

Conclusions to Esther

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Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire to its distant shores and all his acts of power and might together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had raised him are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of media and Persia.

Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes preeminent among the Jews and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

What is at the center of your life tonight? What is the most important thing to you?

What is the first thing that you think of when you get up in the morning and the last thing that you think of when you go to bed at night? What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear bad, even devastating news?

What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear good, joyous news? Would your answers and the answer of an outside observer be the same to those questions?

[1:28] Closely related, where is your trust tonight? Is it in men? Or is it in God? Not just for salvation, yes for that, but also for every day of your life.

Everything that occurs in your life. Who are you trusting? As we draw to a close tonight, a study that we began back in April, we want to think about some of these questions and others.

Esther's taught us many things as we've taken a peek into what life was like in post-exilic Persia for the Jews, living in somewhat in self-imposed exile.

They could have gone back to the promised land by now, but they had not. They remained in the land of Persia. And Esther's taught us many things. We've seen highs and lows from Esther and Mordecai, good and bad for them.

And we've seen lots of lows for Haman and Xerxes. There's a bit more to be drawn from these last few verses here in chapter 10, as well as from the book as a whole.

[2:35] What more does Esther, the queen of Persia, have to teach us tonight? Three questions for us tonight that we'll organize our thoughts around. One, where's your trust?

Two, how do you use your influence? And three, who is at the center of your life? Where's your trust? How do you use your influence? And who is at the center of your life?

The first question, where's your trust? Or we could say, do you trust in God or in men? After all of the trouble we've seen in Persia for God's people, and there's been a lot of trouble in the pages of Esther.

It appears that we're not yet finished. King Xerxes, who is the primary source of all the trouble, is still on the throne. He hasn't gone anywhere.

Yes, there's been a great deliverance for the Jews, but this wicked, this wine-abusing, this foolish, unpredictable, unstable, power-hungry, wanton killer of a king, is still king.

[3:44] The Jews haven't ultimately been delivered from his power, although their lives have been spared. And even though Esther is queen, and Mordecai we see here is number two in the land, Xerxes, a commentator, says, his own personal interests remained paramount.

No matter what the cost to his loyal subjects. He's still looking out for number one. He still doesn't care about the Jews or lots of other people in his kingdom. He still cares about himself.

King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire to its distant shores. That word tribute could either be forced labor or taxes. Now you remember when Esther became queen, there was a royal holiday declared by the king that was probably a tax break for a period of time.

But now he's back to his taxing ways and he can bet that the Jews were not excluded. It's all of his kingdom. Throughout the empire. To the distant shores. Nothing and no people excluded.

No matter how influential the queen and the number two man in the land are. The Jews are going to be heavily taxed along with the rest of the kingdom. And this Xerxes who had given Mordecai great power to deliver the Jews.

[4:59] True, it was still his incompetence. His callousness in the first place that was such trouble for the Jews. And even at the end of the book of Esther, after this great deliverance, the Jews still have problems.

Xerxes is still on the throne. In other words, if any Jews were putting their hope in Xerxes or Mordecai or Esther, their hope was misplaced. Given the lack of the mention of God's name anywhere in the book as we've seen, it seems likely that some are placing their hope in men. Maybe Esther can save us. Maybe Mordecai can save us. Good things are happening while they're in power, while they're in control. Maybe even Xerxes, he put them in those positions of authority. Maybe he can help us.

But as we sang this morning, we are to put no confidence in princes. Nor for help on man depend. And so any who hope in human deliverance would be disappointed.

Xerxes is back to his usual ways and eventually Mordecai and Esther will die. And what will come of God's people then when these saviors of the people of God are gone?

[6:11] Yes, a great deliverance had come. With men, humans as instruments. But it was not the great deliverance the people of God should have been looking for. They should have been looking for something that was not temporary, but rather that was permanent and lasting.

And we too tonight should not be so foolish as to put our hope in something that is fading and temporary can only give us relief for a time. Now we can be thankful if God puts people in our lives who are good for us and who do us good and who do help us.

But if our eternal hope is in them, we are sadly misplacing our trust. We would be fools to put our hope in a person. It might be a parent.

A parent who helps you kids. And that's good. Be thankful for a mom and dad who can provide for you and protect you. But you know that your parents can't save you from your worst problem. Your greatest problem. Maybe you have a teacher who spent extra time with you helping you improve your grades in a particular subject. Great! That's helpful, but that's temporary. It's not lasting.

[7:21] You can't take your grades with you to the next life. Maybe there's a politician who's authored or voted for a law that grants greater freedom to followers of Christ.

Good! Be thankful! But such things will not last. And to put your hope in them is misplaced hope. Maybe a friend or a group of friends have been there with an encouraging word.

Helping hands. Praise God for people like that. But as good as those things are, they cannot deliver the ultimate good. Lasting good. At the end of the day, we still live in a sin-cursed world.

And we're still sinners. And all of these things are temporary. And we still have a great problem. Even with all of these human helps around us.

And so just as we should not just fear the One who can kill only the body, but rather the One who can destroy body and soul in hell, so also we should not put our hope in the One who can only help us in body.

[8:27] Who can only help us temporarily. But rather put our hope in the One who is able to help our souls. Able to save our souls. Able to help us. Not just for a brief period of time, but forever.

What can help us? Esther's and Mordecai's come and go. You get to the end of the book of Esther and it's almost as though at the conclusion, Esther is on the throne and Mordecai's in power.

And so everything's okay. That's how it feels. Mordecai's doing great things for the Jews. He's having high esteem. And we'll see that that's good and right in a few moments. But it seems as though, okay, great.

Good. We're set. We've got it. But he's going to die. And so will Esther. We need someone far greater than a Xerxes or a Mordecai or an Esther or someone far greater than our parents or friends or a politician or a teacher.

Only the great King Jesus can solve our lasting, deepest trouble. And so hope must be found in Him. And in Him alone.

[9:36] And so any trust that's placed in man is misplaced. Any trust placed in yourself is misplaced. As we've repeatedly noted, there's a theme of reversals in Esther.

And in and of themselves, they're good for the Jews. They're helpful for those people. And maybe you've experienced such. A nemesis at work is demoted and you're promoted and you're vindicated when it looks like you're going to be condemned.

Great. Those things are good, but it's not lasting. The greatest of reversals is the permanent one that's worked by the Almighty God. The God who is powerful to save.

The reversal He worked in sending the Messiah, His Son, to deliver us from our sins. He brings abiding peace that cannot fade. It cannot be taken away from you. It is not temporary. It is permanent.

It is lasting. It will never go away. Mordecai could only do good so long as he was on the earth.

[10 : 37] Jesus is no longer on the earth. He's in heaven, but He's still doing His people good. And He will until He comes again and for all of eternity. You see, God takes sinners headed for destruction and He turns them into saints headed for glory.

And that no one can change or take away. And that's our hope. No man can deliver like this. No earthly peace and confidence is so sure and lasting as this.

Do you know this Jesus? Do you know this Messiah? The One that can deliver you forever. The One that can bring everlasting hope and comfort and confidence and peace.

Do you know Him? Is your trust in Him tonight? If you're living in your sins tonight, headed towards hell, let me urge you to beg the powerful God to save you, to stop you in your tracks, and to turn you and set you on the place or on the path that leads you to life.

All other helps in this world will fail you and are temporary. But if you put your hope in Jesus, you'll enjoy an eternity of good.

[11 : 45] An eternity of blessing. Where is your trust tonight? Is it in men, yourself, or is it in the place that it should be? The only place where it will be met in the Lord.

But secondly tonight, how do you use your influence? How do you use your influence in the position where God has placed you?

Mordecai ascended to a level of greatness not previously known to the Jews living in Persia. We're told, no one had more power than him except Xerxes. His deeds are recorded here.

Along with Xerxes, just like the kings of Israel and Judah. You read through the book of Kings and Chronicles and you read how their deeds are recorded in the book of the Chronicles. Mordecai's deeds are recorded. Even though he's not a king, his deeds are recorded in the Chronicles of the Persians.

He's a remarkably powerful man. And it's the king who put him in such a place. We see it in verse 2. All his acts, power and might, a full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had raised him.

[12 : 52] Now of course that's a reference to King Xerxes. He had put him there, but to the discerning reader, to the one who's listening with an ear to hear where God is in the story, we know it's the great king.

The one who sits on the throne of heaven and earth that put Mordecai in that position. It wasn't Xerxes. It was God in heaven that put him there. And he put him in this position so that he might be able to deliver his people at this point in history.

And again, though he's not mentioned, God is clearly at work preserving his people. And Mordecai used that power as we saw in the previous chapters to write the decree that would deliver the Jews and to use his influence in such a way that other leaders and rulers in the kingdom feared him even. So that they were on the side of the Jews as well. Remarkable influence that he had. But it didn't stop there. We're told now that he was held in esteem by his fellow Jews because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

Mordecai here does what is right and noble. And all the Jews there at the end spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews. It's even the word seed, descendants after them.

[14 : 06] He worked for the good of the Jews and for those who would come after them. And he's highly regarded for it. Mordecai doesn't hide behind the need to lie low and not attract attention to himself.

He doesn't hide his Jewish identity any longer. He uses his position for the advancement of God's kingdom, for the good of God's people. And you have to think that at some point he must have asked himself the same question that he put to Esther.

Who knows? But that you've arrived in a royal position for such a time as this. He used it to motivate Esther. To drive her to act. To be willing to go in to the king when she feared for her life. And Esther answered in the affirmative. She was willing to go and do it. And he must have answered as well. That God had put him here.

In this position, for such a time as this, to be able to be used for the good of his people. For the welfare of all of their descendants. I wonder tonight if we do the same.

[15:12] The question that Mordecai put to Esther and perhaps to himself comes to us as well. Do you use your position and influence that God has given you for the good of his people and for the extension of his kingdom?

Where you say, I don't have a position of influence or authority. I'm not in a spot like Mordecai is. And so I don't have any influence to yield for the good of God's people.

You don't have to be second in the land to have influence. You don't have to be in a position of great power and authority to be used of God for the good of his people.

And I would challenge us tonight from Mordecai's example that wherever God has placed us is a place of opportunity. A place where we can be used for the good of God's people.

Are you making full use of those opportunities? Let's think about some examples tonight. Your place of work. Some of you think, alright, I'm off the hook.

[16:14] I stay at home all day. I work at home and so I don't have a place of influence. We'll get to you. But your place of work. Where you go each day to earn a living.

To make money for your family. Are you using the opportunities at that place to further God's kingdom? I'm not talking about clandestinely using the work copy machine to run copies for your Sunday school class without permission and taking advantage of your position to be able to further God's kingdom.

That's called stealing from your employer. It's called abusing the position God has placed you in. I'm not talking about wasting company time to check Christian websites or to post on Christian blogs or whatever.

I'm not talking about abusing the positions where God has placed you. But using them. And taking advantage of the opportunities that He has given you to work for good.

Legitimate uses of the place where He has put you. Do you have an opportunity to defend Christianity around the water cooler and the break room when the name of Christ is being drugged through the mud and Christians are being defamed as wackos, as people that just don't have a clue and they trust in a God they say is all powerful and then He sends a hurricane and how could you believe in a God like that?

[17:31] And Christians are being mocked and there you have an opportunity to do good for God's people and to speak up and to say that Christians aren't crazy and to defend the people of God.

Do you take advantage of an opportunity like that to do good for God's people? To make the name of Christ glorious in your workplace? Or do you just blend into the background?

Do you hide? Does anybody at work even know that you're a Christian? Are you doing any good for the Kingdom of God? For God's people there? Do you take time on your lunch break to encourage that Christian co-worker who's struggling by pointing them again to Christ?

Do you take time at breaks or again at lunch to give testimony not just of what a great week you've had but of how God has blessed you during that week?

Do you ever speak a word of the Gospel to those you have opportunity to interact with because of your position at work? Instead of sprinkling your language throughout the day with profanities and taking God's name in vain, do you instead speak of the God who enabled you to do that good job when you're congratulated?

[18:42] Thanking Him for the success that you've enjoyed or the beautiful weather that He's given that day when it comes up in a discussion? Are you using your position at work for the good of God's people for the extension of His Kingdom?

What about at church? Right here? Right here in these four walls? Where are the people of God? Well, in a concentrated way you find them here every Sunday.

You're sitting next to them. Are you using your position that God has placed you and He's put you in this church at this time for a reason? Are you using the opportunities that you have here for the good of the people sitting right around you?

Do you minister to God's people taking advantage of the various ministries of the church? Do you ever get down to the Bremen Healthcare Center to encourage the folks that meet there the first Sunday of each month?

Do you ladies ever join in with the other ladies that go to visit the elderly and the shut-ins to be an encouragement to them, to do good to those dear old saints, those people of God? Do you gather together with God's people to pray together?

[19:58] What greater good could you do for the people of God than to pray for them? And that's what we do here on Wednesday nights. We gather together as the people of God to pray with the people of God for the people of God.

That's good for the people of God. God has placed you in this church and here's an opportunity. Are you using it? Do you help prepare meals for those that are sick or have recently had babies or are recovering from surgery?

Do you encourage them with a word, a phone call, a card in the mail? Do you exercise hospitality, having God's people into your home to be an encouragement to them? When visitors come through our doors, are they welcomed by you?

Are they invited over by you? Don't just think that someone else will do it. God has placed you here. Are you being an influence for good? You're taking time out of one of your busy weeks to help one of God's people move from one place to another.

You ever been a part of one of Stan's moving crews? That's being an influence for good to God's people. And here He's placed you among His people and He's given you an opportunity to do good. You take just one time a year to clean the church building.

[21:08] Yes, cleaning the church building is doing good to God's people so that we have an attractive, clean place in which to worship our God each Lord's Day. You come alongside those that are struggling and give them encouragement.

Have you ever spoken a direct and personal word of the truth of the Gospel and how God has blessed you to one you know is yet without Christ? Don't assume someone else will do it.

You use the opportunities God has given you for doing good. You take some of those hard-earned dollars at work and give to the church for the good of the people of God in this church and in the people of God all around the world.

Here you are in the church. You've got many opportunities. This is where God has put you. And it's not who knows if God has put you in this place for such a time as this. He has put you in this place for such a time as this.

Some of you here are Sunday school teachers. Wednesday night teachers. Thank you. Thank you for using the position where God has placed you for the good of the next generation.

[22:21] Take that responsibility seriously. Prepare and pray with a view to doing good for God's kingdom each week. Encourage those students you see struggling.

Maybe you've passed up opportunities to teach because you're a little too selfish to give of your time. We always need more teachers. Substitutes.

Those to give other teachers a break. Teachers that have taught for years without a break. And sacrifice either their Wednesday night time of prayer together with the people of God.

Or their adult Sunday school class. Some of you here disciple younger believers. Thank you. You're doing good for the kingdom of God.

Press on in that work. Make the most of those opportunities to encourage and guide these young believers. And if you're not involved in it, you're missing a marvelous opportunity.

[23:16] I'm not saying everyone is equally gifted. You shouldn't be doing something for which you're not gifted, but are you using the gifts God has given you? And the opportunities that He's given you and the place where He's placed you for the good of His church?

What about you students at your schools? God has placed you in your schools for this time and in this place. Are you using the opportunities that you have there for the good of His kingdom?

Do you know who the other believers are at your school? Do you stand up for them when others make fun of them? Are you an influence for salt and light? Do your non-Christian friends know that you are a Christian?

Does their language and behavior improve when they're around you because they know you don't participate in or approve of that sort of talk? Have you ever taken time in between classes to tell the person at the next locker about how God has changed your life and how He could change theirs as

well?

Do you take advantage of your position in your classrooms and discussions in your class? Another place where often God is mocked, Christians are thought of as fools.

[24 : 32] Do you take advantage of those opportunities to respectfully speak a word and show them that Christians aren't stupid, foolish people, but that they're wise, intelligent, educated, well-mannered folks that believe the truth?

Do you ask and answer questions in that respectful way that still shows that you disagree with what's being taught? Do it in a winsome manner and so do good for the people of God.

Guard their reputation and protect it instead of allowing it to be drugged through the mud. Are the people of God at your school? Is your school better off because you're there?

Has the name of Christ prospered or suffered because of the way you carry yourself in the halls of your school? That's where God has placed you. And so be willing to take a stand in a classroom or to share Christ with a broken, hurting student.

Here's an opportunity for you. Yeah, you're not like Mordecai. You're not second in command at your school or in Bremen or in the state or the country, but here's your sphere of influence where God has placed you. Are you using it for good?

[25 : 44] What of your neighbors? Who knows that God has put you in your house in your neighborhood for such a time as this? Do your neighbors know who you are and thus know who Christ is? Other Christians in your neighborhood have been blessed because you're there.

You parents, you're in a position of influence every day. Position of power. To influence your children for good. For the good of the Kingdom of God.

Do your children know of your deep and abiding love for God and His people? Do they know they can come to you in trouble and find help and love and encouragement from the truth of the Scriptures? Do they know they can count on you to regularly feed them from God's Word?

Are you using the place God has put you in your home to do good to the people in your home? We could ask the same question of husbands and wives. Are you better off for having been married to each other? Do you use that position to influence one another for good or siblings?

We could speak of coaches tonight. Those that volunteer and give their time to work with children in their communities. Do you use those opportunities? Teaching them a respect for authority that they don't see anywhere else.

[26 : 56] At the same time being approachable. Do you pray for safety together with your team before the game? Do you have time after practice to encourage the kid on your team that's obviously had a poor home life?

And share with them how life with Christ is far better regardless of what home you come from. What about those brief encounters that you have every day? People at the grocery store, checkout, clerks, the person you're sitting next to on the plane, servers in your restaurant, fans at a game that you're sitting with.

God has put you in each of those positions, each of those places. Are you taking advantage of those opportunities? You know that just engaging people like that in a way that's loving and kind, patient, friendly, will be such a difference to what they're used to with hurried, angry, disgruntled customers and passengers.

Just that can open a door for you. To be able to speak of Christ, here's a place of influence where God has placed you. Are you using it for the good of the kingdom?

Mordecai had a relatively brief period of time. And by God's grace, apparently He used it well. Are you using your brief time in each of these places, and many more that we could speak of tonight, are you using your time well for the good of God's kingdom, for the good of His people and the extension of His kingdom?

[28 : 23] Will you be held in high esteem as Mordecai was? Will you be held in high esteem by God? Well done, good and faithful servant. Because you worked for the good of God's people and spoke up for them and their descendants.

That's our second question. How do you use your influence? And the third question tonight, who is at the center of your life? Or we could ask it this way, do you live a God-centered life?

And these other two are really just subsets of that. How do you use your influence? You should be using it for the good of God's kingdom. And where is your trust?

It should be in the Lord. And if your trust is in the Lord, then He should be at the center of your life. Who is at the center of your life? This question flows out of the whole book of Esther. Where is God in your life?

Sadly, God is not named in Esther. Likely because He was far from the minds of the participants in the story. Or so it seems. What about you?

[29 : 34] If someone wrote a story of your life like it was written of Esther and it had your name on it, would God's name appear at all? As your words were recorded, would God's name be there?

As your life was recorded, would there be talk of you being with the people of God? Your trust in the Lord? Or would it look like this story?

Where very clearly God is at work, but His name is never mentioned because He's not at the center of your life. Is God part of the ebb and flow of your life?

So much so that He's always on your mind, never far from your tongue. Or if you so assimilated with the world, so become like the world around you that you're unrecognizable.

You bear the name Christian, but it no longer is seen. For a time, Esther and Mordecai were unrecognizable as the people of God. No one knew they were Jews. May it never be so with us.

[30 : 36] May each day, the little things, the big things, the celebration, the morning, all of life, may it never be devoid of the name and presence of God. Where is God in your life?

Is He in the little things? The everyday things? The things you don't even think about? Do you really believe that you need God every hour? We confess that. We sing it. We're going to sing it in a few moments.

I need the every hour. But do you live like you believe that? That you need Him every hour? Yes, you say it. But are you willing to go through life content to manage in your own strength?

Content to not express your dependence on God every day, every hour? Content to hide from those around you that you are totally dependent on God?

Content to take credit for that which you never could have done without God's strength? Do you acknowledge Him when you, as we've said, wake up in the morning when you go to bed at night? Is He often on your lips?

[31 : 34] Yes, you find yourself frequently in prayer. At home, at work, at school, as you drive even. When you find yourself in the midst of a difficult situation, is your instinct to panic or to stand there?

While you're looking at the person you're having trouble with and to quickly in your mind utter a prayer, God help me. Give me wisdom. Give me strength. Is your life centered around God? Jews in Persia had managed to all but forget God and push Him to the very edges of their existence.

Don't let the same be said of you in your everyday life. What about the times of significant trouble and trial? It's in these times that we might more naturally turn to God, but even though the Jews mourned and they wept and they fasted, it's all without any mention of God.

May the same not be said of us. Don't let your weeping and mourning in times of trouble be devoid of God. To remove God from the equation when you are suffering is to remove your only hope of comfort, your only strength.

Don't try to take the tragedy out of God's hands as some do. If you remove God from the picture, then you have nothing on which to stand because He is the Father of compassion, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in our troubles.

[32 : 44] He is the one who is mighty to save. He is the one who is an ever-present help in trouble. Why would you run away from Him, run from Him during times of trouble instead of running to Him? Make your times of trouble times of prayer, fasting as you see God's face.

Make your times of temptation times where you immediately turn to Him for help because He is the one who is able to deliver you from the temptation and provide a way of escape. Turn to Him. Make your times of mourning times where you find eternal hope in your Savior and show that hope to others around you.

What about when things are going well? When you've been blessed? In these times, it's easier to relax, to forget that you're dependent on God. Everything's well. I don't need to pray. I don't need His help because things are going so well.

Receive these great blessings. No. It's easier to rejoice without ever thanking and acknowledging God like the Jews may have done here. It's easier to hope and pray for good weather at an event that's upcoming, like a picnic, a church picnic.

may Thank you.