

When God is Anonymous (B90 5)

Esther 4:1-14

INTRO:

Is God at work in our world? Is God at work in your life? Is he at work in mine?

ME:

I find it easy to answer “**yes**” with exclamation points!!! **But wait, there’s more! I think what I have seen of God at work in the world is only the tip of the old, wonderful proverbial iceberg! This means that most of God’s working in our lives and in the world goes unnoticed and unrecognized, because God is working anonymously behind the scenes. Christians and non-Christians alike see things happen and say, “What a coincidence!” But as someone has said, “Coincidences are when God is working anonymously.”**

The book of Esther is the story of a time when God was at work anonymously. It is interesting that though this book is in our Bibles, it never, ever, ever mentions the name of God.

But that seems to be the point!

God is so wonderfully at work that we marvel at each unfolding development in the story, but others see nothing but a series of coincidences.

YOU:

Do you think God is at work in the world and in your life?

Let's open our hearts in prayer before we open our ears to God...

GOD:

Esther 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; 2 he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. 6 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, 7 and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he

might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people. 9 Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, 11 “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days.” 12 When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, 13 Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”

WE:

Esther opens like a history lesson, or a good old fashioned novel. A Persian King named Xerxes is throwing a big party — 180 days of flashiness and pageantry. Then a week long banquet in the royal garden. On the seventh day, after too much drinking, the king decides to show off his queen. To his surprise and humiliation, *she refuses to come to the party!* He is advised to save face by his advisors. *They suggest he replace his queen as soon as possible!* **How?** By having a beauty contest.

Where is God? What does God have to do with all this? There are two possibilities:

- Either God is behind it all, including the king's obnoxious ego.
- Or God simply uses what he's given. He just uses what's happening, folding it into his eternal purposes.

I like the second choice, **how about you?**

By chance(?), a Jewish girl, Esther, wins the contest. But since the Jews are a subjected people in Persia, she keeps her heritage a secret. But her character and beauty are legendary. *So is the influence of her cousin Mordecai on her! By chance (there's that word again!), he learns of a plot to kill the king. He tells Esther, and because of that information the king's life is saved. The story was written in the king's records, but no reward was given to Mordecai.*

Meanwhile, a man named Haman works his way up in the councils of the king until he is second in command to the king. Everybody bows down to him. Everyone except Mordecai; **who bows down to no one**. Haman wants to get rid of Mordecai. He finds out he is a Jew and decides the best way to get rid of him is to get rid of all the Jews. The plot thickens.

Esther is now enlisted for action. There is a sentence in our text which might serve as the theme for this whole book:

“Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”

Let that sink in a bit. **“Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”**

Esther could have ignored Mordecai and remained silent. Her decision in the paragraph that follows shows courage and faith. Some think that at this moment Esther’s life purpose was at stake. God had guided in her being chosen queen. In the biblical perspective election is for service, not just for one’s own benefit. Mordecai’s statement reveals a deep conviction of God working anonymously even in the workings of the nations and in the lives of individuals. Mordecai told Esther, **“If you remain silent, ... you ... will perish.”** Failure to decide brings personal loss and misses the opportunity to fulfill God’s purpose. In God’s providence each person has a unique task.

Then, just as the plot seems to reach its peak in chapter 5, a bit of comic relief as Mordecai’s help from an earlier time is recalled, and his honor is orchestrated **unwittingly** , and performed **unwillingly** , by Haman.

When God is anonymous. He is there and he is working, he is guiding us and leading us and making a way for us to do what he called us to do.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.

YOU:

Verse 14 was the theme for my very first Charge Conference in Charles City. My District Superintendent did not get it at first. It spoke to me about the intersection of our **time** and our **community** and our **world** and what God brought us to that moment to accomplish.

We need to apply that to ourselves today. We have everything we need to do what God calls us to do in bringing light where there needs to be light. We have everything we need to bring love to where love is needed. We have everything we need to bring grace into graceless situations. **How will you do it? Where will you bring light, love and grace?** Who knows, but perhaps you are here today in that pew, i

CLOSE:

As Esther ends, honor wins and the villain dies; and with it all, the Jewish feast of Purim is born. But through it all, we have the story of God behind the scenes, anonymous, but active. It's a story that should encourage us to reexamine our own lives and rejoice.