

05-28-2017

Message: Risking All

Text: Esther 4:1-17

Introduction

- A. Tomorrow is Memorial Day, an American holiday now observed on the last Monday in May. It evolved from Decoration Day shortly after the Civil War to a day honoring the men and women who died while serving in our military in all of our nations wars and conflicts, men and women, who when asked, were willing to put their lives at risk to the welfare of their people.
- B. Over 2,400 years ago in God's providence, in His hidden work of appointing and governing all of creation's events, a young orphaned Hebrew girl, exalted to be Queen of the Persian Empire, was asked to risk it all for the sake of her people, God's chosen descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- C. God's deliverance of Esther and her people is intended to encourage us to trust the Lord, now revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, Who delivers His people who are willing to risk and loose all for His sake.

I. 4:1-3 God in His providence tests the righteous.

Esther 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, **he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly.**² He went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.³ In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, **there was great mourning among the Jews,** with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

- A. Out of prideful hatred for Mordecai, the Jew, Haman, the Amalakite, chief among the Persian princes, had persuaded king Ahasuerus into giving him permission to annihilate an minority group of people within the empire that Haman never identified to the indifferent, self-indulgent king as Hebrews.
- B. This is not the first time the Amalikes, the enemies of God's people, brought sorrow and unimaginable grief to the Jews. Over 500 years earlier, when David and his 600 fighting men returned to their sanctuary city of Ziklag, Amalakites had burned the city and abducted all the women and children not for any unrighteous thing David had done.

1 Samuel 30:1 Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that **the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag,** and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire;² and they took captive the women *and all* who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried *them* off and went their way.³ When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire,

and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.⁴ **Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep.**

- C. We should never think that if our circumstance is difficult, stressful, debilitating, painful, sad, that this falls outside the providence of God, that His wisdom has not appointed it nor has His hand orchestrated it.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, **which comes upon you for your testing**, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

- D. Remember, God has always expected His people to read Esther in light of what He has revealed in the rest of Scripture. 500 years before Esther, the Lord inspired David to write Psalm 11, encouraging the righteous to trust in His sovereignty and love for them.

Psalm 11:3 If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?"⁴ **The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven**; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.⁵ **The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked**, and the one who loves violence His soul hates.⁶ Upon the wicked He will rain snares; ...⁷ For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.

II. 4:4-9 No superficial solutions will satisfy.

- A. Mordecai's clothes and behavior were not appropriate for entering the king's gate. So Esther sent clothes to cover him. The inappropriateness of his outward appearance was hardly important in light of the sentence of death placed over him and his people, and he refused any superficial solution to his condition.

Esther 4:4 Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, **but he did not accept them**.

1. What superficial solutions does the world offer to those living under the sentence of eternal death?
 2. Are we spending our lives on trivial pursuits, or thinking that engaging in a small pursuit absolves us from pursuing greater pursuits? (Eg., interview showing an ecowarrior's self-satisfaction in not using the thin plastic straw Starbucks supplies for stirring coffee, as though she's done her part to save the planet.)
 3. Are we applying superficial solutions to the challenges of life? To the challenges of parenting, marriage, singleness, stress, loneliness, ill health, loss, to the challenges of practicing righteousness?
- B. Esther has been kept insulated from Haman's plot and decree, so she sends a king's eunuch

to investigate.

Esther 4:5 Then Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him *to go* to Mordecai to learn what this *was* and why it *was*.⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate.

C. Mordecai informed Hathach of Haman's plot and financial incentive offered to the king.

Esther 4:6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate.
⁷ Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews.

D. Mordecai also supplied Esther with a copy of the decree to destroy the Jews, so Esther would know for certain that Mordecai is not mistaken or embellishing the gravity of the situation, since he was now asking her to put her position and very life at risk in the hope of delivering her people from destruction.

Esther 4:8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, **that he might show Esther and inform her, and to order her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people.**⁹ Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther.

III. 4:10-12 Risk or cost to self is no excuse for inaction.

Esther 4:10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him *to reply* to Mordecai:¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for **any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death,** unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days."¹² They related Esther's words to Mordecai.

- A. "All ... know" = Mordecai must know he's asking her to put her very life at grave risk. Not being summoned to come to the king for the last 30 days would appear to diminish the likelihood that he would be pleased to see her.
- B. Is the only action required of God's people that which risks nothing important, costs little or nothing?

1 Chronicles 21:24 But King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy *it* for the full price; for **I will not** take what is yours for the LORD, or **offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing.**"

IV. 4:13-14 Self-sacrifice is the action to which we are called.

Esther 4:13 Then Mordecai told *them* to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.¹⁴ "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

- A. Mordecai's response to Esther anticipates a principle that Jesus will tell us almost 5 centuries later ...

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."²⁵ **For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it;** but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

1. We cannot separate ourselves from the interests of Christ and His church and consider ourselves "safe."
2. Charles Spurgeon, preaching from these two verses (sermon #1777), minced no words to his hearers ...

Will you separate your interests from those of your people and your God? ... Does that temptation come across the path of any one of us? It may. You may say, "I shall be saved though the city should perish in its iniquity. ... I know the Lord myself, and that is my main concern. If the heathen perish I am not one of them, and I am thankful that it will not interfere with my destiny." Will you argue in this selfish manner? Will you follow the wicked policy of separating your own personal interests from those of your Redeemer and His church? If so your ship is wrecked before it leaves the harbor. You are no child of God if this principle holds mastery over you. Your salvation lies not in your separation from Christ and His church, but in your union with them. ... You must ... give yourself to Him to make His interests your interests, His life your life, His kingdom your kingdom, His glory your glory. Your personal welfare will be found in submergence into Christ.

3. Christ inspired His apostle Paul to teach us this way of living for Christ. What sacrifice of love toward's Christ and His church are we offering to Christ?

Romans 14:7 For **not one of us lives for himself,** and **not one dies for himself;**⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

- B. Mordecai's second statement implies that

1. There is a hidden hand of providence executing a master plan for all humanity.
2. That we have been given our lives, including our health, strength, IQ, education, jobs, skill sets, wealth, circumstances, not primarily for our own sake, but for the sake of

accomplishing God's greater purposes in and through us. E.g., ...

- a. Esther was not given her beautiful looks to be spent on herself, but to give her access to the throne of Persia, not so she could enjoy the privileges and comforts and status of being queen, but so that she would be strategically used by God to deliver her and His people from annihilation, and His promises from failing.
- b. Mordecai became a foster father or adoptive father, not primarily so he could enjoy raising a daughter, but to guide that daughter in being used for God's greater purposes. He was given his employment at or near the king's gate so he would be in a position to communicate and give guidance to Esther at the right time.

B. If God's divine Son was given His humanity on earth to fulfill God's purpose, know that we humans have been given our lives for no less reason than to fulfill the purposes of God.

Luke 4:43 But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for **I was sent for this purpose.**"

John 12:27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? **But for this purpose I came to this hour.**

1 Peter 2:21 For **you have been called for this purpose**, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to **those who are called according to His purpose.**²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;**

V. 4:15-17 Faith obeys the Lord and leaves the outcome to Him.

Esther 4:15 Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai,¹⁶ "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.

- A. Leaving the outcome to God is not resigning to fatalism. It is doing everything God would have us to for His purposes to be accomplished in and through us.
- B. Esther fasts, typically associated with praying, calling on the Lord for help and deliverance. So we trust God for the outcome by earnestly seeing His help.

Daniel 9:3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him* by **prayer and supplications, with fasting**, sackcloth and ashes.

Acts 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, **having prayed with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- C. Esther enlists the help of God's people in fasting (and praying) for God's deliverance. God has purposed that we not only need His direct help, but also His help through His people.
- D. Esther entrusts her life to God, for Him to do with it what He will for His purposes.

1 Peter 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, **but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously**;

1 Peter 4:19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God **shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right**.

Conclusion

- A. What Esther was asked to risk, Christ was asked to do - give up His very life for His people, that the death penalty for our sins might be paid for by Christ, that we who give our lives to Him in faith might be forgiven.
- B. This weekend we honor those who died to preserve our freedom from human oppressors. But this Lord's Day we honor the Christ who died to provide His church, His holy nation, freedom from the oppression of sin and its consequences, eternal death. As Jesus said, ...

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.³⁵ "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.³⁶ **"So if the Son makes you free, you will be truly free.**