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## Be Opened!

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# Be Opened!

## **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

After you have messed up, or made a mistake, or made a poor choice, have you sometimes heard a voice whispering to you, "You just didn't listen"?



*From Our Guest Writers*

## *Be Opened!*

*After you have messed up, or made a mistake, or made a poor choice, have you sometimes heard a voice whispering to you, "You just didn't listen"?*

*You are not alone.*

*Holy Scripture is filled with stories of people who listened and others who did not.*

*The other day three stories of people who did not listen came to my mind. I was left wondering how often I have acted like them in the course of my life.*

*One of those who did not listen was King Herod. The story can be found in the Gospel according to Mark 6:17-29. This King Herod was one of the sons of King Herod the Great (in)famous for his slaughter of innocent children at the time of the birth of Jesus.*

*In the story Mark tells us that Herod was drawn to the words of John the Baptist. He recognized John as a holy man but could not bring himself to accept what he heard. To act upon John's words, Herod would have needed to abandon his life style and humble himself before God. He would have probably been subjected to humiliation by those who had shared his former life of waywardness. It was easier for him to keep John locked up, out of sight and, mostly, out of his mind. This worked for a while, as when I hear the words of a holy man or woman but ignore them, refusing to ponder the message but not exactly rejecting it. That works until, like Herod, I do something stupid. I could be at a party with my guard down. I make what I know is a foolish statement or promise. Then everyone stops, or so it seems, to see what I will do next. Will I be humble or be too proud to stop my foolishness, to listen to the words that are true? Herod chose to be proud.*

*Another passage tells the story of another man seemingly at the opposite end of the spectrum where Herod stands. Scripture identifies him only as the **rich man**, a member of the ruling class (see Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-27). He kept the Law from his youth. Perhaps he thought that was not sufficient for him. Perhaps he thought his wealth evidence of God's approval and blessing. In any case, he asked Jesus what else he should do to enter the Kingdom of God. The response Jesus gave proved too much for him to hear, to accept. The man grew melancholy for, as recorded, he had many possessions. Thus his possessions made his decision for him.*

*The third story is unlike the other two. This is about the Roman procurator Pilate (see Matthew 26:11-26). He, as they say, had no dog in the fight when Jesus was presented before him as a criminal. He was in a position to be totally objective in judgment since he had no religious convictions in the matter. It seems he recognized that the charges made against Jesus were contrived. His actions, as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew, support the impression that he saw the injustice in the proceedings. Yet, he failed to listen to the voice within him (made palpable by the message his wife sends him) to dismiss the case against Jesus. It didn't work as he had hoped, and he felt the pressure of public opinion too much against his wish to release Jesus. He decided not to decide, and he let the whims of the masses to choose for him. He washed his hands...*

*What were the personal consequences for each of these men's decisions or indecisions? I really do not know. Nor do I know what happened to them later in their lives. I can trust in the power of God's Word to find a way into the heart of even a hard hearer.*



*Paul Rothermich (from Toledo, OH)*