

“ESTHER’S SECOND FEAST.”
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First Christian Reformed Church
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Scripture Texts: Esther 7

Introduction.

This is a life and death chapter, two lives hang in the balance. Who will get life and who will get death? Both of them plead for their lives, one before the king, one before the queen. One will be executed, one saved.

Esther’s Request, 6:14 – 7:4.

The pace picks up, things are unraveling. Haman is hurried out the door and off to the queen, either he had forgotten the time, or simply the king and queen are not to be kept waiting.

Notice the change in the narrative as to who is in control. In chapter 3 Haman was in control, plotting against the Jews. In chapter 4 Mordecai was in control, calling Esther to action. In chapter 5 Esther was controlling the action going to the king and hosting a feast. In chapter 6 it was the king making decisions and plans. Now in chapter 7 Haman is clearly not in control at all, it is Esther who is driving the narrative.

But as we have seen all along, over all of this there is a divine providence, God is directing it all according to His will and purpose.

The king repeats his questions. “What is your wish? What is your request up to half the kingdom?” He shows his eager willingness to honor her desires. He promises a positive and generous response.

He makes two offers and she makes two requests. “Let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request.”

In verse 4 Esther reveals her own identity to the king. This is risky.

For five years she has kept her identity a secret and now she is about to come out. It has to be a scary proposition for her especially in light of the king’s decree that has gone out. She is risking her life to identify with her people.

Notice how carefully and wisely she avoids implicating the king in these actions done to her and her people. After all the king is indirectly responsible for his irresponsible behavior. She wants to expose Haman without incriminating the king who had sealed Haman's decree.

Then comes the first blow, she directly quotes from Haman's decree, that her people are to be "destroyed and killed and annihilated."

She shows further wisdom in pausing and leaving the king to ask further questions, thus drawing him unto her side. He is startled and astonished. "What are you talking about, who is trying to kill you and your people?"

He is angry even before he knows who to be angry with. He is offended and incensed that someone would attack his queen and her people. "Who is he and where is he?"

Esther's strategy is very similar to Nathan's when confronting David's sin with Bathsheba. Remember how Nathan skillfully told a story that aroused David's anger and demand for justice before revealing that David was the evil man.

Esther incites the king's anger before revealing the cause.

Now the dagger, the knife thrust. "A foe, an enemy, this wicked Haman!"

Ahasuerus's Response, 7:5-7.

The king withdraws in anger, though we are not told why he is angry? It could be over a wicked plot against his queen, or that his favored number two man is involved or that he has been taken for a fool and unwittingly drawn into this evil scheme by Haman who has tricked and deceived him.

It is possible the king thought the people were being enslaved, when it was Haman's intent to kill them.

Consider the king's dilemma. What is going through his mind out in the garden? Can he punish Haman for a plot he approved and sealed? If he does, won't he lose face? And what about the fact that the laws of the Medes and the Persians are irrevocable?

Haman's Remorse, 7:7-10.

Haman has three options. Run away, but that would be an admission of guilt. Follow the king into the garden to beg for mercy but he's pretty mad. Beg the queen for mercy.

Haman falls on the queen to beg for mercy.

Note the hypocrisy of a man who showed no mercy now begging for mercy.

Note the irony, him begging for mercy from his intended victim.

The man who wanted a Jew to bow down and grovel before him, is now groveling before a Jew.

The king is without advisors at this point and as we have seen he seldom does anything without input from others. In this situation the input comes in the form of a coincidence of perfect timing. As he walks back in he sees Haman casting himself on Esther.

There is historical evidence to suggest that in Persian culture no man was to approach a woman of the king's harem closer than seven feet or even speak to with her without the king being present.

More irony, it is in his pleading for his life that costs him his life. He falsely accused the Jews of treason against the king, and now he is falsely accused of treason against the king.

The king clearly over reacts to the situation and imputes motives that are not there. But it is a convenient lie, allowing the king to save face for his earlier irresponsibility.

Haman has violated harem etiquette and is executed for the crime of physical or sexual assault.

Harbona conveniently mentions the gallows Haman had just built to execute Mordecai, who dear king, you will remember spoke up to save the king.

The public disgrace and humiliation he intended for Mordecai becomes his own fate. Mordecai got the honor Haman wanted. Haman got the gallows he wanted for Mordecai.

Oh, how the mighty are fallen.

Psalm 7:14-16 Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.

15 He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made.

16 His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends.

Proverbs 26:26-27 though his hatred be covered with deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.

Thus Haman is hoist by his own petard, killed by his own bomb, and impaled on his own stake.

The villain's own weapon and malicious plan is the cause of his downfall and death. Haman's sins find him out.

Is Esther's silence and lack of pity or forgiveness a flaw in her character? Or is Queen Esther finishing what King Saul was supposed to do so many years before, when he failed to kill King Agag? Saul was commanded to spare no one, so now Esther must not spare Haman.

Because of an ancient covenant, the Jews are delivered and the Agagites are destroyed.

Implications and application.

We reap what we sow.

What goes around comes around.

What we sow from sin or from our sinful nature will come back to reap corruption.

Pride.

In Haman we have a case study in pride. He is a man with an insatiable lust for power and control and authority and honor. He will use or run over anyone for it. Because Mordecai won't bow down to Haman, Haman decides to kill millions of Jews. Pride makes him willing to kill millions of people so he can feel better about himself, and it is pride that kills him. The enormity of the evil in his heart is pictured in the enormity of the gallows he built.

History is filled with examples.

Hitler in Germany.

Duvalier (du val yea, Papa Doc) in Haiti.

Kim family in North Korea.

Idi Amin in Uganda.

Pol Pot in Cambodia

Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Each a ruthless dictator with an unquenchable thirst for power and control, each mass murderers with unrelenting brutality toward anyone who threatened their power.

None of us likes to be around proud or arrogant people. We look down on them and feel superior to them, in other words, we can be just as proud. Pride makes us very self-centered, it's all about me.

Nothing good comes out of pride, it only leads to destruction. There is no pride before God, none can stand, no boasting, no self-centeredness.

Jesus is the model, He emptied Himself of glory, He came not to be served but to serve. Jesus was the center of the universe but He didn't act like it. Jesus didn't use people for His own glory. The humblest person on earth died for all of our pride.

The cross is where we kill pride. We deserve nothing, we have nothing we have not received. We only deserve the cross, but Jesus dies in our place. We should fix our eyes on Him and not on ourselves.

The great reversal.

How often does wickedness and evil seem to prevail? How often do we feel like the Psalmist in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73:3, 12-13 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

12 Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.

13 All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.

One of the purposes of God's providence in the world is to make things right. This is why God reserves judgment and revenge for Himself. He will get it right when He sets all things right.

God will deal a decisive blow to all evil and wickedness.

Calvary is the bringing down of the strong and mighty, of Satan and death and evil. The cross is Satan being hoist by his own petard, killed by his own bomb, forced to drink his own poison. Death was put to death in the death of Christ.

Satan couldn't help himself, he took the bait and was killed in his own trap. The power of the unstoppable will be stopped. The cruelty of the wicked will fall on them.

Haman is a picture of the world's hatred of God and God's people. They will reap what they have sown. We have to wait and be patient for the harvest to be ripe.

Until then it is right to pray for justice and for a stop to injustice and for God to act. Where we can we must stand up and speak up for justice.

Revelation 19:1-2 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
2 for his judgments are true and just;
for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

This must be so. All sin and evil and wickedness set themselves up as direct assaults on the holiness of Almighty God. Divine justice requires a full response. God takes all sin and evil personally.

There could be no mercy shown to the wickedness of Haman.

We are assured of a great reversal, our final destiny is glory, no matter how powerful the enemy.

Contrast Esther’s relationship with the king and our relationship with God.

She has to be careful, she manipulates him as Haman did before. He is fickle, shallow, ignorant and weak.

With God we can be straight and He is strong and wise and always does what is right, with the right motive because He is completely righteous.

His wrath has been dealt with by His Son. Notice that the king’s anger was abated with Haman’s death. Compare how the Father’s wrath was satisfied with the death of Jesus. Jesus bore the full fury of God’s wrath for sin.

We don’t have to pray saying “if I have found favor in your sight,” we come knowing that we have favor through Christ. We are loved and justified.

Finally, there is a picture of the Gospel here in chapter 7 and leading into chapter 8. The initial action and the future action. Haman is removed but there is further evil that must be removed, the decree of death to the Jews. Our sin is broken and forgiven, but there is still evil and wickedness to be dealt with.

This is the already and the not yet, what God has already done and what God has yet to do.