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In the book of Esther, we see that she feared approaching the king. If he didn't extend his golden scepter to her, she would be executed. Thankfully, he did. But here's the wonderful hope you and I have. Our King is always holding out the golden scepter to us! He says we can always approach him with freedom and confidence... and we can always be sure to find grace and mercy from Him. Always remember, His throne is a throne of grace, and He sits on the seat of mercy. Did I say "always" enough? It's always true.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Esther 6-7

Where are we in the story now? Esther has become queen. Mordecai, her uncle, has discovered a plot against the king and saved his life. Mordecai has also really angered the king's exalted official, Haman, by not bowing to him. Haman has bamboozled the king into signing a decree to annihilate the Jews in close to a year. Through Mordecai, Esther has realized that she may have been appointed as queen "for such a time as this." She has called for a 3 day fast. In chapter 5 (which we're skipping past), she mustered the courage to go to the king who graciously held out the golden scepter to her and welcomed her into his presence.

Instead of telling the king about Haman's evil plot, she invited him and Haman to come to a feast. He accepted. He offered her anything she wanted, even up to half his kingdom, and she asked him and Haman to come to another feast the next night where she would tell him what she really wanted. I'm not sure why she did this from her perspective, but I am absolutely sure why God did.

Haman was so excited to be invited to another feast by the queen that he left the first feast all excited. But that excitement immediately turned sour when he left the palace and saw Mordecai, still refusing to show him the respect and fear he thought he deserved. He went home and plotted with his family to have Mordecai hanged the next morning on gallows 75 feet high. He had them made on his property just for Mordecai. That's a heart of bitterness for

sure!

Now I come to chapter 6-7. I can see God's hand all over it once again. Why did Esther ask for another feast? From her perspective, maybe it was to muster up more courage. She would have no clue what God was going to do that night. From God's perspective, He was REALLY gonna make it clear who's in charge.

That night, the king just happened to be unable to sleep. So he had his book of "memorable deeds, the chronicles, read to him." Interesting. Maybe he thought, "This will lull me back to sleep." But what was read to him was the plot to kill him, and how Mordecai was the one to expose the plot and save the king. He asked, "What has been done to honor Mordecai for this great deed?" After all, it WAS memorable. The reply, "Nothing."

Well... it just so happened that Haman entered the outer court of the palace at that very moment. He couldn't wait one minute longer to get permission to hang Mordecai. But before he could make his request, the king asked him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" Well... Haman, for sure, thought this was a sneaky way of asking him what he'd like the king to do for HIM. After all, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than ME?"

So Haman really gave an overwhelming answer for how the king should honor him. "Let royal robes be brought, which the KING has worn, and the horse that the KING has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'" I can only imagine the look on Haman's face when the king said, "Awesome. Do all that for Mordecai. Don't leave out any detail."

After Haman carried out this mission, probably very sick to his stomach the whole time, he went home and told his family and friends what just happened. They do not get the prize for comforting someone when they're down. They said, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him." Enter the eunuchs to bring Haman to the feast. Yikes. I can hear the music swelling.

Queen Esther, the king, and Haman sat down to the feast, and as they sipped their after-dinner wine, the king asked her the same question as the night before. "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

I'm guessing Haman had been using this feast to distract himself and maybe to talk himself out of worrying about what his wife and friends said. After all, he alone was invited to dine with the king and queen TWO days in a row! But that distraction changed in a moment when Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. For we have been sold, I and my

people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king."

The king was furious! Who would do such a thing? Ummm... I'm guessing the king didn't even remember that little edict he signed just a few days earlier saying that the Jews would be destroyed. But Esther answered, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen."

Ohhhhh snap! The king got so mad that he left them and went into the palace garden. During that time, Haman fell on the couch where Esther was and begged her for his life. (Ummm... excuse me, Haman. You want mercy? But you have no mercy? Interesting.)

Well... the king just happened to walk back in the room as Haman was grabbing at the queen and begging her for his life. The king said, "Will he even assault my wife in my presence, in my house?" His servants wasted no time. They immediately covered Haman's face and one of the eunuchs told the king about the gallows that Haman had just so happened to prepare for Mordecai. Haman was immediately hung on his own creation.

I know from reading on that Mordecai was given the position that Haman had just lost through death, and he was put over the house of Haman. Whoa. Also, the king gave the Jews a right to fight back since he couldn't revoke the edict for the day of fighting. To this day, Jews celebrate what they call Purim, or the Feast of Lots, celebrating what God accomplished by saving His people.

What do I learn from this story? There are NO coincidences. God is always involved even when I can't see it. I can see this in my own life in so many ways. Even the circumstances of how Tim and I ended up in full time ministry, and at this church... is such a story of God weaving details together over a period of YEARS that just so happened to happen. Every single one of God's children, no matter who they are, have a "for such a time as this" purpose. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship (His poem), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." O Lord, please help me to be faithful to You in whatever You have for me to do "for such a time as this." Also, please help me to remember that when the wicked are prospering, the story isn't over. You are in control. And Proverbs 29:26 says, "Many seek the face of a ruler, but it from the Lord that a man gets justice." You love justice, and You accomplish justice. I can ALWAYS trust You. Please help me to stand firm in my faith regardless of what I see. Help me to have the courage of Esther and the faith and loyalty of Mordecai. Mordecai understood how to honor the earthly king but worship his heavenly King. Help me to do the same.