and what God expects from us and our leaders.

What I am saying is, this is what John did, this is what Jesus did, and this is what the prophets did, and we should not think that we are exempt from this ourselves. We have an obligation to vote for who we believe would do their best to bring about what we believe God would want to occur in our communities and in our country.

Especially if we take seriously your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. And we want to live into that, because you try to vote into office those who will help that, and not hinder that. And when they go astray from that, we call them out, in hopes they will see the error of their ways and repent.

So, hold Biden accountable, hold him accountable for still putting children in cages, hold him accountable for dealing shadily on the infrastructure deal, call him out for being creepy with women, call him out for racist rhetoric, call him out and hold him accountable until his behavior changes. Hold Henry accountable, hold Tim and Lindsay accountable, hold Tom Rice accountable, hold Theresa Myers accountable, hold your leaders accountable according not to our own desires, but according to the will and Word of God.

Ultimately, we hold them accountable because we are beholden to God and not any political party. We are called to godly standards and when our leaders are immoral and we are okay with it, where does it lead our country? Do we end up like Israel? And as we are citizens of this country, we should care about it enough to have high expectations and high standards for our leaders.

If you don’t believe Jesus warns us about this. Look at what he tells the disciples, look out for the leaven of the pharisees and of Herod. Jesus is telling them, look out for Herods leaven or Herods negative sinful effect on you. No matter what your political affiliation because we must watch out that we don’t suck up the leaven of low character leaders that we think are championing causes we care about, but rather we remain holy and set apart, undefiled from the culture that is around us. Because calling for moral reform is walking in the footsteps of John, the prophets, and Jesus.

You may still be asking, why we do this? It is all about Christ. It is in obedience to Christ that we do this, and it doesn’t matter who we are, God used the lowly herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees to speak truth. We are all called to speak truth, even if it is dangerous to do so. Because that is how important God’s truth is in all the world, because if we all lived according to God’s truth this world would be a better place. Our country would be a better place, our state, our city, our communities would be better places. We must follow in John, Amos, and Jesus’ footsteps and speak the truth about God’s kingdom because the stakes are too high.