

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 10TH - 11TH, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

PRIDE? (ESTHER 3:1-6)

"AFTER ALL THIS..."

There is another jump in time to the next pivotal event in the story: Haman is honored and promoted. This gives a sense of irony because we just read that Mordecai saved the king.

- It was customary for royal staff to bow down and "pay homage" to newly promoted people, but Mordecai refused.

SOUR GRAPES?

Mordecai was in Susa when he should've been in Jerusalem, and he hid his ethnicity, which means he probably didn't observe Jewish religious traditions. Why not compromise now?

- Haman was an Agagite (enemies). Haman was also promoted, though Mordecai had saved the king. Was this just selfish pride?

"...HE WAS FILLED WITH RAGE"

Haman was not only "filled with rage" at Mordecai's refusal, but when he learned of his ethnicity, it became "repugnant" to wipe out not just Mordecai, but all of his people.

- Haman was so offended he was willing to destroy a whole people. **Does our offense ever lead to irrational actions?**

WHERE DO WE DRAW LINES?

It seems like Mordecai **compromised on some majors but got stubborn about some minors**. Do we fall into this trap?

- Are we focusing on what God wants us to focus on? Are we willing to minimize minors and live out the majors of our faith? Does pride or preference interfere?**

HAMAN'S PLOT (ESTHER 3:7-15)

ROLLING THE DICE

About 5 years after Esther's coronation, the high-level leaders under Xerxes cast lots to determine what date they would annihilate the Jews.

- After picking a date, Haman presents half-truths and lies to Xerxes about the Jews who "did not obey the king's laws."

DIVERSITY WAS ACTUALLY CELEBRATED

The Persian empire boasted of its diversity (Romans as well), but Haman convinced Xerxes that ethnic differences were a threat.

- Several empires throughout history have **allowed the people of God to exist as long as their theology** came second to cultural ideology. We're seeing similar **pluralism** today.

WE WILL ALWAYS BE ALIENS

From the beginning of human history until Christ's return, the people of God will always be cultural/societal outsiders.

- Christians are to balance living as good citizens in a pluralistic society** (1 Peter 2:17; Romans 13) **without compromising our faith**. Though difficult now, it pays off for eternity.

A BRIBE AND A SIGNET RING

To ensure Haman got revenge on Mordecai, he offered a bribe to Xerxes. Haman then got the "money and people...to do with as [he saw] fit."

- So, a letter was sent out with the king's approval that all Jews—young, old, women, and children—were to be killed and plundered on the 13th day of the 12th month.

"THE KING AND HAMAN SAT DOWN TO DRINK"

The destructive, dirty work was set into motion, and the elite leaders sit back and indulge in their luxuries, not caring about the lives of the common people.

- Empires have never changed; this is why **we ultimately cannot put our hope in any institution except the Kingdom of God**.

WIDESPREAD FEAR (ESTHER 4:1-9)

CONTRASTING CHARACTERS

Ch. 4 serves as a counterpoint to ch. 3, contrasting Haman and Mordecai. When Mordecai heard the news of his people being killed, he "cried loudly and bitterly" in the streets.

- This reaction was mirrored by all the Jews who heard the edict in every corner of the Persian Empire.

"OVERCOME WITH FEAR"

When Esther got the news that Mordecai was lamenting in the streets, she was terrified. She also sent new clothes to Mordecai, but he didn't accept them.

- Mordecai was probably offended, thinking that Esther wasn't taking the edict seriously, but she didn't know any details yet.

RELAYING THE DETAILS

One of Esther's servants Hathach, goes out to Mordecai and learns what is bothering him so much.

- Mordecai then commands Esther, through Hathach, to approach the king (which could be dangerous) and "implore his favor, and plead with him...for her people."

WHEN WE GET OURSELVES INTO SITUATIONS

Mordecai shouldn't have been in Susa; he willingly hid his heritage and commanded Esther to do the same, but now **when being a follower of God is beneficial, he changes**.

- Do we only feel remorse or allegiance when we're desperate? Are we living in integrity and obedience at all times?**

BECOMING A LEADER (ESTHER 4:10-17)

THIS CONVERSATION COULD KILL ME

Esther tells Hathach to remind Mordecai of the dangers of casually approaching Xerxes. At this point, Esther had not been summoned (with the king at all) for 30 days.

- This seems important because it is not her deep personal relationship with the king that will bring her favor, but the hand of God.

APPLYING THE WRONG PRESSURE

Some argue Mordecai's wailing in the streets was him trying to fix the problem and failing to rely on God. He also uses fear tactics to put the pressure of saving the Jews on Esther.

- This is a subtle reminder that **we can be vessels, but ultimately, our hope for all situations depends on God**.

"FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS"

This is one of those phrases from the Bible that is easily twisted and taken out of context. We must remember that Mordecai's family shouldn't have been in Susa in the first place.

- This phrase points to the **sovereignty and grace of God to take our mistakes, when we're humbled, and use them for His glory**.

To be fair, this phrase does remind us that **we all have a purpose and are alive in this time for a reason**. It also reminds us to be **willing and obedient vessels to be used by God**.

- We will all have our Esther moments when we have to **face adversity in order to honor God and help others be saved**.

A PROPER RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY

Esther tells Mordecai to tell the Jews to fast and pray for 3 days in preparation for her conversation with Xerxes.

- In this moment Esther really steps into her role as a leader. **She leans on God through prayer and fasting and is willing to put her life on the line for what is morally right**.

CHRISTIAN IN ALL THINGS?

- Like Mordecai, we have a tendency to neglect the majors of our faith while getting hung up on minors (Matthew 23:24).
- Are we able to let the small stuff go? **Does our pride, politics, or preferences cloud our Christian identity? Are we offended too easily?** Are we seeking to be biblical in all things?

WALKING THROUGH TWO WORLDS

- We live in a pluralistic society. How are we balancing being good citizens on earth while making sure our ultimate allegiance is to the Kingdom of God?
- Do we place too much hope in earthly institutions?** Do we really think there is security in that? **We must find balance**.

ONLY WHEN IT WORKS FOR ME

- Do we live our lives by our dreams, direction, and desires? **Do we only consult God when it benefits us?**
- Do we only feel remorse for selfishness or sin when we get caught or we may lose something? **Do we understand this is not a true relationship?**

ARE WE LIVING "FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS"?

- We have a purpose, from God, for right now. This should encourage us to **live selflessly, intentionally, and with integrity**.
- To be used by God to impact our culture and society, we must **pray, fast, study the Word, and be willing to sacrifice it all for the sake of God's Kingdom**.