

Studies in Esther-02 Esther 4

by William MacDonald

The sermon explores Esther's pivotal role in saving her people through faith and courage amidst dire circumstances.

Duration: 50:15

Scripture: Esther 4:14, Esther 4:16, Psalm 46:10, Isaiah 45:7, Matthew 8:27, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:17

Topics: "Studies"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the darkest moment in the book of Esther, where the people of God were sentenced to death. Despite the silence of God and unanswered prayers, the speaker emphasizes that God's directive will is still unfolding. The speaker also highlights the world's reliance on alcohol for enjoyment, even in difficult situations. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about the providence of God, illustrating how a computer was donated for the translation of Christian literature.

Transcript

And we're going to read this chapter. Esther chapter 4, verse 1. When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

This is because of an edict that has just gone out, an unchangeable edict, that all the Jews were to be destroyed, killed, annihilated. Mordecai, of course, is a Jew. Cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

He went as far as the square in front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews with fasting, weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her that the queen was deeply distressed.

Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them. Then Esther called Hathak, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai to learn what and why this was. So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate, and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.

He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go into the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. So Hathak returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Then Esther spoke to Hathak and gave him a command for Mordecai.

All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king who has not been called, he has but one law, put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go into the king these 30 days. So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

Then Mordecai told them to answer Esther, Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther told them to return this answer to Mordecai.

Go gather all the Jews who were present in Shushan and fast for me, neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise, and so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish. Then Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Last week we were watching God in his wonderful control over the circumstances dealing with his people. We call that the providential care of God for his ancient earthly people. We saw God as the master checker player, a chess player, moving the men on the board, and it was really rather thrilling.

And sometimes when you read the Bible and think of those things, you say, Yeah, that was good for Esther's day, but it doesn't happen today. But it does happen today. I left the meeting and last weekend in the middle of the afternoon, I was home and the telephone rang, and I had a wonderful illustration of the providence of God working today that I'd like to share with you this morning.

Some time ago, Don Wooten said to me, You know, I have a computer I'd like to sell, and if I can't sell it, I'd like to give it to the work for a tax deduction. And so he tried to sell it, but he couldn't sell it. So I said, Well, I'll tell you what you do.

You turn it over to me. Would you like to see it used in the translation of Christian literature? He said, That would be great. Well, I said, You donate it to Calvary Bible Chapel.

It will come to me, and I will see that it's used in the translation of Christian literature. And Tom Rodriguez here handled the details. And that left me in a very crowded apartment with a computer and a monitor and a keyboard that I could have really done without.

But never mind, it was there. Then I got a call from Eric Shorkin down in Brazil. Eric said he's translating my little booklet, Here's the Difference into Portuguese.

Good, good news. He had sold his computer in order to make a payment for some property to build a new house. So he was without a computer, and he needed a computer.

Well, what do you need? Well, IBM compatible 386, I think he said. Well, it was in my closet. It was in my closet.

So I said, Eric, it's all yours. I said, I have the computer. I have the monitor.

I have the keyboard. I have the printer. He said, I don't need a printer.

Just those three. I said, But how to get them to you? Ah, that's the problem. How to get them to him? He said, Well, send it by mail.

Forget it. Forget it. It would never get to him by mail.

Or if it did, it would be millennial. You know, we would all have passed off the scene by then. Well, one of his colleague missionaries, Floyd Pierce, was home in this country on furlough, he said.

The very thing. So sorry, friend. Floyd was bringing back a computer with him for his own, for his own.

You know, and you're only allowed to bring one computer into the country in Brazil for your own use. Disappointment. Well, I said to Eric, I heard there's a young Brazilian in Decatur, Illinois, works for Caterpillar Tractor.

He's up here from Brazil temporarily. Do you think he'd bring it back? And he said, I don't think so. He said, He'll bring, he'll be bringing back everything, you know.

So I wouldn't count on that. Disappointment. But God is still working.

The providence of God. Just before Floyd Pierce left to go back to Brazil, I had a phone call from him. And he said, Phil, he said, you know, Eric's computer.

I said, yeah, I know. How'd he get it to him? He said, well, you know, there's this young fellow in Decatur, Illinois, named Marcos Suarez. And he said, I asked him if he'd be willing to bring a computer back with him to Brazil.

And he said, who's it for? And Floyd said, it's for Eric. He said, Eric? He said, Eric is my friend. He said, of course, I'll take it back to him.

It's wonderful, isn't it? So Don helped pack, well, he didn't help. He packaged the monitor and the keyboard in one box and then the computer in another. And we shipped it back to Decatur, Illinois.

He was supposed to leave at the end of June, but that changed. He left until the 15th of June. Well, in the meantime, I'm talking with Eric and Eric says, well, you know, we talked about software.

And he said, I said, what would you like? And he said, WordPerfect 6.0. I said, that's funny. I have WordPerfect 6.0 that I'm not using. And so I called Marcos Suarez and asked him, would he be willing to take some software, just be a box about this? And he said, yes.

But time was running out. And we shipped it to him by UPS and hoped that he got it before he left. Well, Eric went out to San Paolo to meet Marcos Suarez and to pick up his computer.

It arrived safely in San Paolo. And when Eric met Marcos, Marcos told him that he believed the real reason for his being sent by Caterpillar from Brazil to Decatur was to bring the computer back to Eric. He said, why? Well, let me tell you why.

He is not in upper management for Caterpillar. He's a technician. For 30 years, no technician has ever traveled from Brazil to the United States for Caterpillar tracking.

For 30 years. He's been with the company only five months. No one with that little time with the company has ever been sent abroad.

His boss has been waiting for 21 years to get a trip to the United States, thanks to Caterpillar. Here his subordinate got the trip, Marcos Suarez. Marcos could have brought a computer into Brazil for himself, but he didn't have the money to buy one.

So he took Eric's in on his allowance. The airline did not charge for overweight baggage and there was no charge at customs. What about the software? The software didn't get to him in time.

Didn't get to Marcos in time in Decatur, Illinois to take down. Even that was a lie. I said to Eric, when I talked to him last Sunday, I said, did you get the software? He said, no.

I said, I sent it to him. He said, I know it didn't get to him in time. He said, that's a good thing it didn't.

I said, why? He said, I want you to make a copy of the software before you send it. He said, the software down here develops a fungus. And he said, the fungus ruins it.

And so he said, I want you to keep a copy of the original up there so that if anything happens to the software down here, you can send another copy. Now, why do I mention that? To show that the same providence of God that was working in Esther's day is working today. I think Mary has seen it, you know.

And Christa, you see it. You just have eyes open to see it. Wonderful, isn't it? God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own.

Is God interested in a computer? He is. He is. He's really interested in getting that down to him.

And look at the way he moved the checkers on the bus. But that really thrilled me when Marcos said that he believed that the real reason for his coming from Brazil to Illinois was to bring that computer back. The fellow has spiritual insight, doesn't he, when he can talk like that.

All right, back to the book of Esther. I thought you'd enjoy that, because most of you know Eric, and will rejoice in it. Last week, we saw that this great king of Persia put on a feast, a magnificent feast.

Actually, in the first chapter of Esther, three feasts count them. Those people really liked to eat. They weren't the last Persians that liked to eat, either, or the last Americans that liked to eat.

But their phenomenal feast that they put on it, and such a display of magnificence and grandeur and glory, the king was suffering from an exaggerated case of eye disease. Eye, the king. And then, of course, he put on a feast, too, Queen Vashti, which was all right.

It was perfectly legitimate. Why shouldn't she? At one of the feasts, when the guests were all pretty well inebriated, drunk, the king ordered the queen to come out to display her beauty before the people from all over the realm. It was not very nice, friends.

We won't go into details, but you can use a little sanctified imagination and realize that his motives were not pure. And the queen had backbones. She was not a jellyfish, and she refused to go.

She refused to bow to him. You say a woman should be submissive to her husband. First of all, she didn't have a New Testament.

Secondly, she shouldn't be submissive to her husband if he's evil in the request that he makes. There are exceptions. There are general rules, and there are exceptions to it.

And this was the exception to it. And so, when she refused to go, why, the whole court was thrown into a dither, and they thought, well, this feminism will go throughout all of the kingdom if we don't put a stop to it. And they said to the king, you've got to get rid of that queen.

And he was a bit of a milquetoast, and he did. He deposed the queen. And then, of course, that left them without a queen, so what did they have to do? Well, they put on this enormous beauty contest, and they gathered the most gorgeous girls from all over Persia, and they brought them in, and they were put through this tremendous course of beauty culture and courtesy, you know, and all of that.

And among them, there was a young Jewish girl, and her name was Esther. And humanly speaking, I think Esther's chance of ever winning that beauty contest, her chances were zilch. She didn't belong to a right race, did she? She didn't belong to a right... she wasn't even a citizen, I suppose, of Persia.

But, God is moving the checkers. God had to get Zivasti off the throne and get Esther onto the throne. Had to do it.

Why? Because he knew what lay ahead. God sees the end from the beginning, and God answers prayer before the prayers are ever made in behalf of his people. And you know what happened.

By now, God moved the intellect, emotions, and will of the man in charge of this whole beauty contest. His name was Haggai, and he took a secret interest in Esther. A good interest, nothing bad about it.

And when the day came, dear, Esther was crowned the queen of Persia. How very unlikely that a Jewish maiden, with no royal blood in her veins as far as I know, I didn't check her blood count, but as far as I know there was no royal blood in her veins, and yet she became the queen of Persia. Most irregular.

But God can do irregular things, and God loves to do irregular things for the accomplishment of his purposes. During right about that time, she had a cousin named Mordecai. Actually, Mordecai was her adoptive father, too, because her parents had died years before, and her cousin Mordecai had raised her.

And strangely enough, God had positioned him there in the kingdom so that he was out at the king's gate, which might mean that he was some civil servant. Might mean that. That he was a civil servant.

And there he is at the king's gate. And last week we saw how God's influence. One day he's walking through the courtyard, and God got him to turn left and turn right and get over to two fellows that were talking.

Their names were Big Ben and Teresh, and they were plotting against the king. And he got there, and he just heard this plot to assassinate the king. And he reported it to the authorities, and a record was made, and it was tucked away in the library of the annals of the kingdom.

But he wasn't rewarded. He didn't get the Congressional Medal of Honor or the Croix de Guerre or any other cross or ribbon or anything else. It just went on like that.

Well, then the villain comes into the story. It's a man named Haman. He was really a wicked, wicked man.

And he was able to get close to the king, you know. And he was able to get the confidence of the king, and he got the king to issue a decree that everybody would bow to him. Everybody would bow to him.

Whenever they saw Haman come along, it was supposed to curtsy or bow or, you know, show homage to this beast of a man. But there was one man in the kingdom who wouldn't bow to him, and we were talking about him last week, and his name was Mordecai. He was a Jew, and he would pay homage only to the one true God.

And it took courage for him to take that stance, because as we said last week, as far as the wretched was concerned, he was the only man in the kingdom who wouldn't bow to Haman. Even his decision involved the lives of all his fellows. Boy, that was a big decision to make, wasn't it? That was a big decision to make.

We talked about that. This was a man of conviction. This was a man who knew what he believed and was willing to stand by what he believed, and it's something that's sadly missing in our country today.

And so, of course, he's furious. He's absolutely furious, Haman is, that this guy has the gall not to bow to him. He's a Jew.

You bow only to the one true living God. And so, he arranges with the king, this is incredible, he arranges with the king that all the Jews must be destroyed. All the Jews must be destroyed.

And you know, it's really interesting when you come to it and see how it was. They're to be killed, destroyed, annihilated. Every word he could think in his dictionary of synonyms, he dragged it out to describe the extinction of the Jewish people in the realm.

Every time I see those words here in the book of Esther, I think of an incident with our dear friend George Landis years ago. George Landis was a visitor, a preacher who used to travel around, and of course, he'd be entertained in the homes of people. And there was one, there was one thing he didn't like when they served him supper.

He didn't like apricot pie. In fact, he said he loathed, despised, hated, and abominated apricot pie. That means he didn't like it.

And one time he went to a home, dear lady from the Fernwood Assembly, and unknown to her, she had apricot pie. And at the end, she said to him, she had slaved all day to make the pie, the poor dear. And at the end, she said to him, how did you like the pie, brother Landis? He said, well, that was a pie, wasn't it? Well, she thought he enjoyed it.

And she called all the sisters in the assembly who were going to have him over, and she said, if you want to give him something he likes, you give him apricot pie. He loathed, despised, hated, and abominated apricot pie. Well, I think of that when I think of this decree that was formulated, they would destroy, annihilate, kill, everything else, all of the Jews.

And then they did an interesting thing. They cast lots to determine when the plan would be carried out. You see, instead of taking his fury out on Mordecai alone, he said, well, if he's like that, all his people must be like that, so we've got to kill them all.

And so they used some kind of superstitious way of determining the date when the Jews would be killed. And you know what? What he didn't know, let's say, I don't know how he did it. I don't know whether they cast dice or what, but let's say they cast dice.

What he didn't know was that as those dice left the hand and twirled through the air and landed and bounced on a table, every movement was ordained of God. You say, can God do that? Can God control the movement of dice? Of course he can. God controlled every bullet in a war, every one of them, no question about it.

Those dice obeyed God's will. And you know, it's an interesting thing, even superstition was harnessed to the will of God, because the way it came out, it gave the Jews 11 months to prepare. 11 months.

It doesn't say this in the record. I don't believe, according to the strategy that they devised, it could have been any longer. I believe that according to the way that these wicked men tried to work it out, it had to be, that was the very longest time it could possibly be, the 12-month Adar.

And so, he has a perfect plan. He's going to get the king to put a signet ring on this decree for the extermination of the Jews. And because it's the law of the Medes and the Persians, it means it cannot be changed.

That was something distinctive about their law. Once the king put his signet ring to it, he himself couldn't change it. It was absolutely unalterable.

And this is a very great part of the story. You know, this story, as we said, has all the elements of great literature to it, although it's still the word of God. And I really think that when those dice finished rattling on the table, Haman was greatly disappointed.

He was saying, oh wow, do I have to wait 11 months to get it all the way? It wasn't the way he would have liked it, I'll tell you that. But God was in control. God was keeping watch over his own.

Just to make sure that everything would go off well, this guy promised the king that he would give him \$20 million to help in the extermination of the Jews. Ray Steadman, who used to be over here at the Peninsula Bible Church, estimated 250 tons of silver. That's a lot, friends.

I don't know where he was going to get that money. Did he have that much money? Maybe he was going to get it from the possessions of the Jews whom he was going to kill. I don't know.

But that's what he offered, \$20 million, or 250 tons of silver, to the king. And then, really, it's something that's very unsettling. It's really amazing when you read the story and read of the tremendous speed with which the decree was to go out throughout all of Persia.

We're going to be talking about that later. You know, when the world wants to do its wicked work, it's amazing how they can do it speedily. I often think of that.

Years ago, John Kennedy was assassinated, and within a matter of hours, it was known throughout the world, wasn't it? Two thousand years ago, the Lord Jesus was slain on the cross at Calvary, and half the world has still never heard it. Something unfair about it, isn't there? Something unequal about it. But I can't help thinking of that when I come.

So, the decree has gone out. It's signed with the king's signet. All the Jews are going to be killed, destroyed, annihilated, exterminated.

The payment is satisfied. He and the king go in and have a few drinks. That's an amazing thing, isn't it? Have you ever noticed the world can't have a good time without alcohol? I think that's incredible.

The world can't have a good time without alcohol. It's the first thing they think of. I've been on an airplane, and sometimes we've gone through very rough weather and crash land, not crash landing, but a forced landing and all this.

The first thing the airline does is serve liquor to the people. Free liquor. Not free Cokes, free liquor.

The world, that's the way the world is. Well, this is the saddest, this is the darkest spot in the book of Esther right now. Look, the people of God are sentenced to die.

And I suppose they could have sat there and thought, where is God? Where is our covenant keeping God? You know, if we're God's people, and he's God, and he's all powerful, and he's all knowing, how come he's silent? How come the heavens are dead, and our prayers are not answered? And God is saying, just a minute, that's not my directive, Will. My permissive, I'm allowing this to happen, but dear friends, the last chapter hasn't been written. You've got to wait till the end of the story, and then see who's right.

God's saying up there in heaven, I'll teach that cruel man a few things. I'll teach that Haman that he can have his wickedness, but I'll have my way. And I'll teach him that I'm greater than any unchangeable decree that the people of Persia can make, the king of Persia can make.

And I'm going to teach that Haman that the way of the transgressor is hard. And I'm going to teach him, be sure that your sin will find you out. And I'm going to teach my people that I do work all things together for good to those who love me, who are the called according to my purpose.

I'll show them. And he did. He did.

Well, the Jews were a threat, Haman thought. They were scared as hell throughout the kingdom, and they were a real threat to him. So he's got to get rid of them.

One of the great lessons that you have to learn, I have to learn from the book of Esther, is that God doesn't do anything, but what you would do yourself if you could see the end of all he does as well as he does. The poem is, God nothing does nor suffers to be done, but what thou wouldst thyself couldst thou but see the end of all he does as well as he. When Haman drew up that decree, he didn't realize that he was masterminding the death of the queen.

This is going to prove to be his undoing, friends. Hold your breath. Let me say that again.

When Haman drew up that decree, he didn't realize that he was masterminding the death of the queen. Probably you're getting pretty close to the king when you do that, aren't you? Better watch out, friends. Trouble in the air.

And his ignorance of that one vital fact in God's providence that proved to be his undoing, I think that's thrilling. I think that's thrilling. His ignorance of that one fact that Esther was a Jewess and that he was masterminding her death.

Well, what do you have here? You have a case of anti-Semitism. You know, no people have suffered down through the centuries as much as the Jewish people have. No people have.

It's absolutely incredible. Why? Somebody interviewed Lord Jacobowitz. He was a former chief rabbi of Great Britain, and they asked him on this TV interview why the Jews have been persecuted so greatly through the generations.

Do you know what he said? I want you to think about this. Why have the Jews been subject to so much anti-Semitism? He said, it's the dislike of the unlike. People don't like what unlikes themselves.

I want you to think about that with me for a little while. It started, of course, way back in Egypt, didn't it, under Pharaoh. That was the first, and how they had to leave the Passover and had to leave and go into the boat.

Of course, Babylonian captivity. People of Israel carried off into Babylon. I really believe Saddam Hussein's great intention was to exterminate the Jews.

And if he could control the oil of the Middle East, he could have all the nations on their knees, and he could do whatever he wanted. Neo-Nazism today is very strong in many countries today. Neo-Nazism.

And then, of course, we look forward to the tribulation period. The worst is yet to come. But get that expression, the dislike of the unlike.

Do you know the word holiness means different? That's really what it means. We don't think of that, but when we think of holiness, we think of sinlessness or something like that. But holiness really means different.

Sanctification means it's the same. Sanctification and holiness are the same. Sanctification means to set apart.

And if you set something apart from the others, it's different from them. And you know, God wants his people, I'm speaking about ourselves now, God wants us to be different. Peter says that the world thinks it strange that you do not run with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.

Many of you have faced that in your business, in your occupation, in your office, in your factory, where you've worked, in your neighborhood. You've faced the chilling animosity of your why. What have you done? You haven't done anything wrong.

You're different. You're different. Set apart to God from the world.

You know, there are some people that think that this age has been the age of greatest Christian bashing of anywhere. And it's increasing all the time. Some of it is deserved.

But I wish the Christian bashing were the result of our lives being such lives of holiness that people would hate us. That would be good. Not because of what they see of Christianity on television.

Not because of that. Some of their animosity is deserved. I think of the attacks that are being made on Christianity today in the United States.

Attacks on the deity of Christ. Denial of his deity. Attacks on the atonement.

People say it's abhorrent, the whole idea of Christ dying for us. Attacks on the scriptures as the inspired word of God. Some of you have read in the magazines and the papers about a so-called Jesus Seminar.

Where this group of scholars get together. And they take the gospels. And they start dissecting the gospels.

And they say, well, it's very unlikely that Jesus said that. And then they'll take another verse and they say, well, we know that Jesus didn't say that. You know, these are scholars.

Nonsense. Utter rubbish is what it really is. When they get through, you really don't have the New Testament anymore.

And they have a very clever expression. I read it. It said, no reputable scholar believes this, you know.

They're denying the truth of the word of God. They say no reputable scholar believes the word of God anymore. Christian bashing.

They don't miss an opportunity to get their digs in at the Lord Jesus. The New Age movement, of course, is part of it as well. Well, just as the Jews have been hated because they're different.

I think that the Lord is calling the church today to be different in the sense of holiness. And to suffer persecution for it. And that would have a great purifying effect upon the church.

Some who are only professors wouldn't hold on to their profession. Well, it's a dark day in Shushan, the palace. It's a dark day for the Jews.

It's a dark day for Esther. It's a dark day for Mordecai. But, you know, even the unbelievers were perplexed.

It says in verse 15 of chapter 3, the city of Shushan was perplexed. The very last words of that chapter. And, you know, it says that in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 28, 28 says, when the wicked arise, men hide themselves. But when they perish, the righteous increase. And then it says in Proverbs 29, 2, when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.

But when a wicked man rules, the people groan. The Bible's wonderful, isn't it? It's a wonderful book. That's what happened in Shushan.

And wickedness there in authority. And the people are groaning. And the people are perplexed.

God is looking down from heaven and he's saying, my people are understandably saddened. God sees Mordecai up there in the square. Mordecai is putting on such a demonstration of mourning and wailing as you've never seen in your life.

Never seen anybody. I don't think there's anybody that can mourn as dramatically as a Jew. And I don't say that critically either.

I say it's sympathetic. I remember years ago going to Jerusalem and there was an exhibit there from the Second World War. It's still there, I guess.

And behind this big glass window, there are some cakes of soap. And those cakes of soap have three letters on them. Pure Jewish fat.

In German, pure Jewish fat. Well, dear Jewish people come from all over the world and they see this and you wouldn't believe what it's like. The wailing and their arms being thrown around and their bodies being thrown around.

For all they know, that fat was made from some of their own loved ones. Terrible. And then twice I've been to the concentration camp Auschwitz.

And once again, Jewish people coming from all over the world. And what they see is not very nice, I'll tell you. It put me into the blues for quite a long while afterwards.

And they wailed and they cried and they threw themselves around. And I sympathize with it. And not to be criticized for it.

But all I'm mentioning, therefore, is it helps me to understand Mordecai out there in the square. What a carry-on. He had a reason to carry on that way.

And he's clothed in sackcloth. Which, of course, was the clothing of one who is mourning. And this is going on throughout the country.

The people are wailing and they're fasting and they're clothed in sackcloth and ashes. God doesn't like to see them plunged into grief like this. But you know what he says? He says, in all their affliction, I'm afflicted.

It's amazing to realize that God feels it in heaven. What his people feel on earth. And God is saying, just be patient.

I'll teach them some valuable lessons. And they will get to know me as the God of providence. And they'll learn to trust me more.

Well, the bush telephone is working. And the word trickles in to Esther. That Mordecai out there, such a display out there in the public square.

And so she says, well, I'll send out a new suit to him. I mean, he's clothed in sackcloth. I'll send out a new suit to him.

He refuses to take it. Why does he refuse? Here's the queen. I mean, I know it's his cousin.

And it's his kind of adoptive daughter. But why would he refuse a suit to him? I'll tell you why. New clothes don't heal a broken heart.

That's why. That man had a broken heart. And the wheels of his mind were going around.

I can just see them going around. How are we going to work this thing out? Well, Esther inquired, what's all this mourning about anyway? What's he putting on such a scene out there as he is? And then the whole story is just unloaded on the queen. The decree against the Jews and Haman's contribution to finance the operation.

Just terrific. The dark day, isn't it? Really a dark day. You may be going through a dark time at the present.

You may be sorrowing over a loved one or the death of a loved one. Maybe wayward children. I don't know what it is.

I want to tell you, there are dreadful conditions in our country today. And a lot of hearts are really sorrowing. Churches are closing across the country.

And you know, there's no commitment as there was a generation ago. Little conviction and no commitment. The only way, the only place you find commitment today is in the dictionary, really.

You can still find it there, thank God. Things are tough. And sometimes when I feel it myself, I think of a man this week.

I read about a man who said, when I look out upon the world system today, I turn away in disgust and look to Christ. That's good, isn't it? When you see conditions in the world today, you just turn away from it in disgust. You read the news.

You see it on television. Is there any morality left? Is there any decency left? You wonder. You turn to Christ and you can find all your satisfaction there.

He never fails. There's a hymn that means an awful lot to me. Especially if I tend to get down, which I don't often do.

He's still my soul. The Lord is on my side. Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain.

Leave to thy God to order and provide. In every change, be faithful, will remain. Be still my soul, thy best, thy heavenly friend.

Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end. I think if I had been living in Esther's time or Mordecai's time, I'd have tried to reach them some way and given them a copy of this hymn. Be still my soul, thy God doth undertake to guide thy future as he has the past.

Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake. All now mysterious shall be bright upon. Be still my soul, the winds and waves still know his voice, who stilled them while he dwelt below.

Isn't that wonderful? That says it all. That says it all. God is working in spite of the fact that we're at the darkest point in the book.

And then Mordecai has a plan of action. He commands some of the assistants, some of the servants, whatever you want to call them, to go and tell Esther that she has to go before the king and plead the cause of her people. Nobody knows she's a Jewess.

They don't know she's a Jewess. Now she's got to blow her cover, as it were. That's what she's got to do.

And this is a serious problem for Esther. For one thing, if she goes before, the king, incidentally, he has a scepter. He has a golden scepter.

It's an ornamental staff here. Probably has a big ball at the end of it with gold encrusted on it. It's a magnificent thing.

And if you went before the king and he didn't hold out that, pow, you had it, friend, death. Why? Because those kings were always afraid of assassination attempts, that's all. They didn't want to have people come

to them unannounced, approaching them.

Their lives, you know, you've heard that expression, uneasy lies of the head that wears the crown. Well, it's still true. It was true then.

It's still true. And so if she took that action, even if she was the queen, it didn't make any difference. If she went before Ahasuerus and he didn't hold out the golden scepter, death.

But that wasn't all. She seemed to have been in disfavor with him for some reason or other. We're not told what the reason.

He had not called her for 30 days. Wow, that was a real cooling off period, wasn't it? 30 days, a whole month he hadn't been called to appear before the king. And it doesn't come out here, but it comes out later.

I might as well anticipate it. Before she went to him, she was going to fast three days. How do you think you and I would look if we fasted three days? I think we'd be drawn and piqued, you know, more so than usual.

So everything was against her. Everything was against her. Say, how dark can things get? She's between a rock and a hard place, but God's saying, no problem, Esther.

Take care of all the details. All you have to do is obey, and I will take care of the consequences. And so Mordecai says to her, time to go.

Time for you to go and speak to the... Esther, don't think that you will escape more than any other. If you don't go, if you don't go before the king, God will bring deliverance from some other quarter. You and your father's house will be destroyed.

And how do you know but you're come to the kingdom for such a time? Those are magnificent words, aren't they? What a challenge. You know, there are times in life when we need to be nudged into action. If you have somebody sometime, maybe a wife or a husband who nudges you into action, well, be thankful for it.

How do you know but you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Well, our time is gone, but that's a good place to stop, I think. And I'd like to stop with this question ringing in your mind and in my mind. Why have I come to the kingdom at this particular time? What work does God have for me to do? I mean, we really do live in a crisis time in the history of the Christian church.

Is God speaking to me about something? If you lay out some plan, it might be difficult. It might not be the thing that naturally I would choose. How do you know but you've come to the kingdom for such a time as this? We'll discuss that more, Lord willing, when we meet again, Lord willing, in the will of God.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for your wonderful word. We thank you more than that for yourself and for your marvelous dealings and grace to us. We think of the grace that sent incarnate love down to Calvary's cross to die for ungodly sinners, not for friends, but for enemies.

And we thank you for the wonderful gospel of your grace, that when we come repenting of our sins and believing in the Lord Jesus, we have life everlasting, become heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and are destined to eternal glory. We just rest today in the knowledge that the winds and waves still obey

his voice, who stilled them while he dwelt below. And we pray that the consciousness of your providence will go with us through the week, and that we might rejoice to see evidences of that providence, of you working in our lives and the lives of our fellow believers.

We ask it in Jesus' name, and for his sake. Amen. Gary will lead us in a closing hymn.

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