



THURSDAY 05.13.10

Esther 4:1-3, 12-16

Mordecai weeps for the destruction of the Jews that is promised by the words of the king, and in desperation, he reaches out to Esther. Esther initially sees Mordecai's request as an impossible task until Mordecai reminds her that she may be the only one who can save her people.

- We often speak of God having a “plan” for our lives, and yet, Esther’s story reminds us that we still must choose to respond as God calls us to. Have you ever experienced an opportunity in the midst of a challenging situation? Can you remember letting an opportunity pass you by?
- Maybe, Mordecai argues, you have become queen for such a time as this? Where might God be presenting you with a new and challenging opportunity? How might the gifts you have received and the position you fill enable you to be used by God?



FRIDAY 05.14.10

Esther 8:1-8

Esther had chosen a meal prepared by her for the king and Haman as the place where she would share her request with the king. When Haman's evil plot is discovered by the king, this once honored friend finds himself begging the queen for his life. The man who had been given the authority to wipe out a whole people is now trying to save his own life.

- Previously, Haman had been given a place of honor that was recognized throughout the kingdom, but his anger towards one man and stubborn pride led him down a path that destroyed his own life. Has anger or unforgiveness ever led you down a similar path?
- Proverbs 16:18 teaches that “pride goes before destruction.” Why is pride such a deadly force in our lives? In what ways might pride be keeping you from forgiving someone else?



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Series: *UNRated*
Sermon: *Palace Struggle Leads to Queen's Stunning Revelation*
Scripture: *Esther 1-4*

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:



Introduction

This week we move forward several centuries in the history of Israel. The nation had divided under the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. In 722 B.C., the northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians, and in 586 B.C., the Babylonians had brought upon the southern kingdom a similar fate. In the 5th century B.C., Mordecai and Esther find themselves living in a foreign land after the Jews had been exiled from the land of God's promise.

Esther was a poor Jewish woman of no social status or merit prior to being summoned by the king. She receives the role of queen of Persia not because of her intellect, character or family background. She receives it because she "pleased the king." Unfortunately for her, Esther will face a challenge in her life that requires her to do much more than keep the king happy. The way in which she chooses to respond to this test is what qualifies her to be called one of the true heroes of the Old Testament.

As you reflect on your readings for this week, may this prayer guide you.

Holy and loving God, we recognize that every moment of our lives belongs to you, and within each day, we are given opportunities to serve you in amazing ways. Give us courage, Lord, to respond to the challenges we face and the faith to stay true to the calling you have placed on our lives to bring your kingdom into our very lives and our world. AMEN.



TUESDAY 05. 11.10

Esther 2:19-23

When the king's edict regarding the next queen reached Mordecai, he had instructed Esther to hide her background because of the Persian people's prejudice against the Israelites. As Esther continued to advance in the process of becoming the next queen, the need for keeping this secret hidden was an even greater concern for Mordecai as well as Esther.

- Mordecai stumbles upon information that is vital to the king and has the courage to pass along that information to Esther. His actions save the king's life. When was the last time you did something that took courage? Was it a difficult decision or something you instinctively knew was right and therefore acted on? Where did that courage come from?
- How have you experienced blessings in your life because of your courage? What kind of sacrifices did you have to make?



MONDAY 05.10.10

Esther 2:5-12, 15-18

The book of Esther begins with Vashti, the queen of Persia, falling out of favor with the king. During an extended banquet, King Xerxes had summoned Vashti in order to "display her beauty to the people." When she refused, her royal title is stripped, and she is banished from the king's presence forever. Vashti's removal opened the door for a new queen to be chosen.

- At this time, Esther is living as an "alien in a foreign land." Esther had no choice in the matter of who would be the next queen. Are there circumstances that you live with every day that you had no hand in choosing?
- Esther will eventually be given the opportunity to serve God in this role that was chosen for her. How might God be glorified in those experiences and circumstances in your life that you did not choose?



WEDNESDAY 05.12.10

Esther 3:1-11

"They are different than us" was the essential argument that Haman brought to the king concerning the Jews. Mordecai's defiance of the command to bow down to Haman was a reflection of his own faith in the one true God. For Haman, it was an act of disrespect that enraged the honored friend of the king.

- Why do you think Haman's anger towards Mordecai was eventually directed towards the entire Jewish people?
- In the New Testament, Paul continually teaches the new believers in Christ that following Jesus involves living "in a new way" that is "different" from the ways of the world. Can you see a difference in the way you live because of your faith? In what area is that most visible? In what area is that least visible? How do you see your faith influencing your identity and choices?
