

Providence in the Palace

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[0:00] Esther chapter 6. That night the king could not sleep, so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.

It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this? the king asked. Nothing has been done for him, his attendants answered. The king said, who is in the court?

Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him. His attendants answered, Haman is standing in the court.

Bring him in, the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, what should be done for the man the king delights to honor? Now Haman thought to himself, who is there that the king would rather honor than me?

[1:09] So he answered the king. For the man the king delights to honor. Have them bring a royal robe the king has worn. And a horse the king has ridden.

One with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, this is what is done for the man the king delights to honor.

Go at once. Go at once. The king commanded Haman. Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai, the Jew who sits at the king's gate.

Do not neglect anything you have recommended. So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, this is what is done for the man the king delights to honor.

Afterward, Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home with his head covered in grief and told Zeresh, his wife and all his friends, everything that had happened to him.

[2:29] His advisors and his wife, Zeresh, said to him, since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him.

You will surely come to ruin. While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

Please turn again in your Bibles with me to Esther chapter 6. And just a reminder that there will be a brief meeting for the members of Grace Fellowship Church right up in the front here following the service tonight.

Esther chapter 6. We noted last week that good stories often have an element of suspense to them, where you wonder what's going to happen next.

You can't wait to pick up the book and read the next chapter to find out what comes after the events that you've just read. And we'll see tonight that good stories also have unexpected twists and turns.

[3:38] Things that you might never have seen coming. Unexpected both for you, the reader, and for the characters in the story. Things that they never saw coming.

Things that they wonder why they happened and where they came from. Well, tonight we come to an infamous twist. A change. A reversal of fortune.

Although we don't really believe in fortune, do we? A reversal of what was expected in the story of Esther. So far, things are proceeding in the opposite way that we think they might should be proceeding.

The people of God are in great danger. They're suffering and the wicked are prospering. The Jews are slated for destruction coming in a few months. And Mordecai, the Jew, is soon to be destroyed

much sooner than a few months.

When we left off at the end of chapter 5, it was the next day that Mordecai was to be killed. And Xerxes, a lousy leader by any standard really, is king.

[4:44] And Haman, one of the most wicked villains we can imagine, is number two in the land. And it seems that there's no end to his prosperity. What gives?

Will this trajectory continue? Where the people of God suffer and the enemies of God and his people seem to prosper. God hasn't even been named yet in the story.

And so far, he seems to be limited to working with fallen, weak, fallible characters that don't show much promise for fulfilling his purposes. But we've seen that that's a faulty notion because God works precisely through fallen individuals to bring about his good plan.

We need not fear. We need not fear for Esther and the people of God. Or bring it right up into today. We need not fear for ourselves.

Because God is on the throne. And we'll see tonight that he does all things according to his plan.

Tonight in chapter 6, those fallen characters, Esther and Mordecai, take a back seat to the real hero of the story of Esther.

[5:59] Here's the turning point, though it doesn't unfold like we might have imagined it. It's a wonderful story told by an excellent storyteller. And we want to consider it tonight. And we want to look at it by considering three questions.

Three questions tonight. First of all, who is the hero? Who is the hero of the story of Esther? And then we'll ask the question, who is the man the king delights to honor?

And then we'll take a look at the question, a question that you must answer for yourself. Whose side are you on? Right? Who is the hero? Who is the king?

The man the king delights to honor? And whose side are you on? We begin with, who is the hero? Or another way of asking the question are, where are Esther and Mordecai in chapter 6?

Here, when the tide begins to turn against the enemies of God's people, and in favor of God's people, Esther is totally absent. She's not even mentioned in this chapter.

[7:04] And Mordecai isn't much more than a passive bystander. He'll be noted by many, but he doesn't have much to say in it. Ian Duguid again says, in a way, help is arising for the Jews from another place.

In a way such as to make clear that their deliverance is entirely from God. In other words, Esther isn't the hero. Mordecai isn't the hero. God is the real hero of the story of Esther.

There are remarkable coincidences here, coincidences, that are described by our author in such a way as to make it obvious that they're not coincidences. That it could only be worked by the hand of a wise, powerful, sovereign God.

And it all begins with a sleepless night. The same night when Haman was gleefully building his gallows to display the dead Mordecai for all to see.

On a night when he's excited about the prospect of finally being rid of his nemesis so that he can really enjoy life. And, in particular, this banquet coming up with the queen and the king. He's excited.

[8:12] On that night, the king, in his palace, can't sleep. Literally, sleep fled from him. And we're not told why he couldn't sleep, whether something was troubling his mind, whether he didn't feel well.

It doesn't matter. Ultimately, we know why he couldn't sleep. The hero of our story didn't want him to sleep that night. And so he didn't. And so either to help him go to sleep, or perhaps to be reminded of his greatness, and to revel in that for a moment, King Xerxes demands that the book of memorable events be brought and read to him.

Well, why this? Why not bring one of the women from the harem, one of his concubines, why not have someone come and play music for him?

Why not something else to distract him when he couldn't sleep? Well, those things wouldn't have served the purpose of our hidden hero of the story. No, tonight it's to be the chronicles of the kingdom, the book of the annals of the king.

It records the records of what had happened during his reign. And as the servant begins to read from those records, eventually, perhaps he had been reading for some time before he got to this point. We've got to get through the whole night.

[9:26] We're not sure when the king finally gave up on sleep and asked for the records to be brought, but maybe he had been reading. And eventually he comes to the place where a story about Mordecai the Jew is recorded.

A story that we considered way back in chapter 2, where Mordecai saved the king's life by reporting a plot against the king's life.

Look back at chapter 2 for a moment. In chapter 2 and verse 21, you'll remember there were two gatekeepers, and they conspired to extend their hand against the king, to kill him.

Verse 21 of chapter 2, During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows.

[10:27] All this was recorded in the book of the Annals in the presence of the king. And that last bit of information about it being recorded in the Annals of the Book of the King and the presence of the king, that's almost a throwaway detail.

Almost something you don't even think about. It's the thing that it seems, well, why did they bother writing that down? Now we see the significance of it. God wanted that thing to be recorded.

And evidently, it was a common practice among Persian kings to well reward those who showed faithfulness and loyalty to the king. It promoted further loyalty.

Theoretically, it was a deterrent to treason, which was quite common in those days. There were all sorts of insurrections. Eventually, even King Xerxes would be killed by someone in his own court. And so, if anyone uncovered a plot like this and made it known to the king and saved his life, such a one was to be rewarded, to encourage others to do the same thing.

If Mordecai had gone unrewarded, the next servant to uncover a plot, to hear that someone was planning on killing the king, wouldn't be very likely to tell the king about it. Mordecai didn't get rewarded.

[11:31] I'm not going to get a reward. Things might be better for me with a new king, so I'm not going to tell the king. And so, the king's made sure to reward these sorts of acts. And so, Xerxes wants to know what's been done to honor and recognize Mordecai for this act of service.

We're back in chapter 6 now. What's been done? Has he been honored? And we might wonder, why wasn't he concerned about it back when it happened?

Why didn't he take care of it then? Well, you remember where the heart of the king is. It's in the hand of our hero, the Lord.

And again, he turns it wherever he wishes. And for whatever reason, Xerxes was distracted back then from rewarding Mordecai. But now, as it's read back to him, he remembers it, and he wonders what's been done, and if nothing has been done, why not?

And nothing has been done. So he seeks to remedy that situation right away. Mordecai must be honored. He's going to honor a Jew. He signed off on the destruction of the Jews, but now he's going to honor one of them.

[12:34] And he knows that Mordecai's a Jew. Down in verse 10, he calls him Mordecai the Jew. It's quite possible that he didn't even know the identity of the people whose destruction he had okayed. Haman never mentions it when he's making his proposal.

He just says, there's a people in your kingdom. They need to be destroyed. They're sort of unruly. They have their own laws. Never mentions who they are. It's never told that the king asked who they are. It's never told that he found out who they are.

It's quite possible he doesn't know that it's the Jews. And so for him to honor a Jew, perhaps not contradictory in his mind at all. And so he wants to honor Mordecai.

And it seems that King Xerxes never does anything without having somebody tell him what to do. And so he says, who's in the court? I need some advisors. Somebody tell me what I should do. Who is around? And it just so happens that Haman has come by very early this day for a very different reason.

[13:35] He wanted to be first in line. Wanted to be there early so he could get this deal with Mordecai taken care of. Get him killed so he could get to the banquet and really enjoy it. Really be happy because he knew the one person that didn't give him the honor and respect he deserved

would never get it to him.

And so the only answer really is to just get rid of him. To kill him. And so this is his day. And so he gets there early. He knows the feast is later in the day. Doesn't want to waste any time. He's the first one in line to see the king that day.

To make a request that Mordecai be hanged. And so the king says, who's here? And Haman's out in the court. And the king wants to, of course, honor Mordecai.

And when you've got two locomotives that are fully loaded and moving full speed ahead, headed toward each other for a collision, you can guess that it's not going to be real pretty. And that's what you've got here.

You've got Haman with one thing in his heart and Xerxes with another thing in his heart. Right now, at the moment, the king wants an advisor on how to honor Mordecai.

[14:43] Haman has shown up to request to hang Mordecai. Something's got to give. Something's going to happen. And before proceeding on to consider what exactly does happen, considering the man whom the king delights to honor, let's remember our first question.

Who is the real hero of this story of Esther? The natural answer to that question might be Esther.

She does some heroic things, although we've seen in other ways she's much less than heroic.

She was brave. She was going to make a bold request this day. All of that, notwithstanding, here in the pivotal moment of the story, she's nowhere to be found.

Esther has nothing to do with this key turning point. Well, maybe Mordecai. He's the next logical answer, but he too has been less than heroic. It's his behavior that precipitated the coming crisis for the Jews.

And here in this chapter, he's not much more than a passive individual. Although it was his act of loyalty that brought some of these things to pass. But Mordecai is not the hero, and so who is the hero?

[15:58] I hope it's obvious to us that it's the God of Israel. It's the God of heaven and earth. The God before whom all must bow. Who else could so order events to bring them to a head like this?

To bring them to this point? Who else could put the king and his right-hand man on a collision course? It can't be chalked up to fate or coincidence. This is the God of the universe at work bringing these things to pass.

He is the one that's about to work this marvelous reversal. Bishop Paul says, O marvelous concurrence of circumstances drawn together by the infinite wisdom and power of the Almighty. Who but Haman should be the man? He's talking about when Xerxes says, who's in the court to advise me about what to do? Who but Haman should be the man? And when should Haman be called to advise of Mordecai's honor but in the very instance when he came to sue for Mordecai's hate?

Who could do that but God bring these things together? Every detail is part of God's design. Not just in Esther's story but in yours.

[17:04] Every detail He's bringing to pass. Do you remember what we heard this morning? That God doesn't change. The same God that was able to so order the events of Esther's life and Mordecai and Xerxes and Haman to bring them to this point is ordering your life and bringing them to pass according to His perfect plan.

God hasn't changed. And so the little things that happen each day that don't make sense to you it's all part of God's plan. The big things that happen that seem overwhelming to you because they're not part of your plan all part of God's plan.

When we read Bible stories or look at our own life we tend to look at individuals in the story rather than looking at the God behind the story who ordained it and who is bringing it to pass.

There's nothing wrong with considering individuals and characters in the Bible and learning from them and profiting from studying them. But don't forget as you study the Word of God and as you look at your own life to see the big picture and to remember that it's God who's on the throne.

It's God's hand who's working to bring all these things to pass and that it's God who's the real hero of these stories. Because apart from Him none of these things would have come to pass.

[18:22] Apart from Him there would be no hope for us. And so remember that God is the One who is the hero of this story. We don't have to question whether what happens in our lives was a good idea or not because we know as Bishop Hall said God is infinitely wise.

And if God is infinitely wise then all things that He does are wise and good. And we don't have to wonder whether good will come from it because we know that God is infinitely powerful and is able to bring good from situations that we can't imagine any good coming from them.

Can you imagine any good coming from a plan to execute the Jews? All of God's people scheduled to be destroyed? Any good coming from that sort of thing? Any good coming from Esther giving in and not standing for what was right and true and becoming the wife of the King and any good coming from these things?

The all-powerful God is on the throne. We don't have to wonder. We know that He is wise, powerful, and good. It's nothing new for us.

You haven't been told something tonight that you've never heard before. But be reminded afresh of the glorious providence of God and its implications for us. It ought to drive us to our knees in worship.

[19 : 46] Bless God that He's faithful to us. That everything in my life, even though I can't make sense of it, God does make sense of it. In fact, more than that, He's bringing it to pass according to His good and perfect wisdom.

That means that we can fully trust God. That we can rest in Him. It means we have no occasion for worry or for fear about what will happen to ourselves, our families, our church, our country, our world, or anything else.

And so we must seek to honor this God. To bow before Him. To submit ourselves to Him when we don't understand. And to thank Him that He does all things well. It's so clear to us when we look back at someone else's story.

It's easy for us to look at Esther and say, oh, there's God's hand at work. And then when we look at our lives, we say, where's God's hand? Why isn't it at work here? God hasn't changed. It is at work. Even though you don't see it. Who is the hero of the story? The hero of the story is God. Who sits on the throne. And it becomes clear to us here. And through the rest of the story as well.

[20 : 56] But a second question to consider tonight as we continue on with this story. And that is, who is the man the king delights to honor. Here in the next, in verses 6-11, that phrase is repeated about four times.

The man the king delights to honor. Haman's been brought in now to advise the king on this very matter. King was no doubt pleased to learn that his right hand man for some reason was in the court very early that day.

Oh, Haman's here. Good. He's advised me before. He'll have a good thought on how to honor the one that I want to honor. And Haman, no doubt, is very glad to be summoned so early to see the king.

Good. He can get his business done quickly. He can get in, see the king, make his request for Mordecai's execution and be on about his business. And so, no doubt, they're both pleased to find out that each is looking for the other.

Although for very different reasons. And so, he comes in. Perhaps right into the king's bedroom. Maybe they're still in there reading. Maybe a place Haman hadn't been before.

[22 : 03] Another honor for him to be that close to the king. Have that much power. And so, the king says to him, what should be done for the man the king delights to honor?

And you can almost just see Haman here. And you wonder what washed over him. And we're told what washed over him. The king's going to honor me. I mean, who more than me would the king want to honor?

And maybe even thinks about it for a second. There's nobody. Nobody the king would rather honor than me. And you see how full of himself Haman's become. He says to himself, who would the king rather honor than me?

And he can't think of anyone. And so, he assumes that honor is coming his way. And this day is going to be far better than he thought. He's going to get rid of Mordecai. He's going to have great honor. Come to him. And you see how consumed now.

He is with himself. It's really sickening how pleased he is with himself. He can't even think of someone else deserving honor from the king. So, so full of himself he is.

[23 : 08] So full of the approval of men that he's been enjoying these days. He automatically assumes it. And so, he repeats it back. The king, or the man the king delights to honor.

Almost as if he's mulling it over in his head. Our translations all push it together from verse 7 into verse 8. So he answered the king for the man.

The king delights to honor. Have them. But it's more broken in the Hebrew. It's the man the king delights to honor. What should be done? And he's thinking, what do I want?

What do I want done for me? Alright, here's what I want. He doesn't say that, but that's what he's thinking. Here's what I want. Bring a royal robe. One that the king has worn.

And bring a horse that the king has ridden on. One that's clear it's a royal horse. In Persia, they even put crowns on their horses. And so, royal crest, it's really a crown.

[24 : 04] Bring a horse the king has ridden on with a royal crest on his head. So it's obvious it's a royal horse. And then have the king's nobles robe the man. And have him put him on the horse and have him lead him through the central part of the city.

And shout before him, Thus it shall be done for the man the king delights to honor. And Haman, you can see him, he's picturing himself with the robe on and on the horse and somebody going before him and saying, This is the man the king delights to honor.

Soaking it up. In other words, he wants more attention, more praise, more honor. We saw that was his idol last week. The favor of men, the approval of men, living for the opinion of others.

Does this seem a little bit petty to you? One commentator calls it almost childish. Going to dress up like the king and ride around and have somebody say this is what will be done for the man the king wants to honor.

You know, why not money? Why not power? Well, Haman had those things. For somebody else, money, power, or powerful position in the kingdom might have made more sense. But Haman had those things and if you're Haman and you love the attention of men, then this makes perfect sense.

[25 : 17] He's full of himself, very proud, and he wants the honor. And so he likes the sound of this phrase, the man whom the king delights to honor.

He repeats it back in his head. He manages to say it twice out loud in his answer to the king and likes the sound of it. The man whom the king delights to honor. I'm the man the king delights to honor.

And you can imagine that if Haman was incensed the day before when Mordecai didn't get up and give him the honor that he deserved, you can only imagine what he felt the next thing. He's expecting to hear, go and let it be done for Haman.

It shall be done for you. Bring my nobles and have it done for this man who stands before me. But instead, he hears, quick! You, Haman, you, go and do these things for Mordecai the Jew.

Don't leave out one detail of all that you've said. Do it all for Mordecai the Jew. Have you ever had the wind knocked out of you? Ever been sucker punched? Well, take that and multiply.

[26 : 22] You've got what must have hit Haman. He's going a hundred miles an hour in this direction and all of a sudden he hits a wall. And you can guess that there was a look of shock maybe?

Of disgust? Of disbelief? A sick feeling in his stomach? What? And maybe he started to stammer out a contradiction, a protest, but he remembers to whom he's speaking and so maybe he holds it back and as he goes to carry out the order, Mordecai, Mordecai, the Jew?

I came here to have him hanged. And maybe he almost turns and goes back to the king after he's on his way and says, did I hear you right? But he doesn't. He knows he heard the king right.

Mordecai the Jew is the one the king wants to...

And all of a sudden he's flying in this direction and now an about phase. And God has taken things and he's reversed them. He's flipped them on its head. And there's more reversals coming for him and this is just the first in a series of them.

But what a thing. His carefully constructed world of pride and honor and approval and control is now beginning to crumble around him. And soon it will be crashing down around him. He must do for the one he hates what he wants most done for himself.

[27 : 46] And so he did it. He can't disobey the king. You can only imagine what must have been going through Mordecai's mind when Haman comes and puts a robe on and puts him on the horse and leads him through the city.

And what must have been going through Haman's mind as he led him through the city. Thus shall it be done for the man the king wants to honor. And he's not talking about himself. The man the king wants to honor isn't going to be leading the horse.

And so it's not him. It's this one back on the horse that he hates so much. And what must the Jews have thought who saw it happening and who knew of the feud between Mordecai and Haman and others who knew?

Why is a Jew being so honored if he's going to be killed soon? What a reversal. Haman begins the day thinking he'll shame Mordecai in his death. But instead he must highly honor Mordecai and he himself will go home in shame.

It's just the beginning for Haman. And the question we want to ask of this frequently used phrase in this section the man the king delights to honor is who is the man the king delights to honor?

[28:54] And not so much concerned here with Xerxes and who he wanted to honor. He wanted to honor somebody that was loyal that had provided a valuable service to him but more concerned with the man that God our king delights to honor.

Clearly he doesn't honor those like Haman. Listen to the scriptures. Again Haman could have used the wisdom of Solomon. Proverbs 25 verses 6 and 7 Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence and do not claim a place among the great men.

It is better for him to say to you come up here than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman. And isn't that exactly what Haman did? Didn't he put himself forward in the presence of the king describing just how he wanted to be honored and the king put him in a much lower place and humiliated him.

Or Proverbs 29 23 A man's pride brings him low but a man of lowly spirit gains honor. Haman's pride brought him low that day.

But a man of lowly spirit a man like Mordecai just doing his job at the king's gate he is exalted. Or Isaiah the prophet God tells us the one who he honors.

[30:10] This is the one I esteem. He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. Haman misses the mark here.

Do you miss the mark? Are you humble? Contrite in spirit trembling at God's word are the repeated words of our Savior but many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first so the last will be first and the first will be last.

Haman goes from first to last in a big hurry. He hasn't hit the bottom yet but it's coming in the next chapter. What of you? Think you deserve honor?

Recognition? Praise? You're already headed down the wrong path like Haman was. Remember the Scriptures tell us that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

At least three times the Scriptures tell us this. Your pride will get you nowhere. Maybe you've been there before. Maybe not quite as bad as Haman but maybe you were at a banquet for work or the sports banquet at the end of the year or something for school or a scholarship competition or whatever and you don't know.

[31:22] Nobody knows who's going to win the awards for that year. And you're listening to the award and you can almost hear your name already. The award for most valuable salesman, most valuable player, Miss Congeniality, whatever.

The award for this goes to and you hear it. Aaron. Yeah. Aaron Hoke. And then another name is read and your eyes pop open and you realize that it's not you.

And you're a bit humbled by it. Nothing so drastic as Haman here. But you've felt that pride before, haven't you? That assumption that you deserve honor, glory, recognition. That's Haman coming out in you.

And look where it got him. May we not be so foolish as to be proud of our strengths, our gifts, our connections, our friends, our family, and satisfaction in those things alone, but may we be humbled that God has given us those things and humbled that He would see fit to bless us with those things and bow before Him.

The one to whom the Lord looks, the one He esteems is not one who is full of Himself and proud, but who is humble and contrite in heart. But ultimately, the final answer to the question, who is the one the King delights to honor?

[32:44] For God, that answer is His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, you remember what God said of His Son when He walked on the earth? This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him. And there at the cross, even when God abandoned His Son for a period of time, think of Christ.

And we see the humility of Christ. Where? Most clearly. At the cross. He humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross. And what did God do for that humbled Son? That humbled Savior? This is the One that He exalted to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name. God delights to honor His Son above all.

And if God delights to honor His Son, what will you do with His Son? Will you honor Him? Will you reject Him as well? Or will you reject Him because you don't think you need Him?

[33 : 50] After all, you're full of yourself, your gifts, your own strength. And so, why do you even need this Savior? You don't think you need Him. Or you don't like the lifestyle to which He calls you.

God honors the Son. You should too. Psalm 2 tells us to kiss the Son lest He be angry and you be destroyed in your way.

For His wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him. Not all who reject Him, but those who kiss Him, who honor Him. Because God has honored His Son, He can look to us and bless us with the honor of salvation because of what His Son has done.

Leave behind your confidence in yourself, your pride, your arrogance, and come and trust in the Savior. What greater act of humility could there be than saying, I'm emptied of myself. I can do nothing to save myself.

I have nothing to bring to You, Lord. There's humility. Recognizing that we are nothing before God. And so we have nothing to bring to Him. And so we come to His honored Son and we say, God, be merciful to me, the sinner, for Jesus' sake.

[34 : 55] Who does God honor? He honors His Son and those who are humbled and trust in that honored, glorified Son themselves.

Who is the man the King delights to honor? It is His own Son and those who trust in Him. One last question tonight. Whose side are you on?

Whose side are you on? The chapter isn't quite done. We've witnessed one of the greatest reversals of fortune ever. But what's the aftermath of it?

What's the fallout from this encounter between Haman and Xerxes? Mordecai. Now, Mordecai returns to his place. It doesn't seem that fazed by the honor that's been given to him. He goes back to doing his job. Probably awaiting hearing word from Esther as well. He just went back to the king's gate. Went back to where he came from. Oh, that the praise of men would have so little effect on us.

[35 : 59] Somebody had dragged us around town saying this is the man the president wants to honor. We'd be running and telling. Guess what happened to me today? I got honored by the president himself.

Well, the president's right-hand man, but the president was the one that wanted to honor me. Mordecai just goes back to his place and resumes his business there. Or that we were so unaffected by the praise of men.

But Haman goes home mourning and with his head covered in mourning and in shame. The Jews had been mourning because of what Haman had done.

And now Haman was mourning because of what had happened to one of those Jews. And he recounts the horrid events of the day to his wife and friends, presumably the same friends that he told the glorious events of the previous day.

And their response is fascinating. And having studied it and read commentators on it, I'm increasingly convinced that this is one of the most important verses in all of Esther.

[37 : 04] Notice what they say after he tells them everything that happens partway through verse 13. His advisors and his wife Zeresh said to him, Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him.

You will surely come to ruin. Mordecai's wife and his friends, his advisors, have begun to see the handwriting on the wall.

Maybe they've heard stories about the Jews, about God's people, but hadn't really believed them before. The day before, just the day before, you remember what they were telling him, go build a gallows and hang Mordecai and be done with him.

And now they're telling Haman, you can't stand before Mordecai because he's of the seed of the Jews. Maybe the day before they had agreed, here's Haman's chance to defeat this historically, either really lucky or really blessed people of Israel.

The Jews. But now they see that the rumors about these people are true. The Jews are, in some ways, indestructible. Maybe they don't know why, they're just superstitious perhaps, but the events of that day, such a dramatic change from what was expected, now forces new advice from their lips. [38 : 24] No longer do they think Haman stands a chance against Mordecai because he's a Jew. If Mordecai, before whom you've begun to fall, is of the seed of the Jews, then you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

You've begun to fall, and you will surely fall before him. That's how they put it. It's not what Haman wanted to hear, but it's true nonetheless. Maybe they weren't just superstitious. Maybe they were beginning to recognize the God of Israel.

One commentator says, the way in which the Jewish people had survived deportations and preserved their identity had not escaped notice, and this in itself, witnessed to the power of God. God's greatness is known among the nations. And maybe they're beginning to see it. See, Haman went home ashamed and then heard news that he didn't want to hear.

And then off to the feast, maybe hoping for a better outcome than that was predicted by his wife and friends. He had, as Ian Dugan said, a Psalm 2 moment. An opportunity to kiss the sun.

[39 : 28] To come and put his hope and trust in this God of the Jews. This One who had delivered them time and again and brought them through deportations and exile and all sorts of things. And it preserved them.

They don't quite get it right. It's not because Mordecai is a Jew that he'll be preserved. That Haman will certainly fall. It's because of the God of the Jews. And Haman had that Psalm 2 moment.

He could still find refuge there, but instead he continues down his chosen path, raging against the Lord. Destined to destruction. There's no other outcome for Haman now.

Bishop Paul says, If we be thy true spiritual Israel, either earth nor hell shall prevail against us. We shall either stand sure or surely rise, while our enemies shall lick the dust.

Haman was about to lick the dust. Because he was fighting against the God of Israel. Haman won't prevail against God or His people. And I'm here tonight to tell you that neither will you.

[40 : 35] You cannot stand against Him. Haman's wife and his friends were beginning to see it. They saw it as being from the Jews.

We understand that it's because of who their God was. The great God of heaven and earth. You cannot stand against Him. You will surely fall before Him. And you might think, You're crazy. Things are going so well in my life right now that I've got no reason to think that anything you're saying is true. My life is good. And you're saying, I'm going to fall before the great God just because I haven't trusted in His Son?

No evidence of that in my life. Things are going so well. You go back to chapter 5 and that's where Haman was just the day before. Everything going great. Just this one little nuisance.

Mordecai could get rid of him. Everything going well in his life. No reason for Haman to think that he had a problem in the world. And then one day later, it's abundantly obvious to him that you cannot fight against the God of heaven and earth.

[41 : 39] You cannot stand against Him. You can't hope to fight against Him and win. Haman lost. You read chapter 7 or you come back and hear more about it next time. And you'll see where Haman's rebellion landed him.

Don't be deceived. Things look good for Haman right up to the day before his death. But you know you can find hope in the seed of Israel. The seed of Abraham. Christ.

He's going to be one of two things to you. He's going to be a stumbling block for you. And will be your destruction because you've rejected Him. Will be a rock of salvation. You can come and trust in Him.

You can put aside your pride. You can put aside your Haman-like ways and come to Him. It's one side or the other. On God's side is great blessing and certain hope for the future. Against God, there is fear.

There is no hope. There is nothing guaranteed for your future except punishment and destruction. There is no chance of stopping God from preserving His people.

[42 : 40] There is no chance of stopping God. And isn't that what the story of Esther is all about? God preserving His people. You can't fight against the Lord and win. And what a blessing that is.

It's a challenge if you're outside of Christ. If you're not trusting in Him. If you're fighting against God. But what a blessing for Him if you are a child of God. What a blessing to know that the God of the

universe fights for you.

To see that God's plan of salvation for His people cannot be thwarted. It was true in the days of Esther. The Jews were going to be destroyed and there would be no Messiah. Did God let that happen? No.

And neither can His plan for you this day be thwarted. His plan to bring you safely home into His kingdom. Into His glorious heaven. That plan cannot be stopped any more than His plan back then could be stopped.

God will save His people. And not just the Jews now. It's been broad. Jews, Gentiles, all who believe. Any who believe in God's Son. All who find comfort and hope in Him.

[43 : 45] And so the question tonight is which side are you on? on God's side? Trusting in His Savior? Or are you on your own side?

Maybe with a few friends in the world gathered around you with no hope. Pleased with your strength and your gifts and abilities, that cannot save you. Which side are you on?

If you want to boast in something, boast that you understand and know the Lord. If you want to glory in something, glory in Christ. Christ. Put no confidence in the flesh.

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only safe side to be on.

Do you see it? Do you see that tonight?

Do you believe it? Haman's wife and friends started to see it. You've started to fall and you can't stand before Mordecai.

[44 : 41] You can't stand before the God of Mordecai and hope to win. But you can come to His Son, His honored Jesus, and trust in Him and find refuge and fight with God for the cause of His kingdom.

Well, while he was still talking to his wife, his friends, that prediction ringing in his ears that he wouldn't stand, the king's servants arrive and they whisk Haman away for the banquet.

The one that he was so excited about. The one that he was so anticipating with the king and queen. Not going happily as he had anticipated. He's going humiliated, humbled. In less than 24 hours, things have changed drastically for Haman and it's about to get much, much worse.

Mordecai was not dead as he had hoped and expected. And by the end of the day, things would not be as he had planned at all. Good thing that God is the hero and that He is on the throne.

Blessed thing that He has honored His Son. Blessed thing that He looks to those who trust in His Son. Blessed thing that those who are on the side of His Son cannot lose.

[45 : 56] That God's plan for you, for your salvation, cannot be thwarted. Terrifying thing if you are on the wrong side. That God's plan can't be thwarted. And you will be destroyed in your sin unless you come and trust in His Son.

Whose side are you on? Let's turn to Hymn 493 that asks the question, who is on the Lord's side? It's only in Christ, on the Lord's side, that there is any hope for you or for your future.

Our Father, we must confess that it is only by Your grace, divine, that any of us here tonight find ourselves on Your side. Humble us, help us to realize that it is of nothing in ourselves that You have saved us, but only by the work of Your glorious, Your great, Your honored, Your exalted Son.

We thank You for Jesus this night. We thank You that You have delighted to honor Him and that for His sake You've been pleased to look on us with favor as well. We who are so much like Haman, so proud, so full of ourselves, we thank You for Your great mercy, for the great gift of the forgiveness of sins.

We pray that You would cause some this night who are not on Your side, who are raging against You. We pray that You would open their eyes to see the futility of their fight, to see that they cannot stand before You, that the God of heaven and earth will prevail against them.

[47 : 18] And so draw lost sinners to Your glorious Son this night. And encourage us with these great truths. Thank You that You are on the throne, that You do all things well, and that Your plan for our salvation cannot be thwarted.

Comfort us, encourage us, send us from this place confident and grateful for all that You've done for us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.