Sermon: ***Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown*** – from Shakespeare’s King Henry IV pt 2.

It is never easy being ‘in charge’ whether it is of a country, a business, a school, or a church.

For various reasons: Weight of Responsibility, Compromise, Danger from Rivals, Temptation, Corruption.

Some of these loom larger, some less so, depending upon character, and what checks and balances in place.

Eg Ex-President Zuma and corruption charges.

The Herod in our story, Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was not good. He seduced and married his niece, Herodias, and probably lusted after his step-daughter, Salome.

John the Baptist publicly criticised this marriage, which upset the couple.

This was the same Herod of which Jesus said **“Go and tell that fox”** (Luke 13.32), after Jesus was warned that Herod wanted to kill him. It was also this Herod that Jesus faced while on trial (Luke 23.6-12).

In our story we also see some of his uneasiness of wearing the crown.

Herod, we are told, was afraid of John (a holy man), intrigued as John was not afraid of him, and fearful of popular backlash if he killed John, which is why he merely arrested him.

But Herod also sought popularity from those who might have the power to depose him; so at his birthday party, lusting after Salome, he wanted to look good, so made a generous (and foolish) offer (6.23).

Salome & Herodias forced him to choose between which popularity he needed most. Could he back down?

Herod’s choice was compromise, temptation, corruption, a greater fear of rivals than the people.

What does this story say to us? When we are in positions of responsibility (eg. at home, church) how do we make our choices? It is easy to give in to the strongest desire, which for Herod was not to look bad in the eyes of his wife, step-daughter and rivals. We need to step back when making big decisions and closely examine our motives. Maybe we can ask What Would Jesus Do?

Jesus’ decisions have at their heart, love; whilst not afraid of conflict, he did not actively seek it; he sought growth and was prepared to sacrifice if it meant a better outcome for others (hence the cross).

In short, Herod created a chain of sin beginning with his lust for his niece.

Instead let us, like Christ, create a chain of goodness beginning with our love for each other.  
And let us pray for those in charge, whether the Parish Council looking for a new presbyter, or our Prime Minister seeking to keep Covid-19 away from this country.