
First Baptist Dyersburg • Sermon Notes

Esther

Message #12 in the series

Lessons from People Like Us

Sunday, August 23, 2026 • Mike Hickman, Senior Pastor

Esther Becomes Queen

But after Xerxes' anger had subsided, he began thinking about Vashti and what she had done and the decree he had made. ² So his personal attendants suggested, "Let us search the empire to find beautiful young virgins for the king. ³ Let the king appoint agents in each province to bring these beautiful young women into the royal harem at the fortress of Susa. Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the harem, will see that they are all given beauty treatments. ⁴ After that, the young woman who most pleases the king will be made queen instead of Vashti." This advice was very appealing to the king, so he put the plan into effect.

⁵ At that time there was a Jewish man in the fortress of Susa whose name was Mordecai son of Jair. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei. ⁶ His family had been among those who, with King Jehoiachin of Judah, had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. ⁷ This man had a very beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter.

⁸ As a result of the king's decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king's harem at the fortress of Susa and placed in Hegai's care. ⁹ Hegai was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

¹⁰ Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had directed her not to do so. ¹¹ Every day Mordecai would take a walk near the courtyard of the harem to find out about Esther and what was happening to her. (Esther 2:1-11, NLT)

Mordecai's Loyalty to the King

²¹ One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh—who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters—became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. ²² But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. ²³ When an investigation was made and Mordecai's story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. This was all recorded in *The Book of the History of King Xerxes' Reign*. (Esther 2:21-23, NLT)

Haman's Plot against the Jews

⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. ⁶He had learned of Mordecai's nationality, so he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Instead, he looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.

⁷So in the month of April, during the twelfth year of King Xerxes' reign, lots were cast in Haman's presence (the lots were called *purim*) to determine the best day and month to take action. And the day selected was March 7, nearly a year later.

⁸Then Haman approached King Xerxes and said, "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire who keep themselves separate from everyone else. Their laws are different from those of any other people, and they refuse to obey the laws of the king. So it is not in the king's interest to let them live. ⁹If it please the king, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 10,000 large sacks of silver to the government administrators to be deposited in the royal treasury."

¹⁰The king agreed, confirming his decision by removing his signet ring from his finger and giving it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹The king said, "The money and the people are both yours to do with as you see fit." (Esther 3:5-11, NLT)

Mordecai Requests Esther's Help

¹⁰Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai: ¹¹"All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days." ¹²So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai.

¹³Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. ¹⁴If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

¹⁵Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶"Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die." ¹⁷So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Esther's Request to the King

On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance. ²When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her and

held out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter.

³ Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" (Esther 4:10 – 5:3, NLT)

The King Executes Haman

So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet. ² On this second occasion, while they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

³ Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request, I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. ⁴ For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had merely been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would be too trivial a matter to warrant disturbing the king."

⁵ "Who would do such a thing?" King Xerxes demanded. "Who would be so presumptuous as to touch you?"

⁶ Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our adversary and our enemy." Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen. ⁷ Then the king jumped to his feet in a rage and went out into the palace garden.

Haman, however, stayed behind to plead for his life with Queen Esther, for he knew that the king intended to kill him. ⁸ In despair he fell on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, just as the king was returning from the palace garden.

The king exclaimed, "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes?" And as soon as the king spoke, his attendants covered Haman's face, signaling his doom.

⁹ Then Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "Haman has set up a sharpened pole that stands seventy-five feet tall in his own courtyard. He intended to use it to impale Mordecai, the man who saved the king from assassination."

"Then impale Haman on it!" the king ordered. ¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided. (Esther 7)

The Victory of the Jews

So on March 7 the two decrees of the king were put into effect. On that day, the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but quite the opposite happened. It was the Jews who overpowered their enemies. ² The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the king's provinces to attack anyone who tried to harm them. But no one could make a stand against them, for everyone was afraid of them. ³ And all the nobles of the provinces, the highest officers, the governors, and the royal officials helped the Jews for fear of Mordecai. ⁴ For Mordecai had

been promoted in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces as he became more and more powerful. (Esther 9:1-4, NLT)

¹⁶ Meanwhile, the other Jews throughout the king's provinces had gathered together to defend their lives. They gained relief from all their enemies, killing 75,000 of those who hated them. But they did not take any plunder. ¹⁷ This was done throughout the provinces on March 7, and on March 8 they rested, celebrating their victory with a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁸ (The Jews at Susa killed their enemies on March 7 and again on March 8, then rested on March 9, making that their day of feasting and gladness.) ¹⁹ So to this day, rural Jews living in remote villages celebrate an annual festival and holiday on the appointed day in late winter, when they rejoice and send gifts of food to each other. (Esther 9:16-19, NLT)

As followers of a completely sovereign God, there is no place for coincidence and luck in our thinking; we celebrate God's providence instead. Now when most of us think about God working providentially in our lives, we tend to focus on the positive times – like receiving a check to cover a bill. However, we also have to be careful to recognize that sometimes God's providence doesn't feel so good. There are times when God providentially brings hardship and even suffering into our lives for His glory and our good. (Brian Dembowczyk, *The Gospel Project*)

Christ Connection: the command to kill all the Jews threatened the fulfillment of God's promise of a Messiah-King who would bring the blessing of Abraham to the world. Even though His involvement in the story of Esther seems hidden, God was at work, creating and implementing a plan to rescue His people and set the stage for the coming of His Son. (*The Gospel Project*)

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. (Romans 5:6-9, NLT)