

Unit II: God Promises a Just Kingdom

Justice Prevails

DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 19:11-26

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Esther 3; 5; 7

PRINT PASSAGE: Esther 7:1-10

Key Verse—They hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified. (Esther 7:10, KJV)

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They impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided. (Esther 7:10, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explicate the story of Esther as a triumph of justice.
- Sense that treachery will not win.
- Commit to acting justly in every situation with the assurance that good triumphs over evil.

*Key Terms

Eunuchs (verse 9)—Hebrew: *saris* (saw-reece’): “chamberlains” (KJV); court officers.

Gallows (verse 9)—Hebrew: *’ets* (āts): planks; sticks; wood; it is a structure on which to hang a criminal; “pole” (NIV).

Petition (verse 2)—Hebrew: *sheelah* or *shelah* (sheh-ay-law’): request; a thing asked for.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Life Happens

Blaine was doing great work within the ad agency. He was a creative spirit who was able to transform several product lines. Blaine had a keen eye and paid attention to detail. He was also able to provide clear direction and guidance.

As the associate director, everyone resonated with Blaine. He distinguished the content, broke down information into parts, established relationships, and obtained various perspectives. Due to this work style, his colleagues would open up to him and collectively they would make the product lines better.

The creative director, Diedre, did not like the cohesiveness evident in how Blaine worked with the rest



Overview

The book of Esther was written around 480 BC. The author is unknown. About a hundred years after the Jews had been expelled from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, many Jews returned to Jerusalem to start a new life in their homeland. However, some of the Israelites remained in Persia in the city of Susa. Among them were Mordecai and his cousin Esther. There is something unique about this book. Although the name of God or the word *prayer* is not mentioned throughout the book, God's providential care is the main focus. The story of Esther took place in the city of Susa. Chapters 1–6 explain how Esther became queen of Persia and how Haman, the prime minister of Susa, deceived King Ahasuerus into signing a decree to kill all the Jews in Susa. However, in chapter 7 God worked in a mysterious way. God used Esther to save His people from annihilation. Esther stepped out on faith to save the Israelites. With boldness and courage Esther approached the king to expose the wicked Haman. She did the will of God and completed a task most would not have been able to fulfill. In the end, God is once again victorious and justice triumphs.

of the department. Diedre liked things to be focused on her, plus she wanted the overall credit if a product launch did well and to escape blame if a product launch failed. In her mind, Blaine was stealing her thunder, and he had to go.

Diedre made her case to the marketing executive of the company about firing Blaine. The Marketing Executive listened intently and wanted to take time to absorb Diedre's request and to do a little digging. The marketing director noticed that Blaine was a top-notch associate director who was great at his craft. Plus, the warmth that he brought to the team was needed. Blaine stayed at the company and was promoted to Creative Director. Diedre was terminated.

Questions

1. Has anyone ever tried to sabotage your career, finances, education, etc.? How did you handle it?
2. Were you able to prove yourself beyond measure in your role? If not, were you able to find a better opportunity that would accentuate your skill set?

COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Stepping Out on Faith (*Esther 7:1-4*)

KJV

SO THE king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second

day at the banquet of wine, What is thy *petition*, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

NIV


SO THE king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet,

2 and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your *petition*? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

3 Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request.

4 “For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.”

After Esther realized that it was up to her to save her people along with herself, she decided to have a banquet for the king; she also invited Haman. She felt as though it was her only chance to appeal to the king. However, it was not appropriate for anyone, including the queen, to approach the king on such short notice or without special request and being recognized by the king. Esther was going to step out on faith. The king and Haman both accepted the invitation and attended Queen Esther’s banquet (**verse 1**). As the event progressed as planned, Esther continued serving the men wine. The king asked Esther for a third time what her petition was (**verse 2a**). King Ahasuerus loved and adored Esther and wanted to please her. He explained to her that he would give her whatever she wanted, up to half of the kingdom (**verse 2b**). Once again, Esther trusted God and stepped out on faith. She answered the king, “If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request” (**verse 3**, NIV). Esther put all her confidence in God and continued to explain her petition: “For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated” (**verse 4a**, NIV). Haman was out to completely destroy all the Jews. However, he was not aware that Queen Esther was a Jew. Esther further indicated that if they were merely being sold as slaves, then she would not have exposed the evil Haman—but he left her no choice to speak up, petition, and request justice for her life and for the lives of her people. The queen expounded on this sentiment: “If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king” (**verse 4b**, NIV). Here in **verse 4b**, Esther acknowledged the king’s power and displayed respect for his time as a leader. However, she made it known that she was a Jew and because of Haman, her life was on the line as well. The threat was also against Mordecai, who had once saved the king’s life along with the lives of her people, the Israelites. Esther is a prime example of what we need to practice as true believers. We must put our trust and confidence in the Lord, and step out and take a bold stand for justice, no matter the circumstances.

 **What Do You Think?** As believers, we must take a bold stand for justice when we see injustice taking place in our community. How should we respond to someone who is a nonbeliever that is committing an act of injustice in our communities?

Courage to Speak Up (*Esther 7:5-7*)

KJV

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

NIV

5 King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?”

6 Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

7 The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

In response to Esther’s petition, King Ahasuerus asked Esther who the person was who would be so arrogant and wicked as to seek the path of genocide against the queen and her people (**verse 5**). Esther, without hesitation, identified Haman as the wicked enemy of the king’s administration (**verse 6a**). Esther did it! She spoke up and spoke out with authority and truth! Finally, Haman was afraid in the presence of the king and the queen (**verse 6b**). This is in sharp contrast to his arrogance and cunning behind their backs. Haman knew that his time was short and was terrified because his plan had backfired. Also, he acknowledged the king and queen as one, unified and standing together as husband and wife. The king was furious and was so upset that he had to take a walk in the garden (**verse 7a**). Haman knew he had to move quickly. There was no way the king would allow his queen to be killed nor her people annihilated. Furthermore, Haman had planned to kill the one person (which was Mordecai) who had saved the king from a plot to murder him. Haman began to beg and plead for his life, knowing the king had already decided his fate (**verse 7b**). Haman thought that his last hope to save his own life would be in Esther’s hands, so he began to beg her for his life (**verse 7c**). Just like Esther, it is vital that we also be courageous and speak out against injustice. God will always be with us when we are doing His will and standing up for what is right. No matter the circumstance, never remain quiet in the face of injustice and always speak up for righteousness!

 **What Do You Think?** Consider a time when you prayed about a circumstance. Did you wait on God to use you and speak out, not wait on God and move on your own time, or just remain silent about the situation?

Justice Always Wins (*Esther 7:8-10*)

KJV

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.

9 And Harbonah, one of the *chamberlains*, said before the king, Behold also, the *gallows* fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

NIV

8 Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

9 Then Harbona, one of the *eunuchs* attending the king, said, "A *pole* reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Impale him on it!"

10 So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

The king was furious and may have felt foolish and manipulated by Haman. Haman had convinced the king to sign a decree to get rid of all the Jews, which meant the death of his beautiful queen, Esther, and Mordecai, the man who had saved his life. As King Ahasuerus went to the palace garden, he may have contemplated what he could do to correct this tragic series of events. When he returned to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where the queen was reclining, begging for mercy (**verse 8a**). This was also unacceptable, for no one was to ever be alone with the king's wife and appear to be violating her. Haman had certainly crossed the final line with the king. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" (**verse 8b**, NIV). The king could barely finish his sentence before his attendants took Haman into custody, covering his face (**verse 8c**). Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs, spoke up. He had noticed that a pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits (about twenty-five yards) was standing by Haman's house. This was the gallows or stake that Haman had prepared for Mordecai to die on in front of everyone (**verse 9a**). However, Proverbs 26:27 tells us that whoever digs a ditch for another shall fall into it, and whoever rolls a stone up a hill to do mischief will have that same stone roll back on him. This is exactly what happened to Haman. He had spitefully plotted to kill Mordecai and all of God's people; however, in the end, the king commanded Haman to be impaled (speared) on it (**verse 9b**). So, they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai! Then the king's fury subsided (**verse 10**).

This had to be humiliating for Haman in his last moments of life. To have the whole city watch him be put to death instead of Mordecai and Mordecai's people was a surprising turn of events. Queen Esther saved her people. She allowed God to use her. Only God could have done this. God delivered His people once again. God is always working it out for our good. We must let not our hearts be troubled, for the betrayal of one shall not win. Treachery will be defeated, and the judgment of God will reassure us that good triumphs over evil every time.

 **What Do You Think?** As Christians, we know that justice will always prevail. How is God's wrath different from human judgment?

Your Life

It is always important to keep the faith of God in our hearts no matter the circumstance, even when He may not always be mentioned or seem present. However, we as believers know that He is always with us.

Your World!

In our world today, we must remember always to speak up for what is right for us, our church, and our community. God will always be with us when we choose to take a stand for justice.



Closing Prayer O just God, give us the courage to speak up when we know there is injustice being committed. Remind us that You are with us, if we step out on faith and do what is pleasing in Your sight. This is our prayer in Christ’s name. Amen.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , April 20	“Solomon Makes a Just Decision”	(1 Kings 3:16-28)
TUESDAY , April 21	“Jesus Issues His Platform for Justice”	(Luke 4:14-21)
WEDNESDAY , April 22	“The Year of Jubilee Established”	(Leviticus 25:8-17)
THURSDAY , April 23	“A Light to the Nations”	(Isaiah 49:1-7)
FRIDAY , April 24	“A New Vision for the People”	(Isaiah 61:1-7)
SATURDAY , April 25	“Zion Welcomes the Redeemed Home”	(Isaiah 62:5-12)
SUNDAY , April 26	“The Lord Brings the People Justice”	(Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a)

Notes