

Friday, October 12, 2018

Ruin

Esther 5-6

His advisers 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!"

Esther 6:13b

Esther has won favor with the king and has made a request which continues to cause Haman to feel he is valued and special and yet he burns with rage when Mordecai will not bow to him. He seeks advice and plots to kill Mordecai because of hatred. Ironically, God has designed for Mordecai to be exalted by Haman. I can't even begin to imagine the humiliation Haman felt as he paraded Mordecai through the streets proclaiming that people should honor him. He went home overcome by grief. What he had planned the night before for Mordecai was surely not going to happen now. His advisers, who the night before were so sure that Mordecai could be hung on ostentatious gallows, now break the news to Haman. He could not hope to stand against a man of Jewish origin. Maybe God isn't mentioned by name in Esther, but it is clear He is there in His people. The descendants of Agag knew the power of God as He protected His people. Haman goes to the banquet with an awesome weight upon him. God will not be mocked. Those who oppose Him will come to ruin.

Dear God, help me remember that You protect Your own. Thank You that as I read Esther I am reminded that You are in and over all things. Your enemies that come into my life will be defeated. They will come to ruin in your sovereign timing. I can stand strong and hold tightly to that in every situation in my life. Amen.

Saturday, October 13, 2018

Became

Esther 7-8

In every province and in every city, wherever the edict of the king went, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

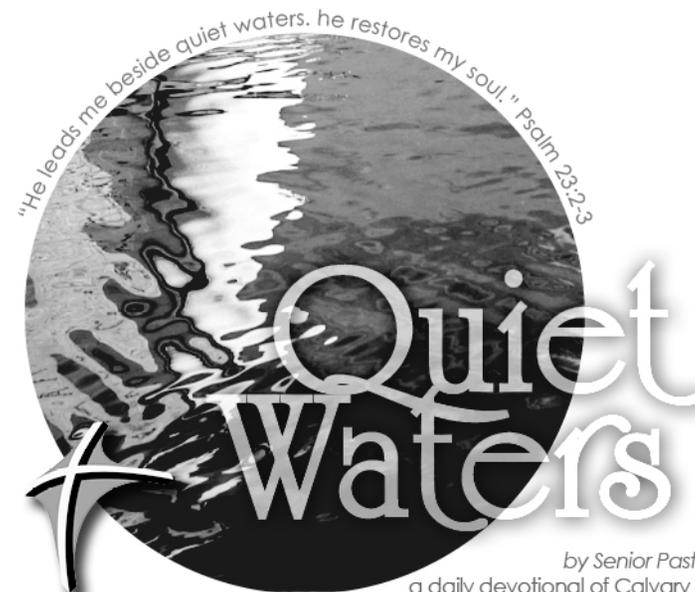
Esther 8:17

God is working powerfully in the midst of a plan to eliminate the Jewish people. Haman's deception and wickedness is revealed and he is hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. In addition, Mordecai is given the signet ring that Haman had possessed and in turn is given the authority that went with it. His first act was to write a decree that would allow the Jews to gather and defend themselves against those who wanted to kill them. It was sent to all the provinces. The edict and the raising up of Mordecai brought a time of great celebration in the city of Susa, as well as in every city that received word. The events that led to the celebration and the celebration itself moved the hearts of people of other nations and they became Jews! This does not necessarily mean that they experienced full conversion, rather that they identified themselves as Jewish. Things had changed in a moment. Instead of Jews being despised, they were revered—because of the deliverance of God.

Does the way that God works powerfully in my life cause others to claim the name of Christ? Am I seeking to have my life influence other lives in the church to live out the power of God so that He can show His strength and power in order that people of every nation will be drawn to Him?

O LORD, I long for You to show Yourself in great power in our day so that many will turn to You. I pray that there will be conversions that flow from a great awakening among the nations. Amen.

October 8 - 13, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, October 8, 2018

Neglect

Nehemiah 10-11

"We will not neglect the house of our God."

Nehemiah 10:39b

This is a powerful declaration that follows a prayer and a resolution that is made by the exiles. The prayer recounts the history of Israel, yet one cannot help but see that the history of Israel is really just a declaration of the faithfulness of God. The history is filled with the accounts of disobedience and neglect of the love of God. Israel pursues other interests and, in so doing, turns their back on the God who loves them deeply. He is patient and compassionate, but He will not share His people with another god, so He brings them into discipline because of His deep love. The people who make the statement in 10:39 are people who have truly given themselves over and have declared that they will serve the LORD and follow His commands. This reveals itself in how they care for His house that has been rebuilt. To this point, they have neglected caring for His house as they poured the resources He entrusted to them into their own houses. This is a declaration that they will put God above themselves. They will sacrifice their selfish desires and will give their hearts to serve Him. There are so many ways that I am tempted to neglect the service of the LORD and put myself and my interests first. As I review my history—if I am honest—I see the same periods of neglect and disobedience, but also I clearly see the patient, loving faithful hand of God, graciously leading me to follow Him. My story is a testimony of His love and grace.

Dear God, I thank You that You have been so loving and compassionate toward me. By Your grace, in Your power, I vow that I will not neglect to serve You. Amen.

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

Neglected

Nehemiah 12-13

So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?" Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.

Nehemiah 13:11

About twelve years have passed. Nehemiah returned to Babylon and then came back to see how things were going. It was not good. Things had gone back to where they were before he came the first time. There is nothing really new happening, but one difference is that this group of people had made a covenant with God in chapter 10 that they would not intermarry, they would keep the Sabbath, they would pay the temple tax, they would bring additional provisions for the temple, they would dedicate their firstborn, and they would bring a tithe. When Nehemiah returns he finds that they have broken the covenant. They had vowed not to neglect the house of God. The vow was broken within twelve years—during which God had sent Malachi to speak to these issues. It would seem this only hardened hearts. Nehemiah reminds the people that these are actions that bring the discipline of God and he swiftly moves to set right the worship of God and moves to have the people live out the vow they have made. Reading this reminds me that I have made a vow to God as well. As I repented and turned to Him for forgiveness and salvation, I exchanged my old life for a new one. I vowed that I would live my life for Him and for Him alone. I must constantly watch for the drift away from my vow and reaffirm my covenant with Him.

Dear God, my heart is to serve You and You alone. It is my vow to You. Even as I say this, I realize that it is only by Your mercy and Your power that I can keep this vow. Work in my heart and my life that I may never neglect serving You! Amen.

Wednesday, October 10, 2018

Favor

Esther 1-2

Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:17

The story of Esther is an account of some of the Jews who lived in exile who did not to return to Jerusalem under the decree of Cyrus. Even those who did not return to Jerusalem were still used by God to preserve His chosen people. The book will reveal a plan to annihilate the Jewish people. This plan is birthed by an ancient rivalry that exists only because of disobedience on the part of Saul. Saul was told to destroy completely the Amalekites, but he did not obey and he did not kill Agag the king (1 Samuel 15). Esther's uncle Mordecai is a descendant of Kish, thereby related to Saul. Mordecai tells Esther not to reveal her nationality or her family background. As I read the account, I am swept in to consider the greatness of this Persian empire and the opulence within. It is in this great empire that God moves to have an orphan Jewish girl become queen. Esther won the favor and approval of the king more than any other girl in this empire. While God is not specifically mentioned, it is clear He is moving in His people who are in exile. In this I am reminded that God is always working His plan in the world—and in our lives. He is sovereign over all there is and He moves in the hearts of people every day.

Dear God, I praise You for Your hand in all of history as You write Your story on the lives of people. I praise You for Your faithfulness to Your promises. Amen.

Thursday, October 11, 2018

Deliverance

Esther 3-4

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

Haman the Agagite has cast the plot to destroy the Jews. The descendant of Saul is threatened by the descendant of Agag. But God is in the midst of this. The Jews have called out to the LORD with the tearing of clothing and the wearing of sackcloth and ashes. They have been fasting. Mordecai sends word to the queen. It is time for her to step up and help. She must make a bold move to save the people of God. There are many great truths in this statement of Mordecai. 1) The promise to the nation of Israel remains. There will be deliverance for the people of God. 2) He will preserve His nation but may not preserve or rescue individual people. 3) He works within the will of people. Esther has a choice. She can remain silent. 4) God is in the details of the lives of people. She has not come to the throne by chance. The exiles who had not returned to Jerusalem would now be used to protect the nation. Esther chooses to walk in faith and if that means she perishes, so be it. This attitude reminds the reader of the words of the three exiles who were thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:17-18). May I have such faith in the God who is working His plan in all things. May I have this same boldness and resolve to follow Him, confident in His promised deliverance.

Dear Lord, You are my deliverer. It is Your promise, and I rejoice. Just as You have delivered Your chosen nation time and again—I know You will deliver me. Amen.