

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Feb 9, 2020
Team Ministry: For Such A Time As This
Pastor Hall 8am & 10:30 Festival, Pastor Temple 9:15 & 10:30 Fam Life

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

- Anything to share about personal events since you last met or about applying last week's message on "Wearing Yourself Out" (w/Jethro in Exodus 18)?
 - Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)
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- Are there issues present in our culture today, that you wish you could do something about personally but don't know what? Why do you feel a particular burden for them?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture, Esther 3:12-13, 4:9-17. Know that it is ok to skip some questions below in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

¹² Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring. ¹³ Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews— young and old, women and children— on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

⁹ Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹ "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law:

that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king." ¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- The King of Persia, Xerxes conquered the nation that had conquered and exiled the Jews, Babylon, and allowed the Jews to return to Israel in 539BC. 3:12-13 presents the outcome of a political manipulator and hater, Haman. What policy did Haman write and get the King to allow him use of his ring to endorse?
- Esther's cousin Mordecai raised her like a father would have and kept in touch after she entered the palace as a wife of the king (with her Jewish background being kept a secret). What was Esther's initial response to Mordecai's request to speak to the king about this unjust law (vs 9-11)?
- How did Mordecai's response include both personal challenge to Esther as well faith in God's power (vs 12-14)?
- How did Esther's response to Mordecai also demonstrate great faith as well as courage (vs 15-17)?
- Why do you think Nazi Germany did not allow the book of Esther to be shared or read in the concentration camps?
- Since God's name and laws are not mentioned in the book of Esther explicitly, why or how do you think it was included in the canon (Bible)?
- How do you respond to the quote by Dr. Karen Jobes, "God is omnipotently present when God is most conspicuously absent?"

Other Related Readings (10 min)

- Would a volunteer please read out loud, Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
- How do our choices influence the outcomes of life events on earth, given that God is all powerful and governs the universe?
- How does Mordecai's statement in 4:14 above reflect trust in God's power but also the call the take responsibility to be an agent of change for God?
- Where do you see the hand of God working out things for the good in the story of Mordecai and Esther?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the additional readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- What do you think about coincidences and how God works in your life? Are coincidences purely random all the time, some of the time or none of the time (always flowing from God's activity and not randomness)?
- Where did you see the hand of God at work in the events of your life this past week?
- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Where or how may God be leading you to speak up and not be silent?
- Is there anything the group can pray (or fast and pray) about for you in a similar way that the people fasted and prayed for Esther?

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- What kind of platform of influence has God given you?
- Is there a way you can use your platform of influence this week to touch upon any issues discussed by the group?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer