

5. What hope do we have in Christ for facing the dying part?

6. What are some of the dangers of the “security gospel” (i.e., making safety and security one of the highest goals in our lives)?

7. What are some of the practical ways we can overcome these dangers?

8. What current practices (spiritual and otherwise) can help us and our loved ones prepare to face extreme or challenging circumstances we might face when dying?

**“Who Do You Say I Am?”
(A Series on Matthew 14-17)**

“How Do You Want to Die?”

Matthew 14:1-12

How do you want to _____?

If you think you can _____ how you die, you’ll act as if you can control how you die; you’ll make safety and security your highest goals. And there are big dangers in making safety and security your highest goals.

The Absurdity of John’s Death

I think we read this passage and think these people were _____ this kind of thing. The whole marriage craziness among the rich and powerful....very normal, back then and now. Beheading without trial, heads on platters at parties....not normal.

For the disciples, getting the news that John had been beheaded was like the moment a second plane hit the _____ tower on 9/11 for us.

The disciples had _____ been safe and would never be safe; now, with John’s death, they knew it.

Jesus not only didn’t keep John safe, John died in the most ridiculously _____ way possible. He died this gruesome death because a dancing teenage girl did the bidding of her power-hungry, vengeful mother and asked for John’s head on a platter.

“We wonder how God could allow such a thing. But in fact death usually seems absurd or tragic. Some die too young—as a child, as a teenager, as a young adult, as a young mother. Others die too old, at the age of ninety-eight after years of suffering. Sudden death offends us: ‘There was no warning; they had no time to set their affairs in order.’ But gradual death seems shameful too, as we helplessly watch a loved one suffer from a series of strokes or from Alzheimer’s disease, so that the use of legs, hands, mind, and tongue are slowly taken from them.” (Daniel Doriani)

Where is God leading you with your BLESS list this week?



The Seduction and Danger of Making Safety and Security Our Highest Priority

This passage recounts the absurd way John dies. Jesus doesn't lift a finger. Then it ends ______. (Matthew 13:11-12).

We're easily seduced into making safety and security our highest priority since God isn't going to _____ our safety in this lifetime. But making safety and security your highest priority is dangerous.

1. We'll never speak hard truth to the powerful and _____.

When you make safety and security supreme, you fail to speak up against injustice and evil and you fail to stand up alongside the _____.

2. We're less generous and _____.

"The security gospel has deeply political implications. It tells us who deserves protection and who must pay for it. It justifies harmful drug and crime policies, And it teaches us who to fear and who to protect. In the security gospel, our sin problem of vulnerability is solved by physical force, harsh policies, and high walls. Protection is the ultimate good. And anything else can be sacrificed at its altar. (Kaitlyn Scheiss)

3. We feed _____ and fear.

Fear and anxiety are contagious and proving _____ for our teens.

4. We _____ to carry out our gospel mission.

The gospel is about living in such a way that our influence brings God's rule and realm into _____ life. Our gospel mission to help others come to know God personally is of the highest importance, but God's kingdom has implications for every square inch and minute of our lives.

This story ends with little _____, except that we know it's not the end of the story. We know that God will die a ridiculously absurd death on the cross so that our absurd deaths will not be the end of our story. And the God who is willing to die for us walks with us through all the indignities and absurdities of our lives and our deaths.

Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Read Matthew 14:1-12. What are some of the details in this story (and from what we know from other historical sources) that underscore the tragedy and absurdity of John's death and the way he died?
3. This passage, and others like it in Scripture, compel us to look at the realities and inevitability of death and dying, so let's spend some time doing just that, together. How would you like to die?
4. Many of us say that it's not death that scares us; it's the dying part. What scenarios of dying most scare you?