

Esther is Made Queen

Call to Worship: Psalm 66:1-4

Hymn #718- *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

1st Scripture: Genesis 39

Hymn #706- *Take Time to Be Holy*

2nd Scripture: Esther 2

Hymn #710- *I Need Thee Every Hour*

Introduction:

It was in the third year of his reign that King Ahasuerus had made a feast for all of his officials, and showed off the glory of his majesty to them for 180 days (Esther 1:3-4). And then, following this, he had a seven day feast for all the people at the citadel in Shushan, in the court of the garden of the king's house (vs. 5). And it was at the end of this feast, on the seventh day, that Queen Vashti had refused to come to the king on his order, leading to her deposition as queen (vs. 10). In verses 16-18 of chapter 2, we find that Queen Vashti has finally been replaced by Esther, some four years later, toward the end of the seventh year of the reign of King Ahasuerus. Needless to say, brethren, a day is but a thousand years and a thousand years is but a day to our all-sovereign God. No one had a single clue that what God had ordained four years earlier would lead to something marvelous in the raising up of the Jewish Queen Esther. Do we see yet again, brethren, that this is God's story?

None of us have a clue as to what God has been preparing in our lives for the past many years, even unto the great work that He is doing in us in the present, and will continue to do in the future. By faith, we just know that Romans 8:28ff is true. And what of our church, brethren? What of all of the happenings in this body; the changes, the trials, the periods of rest and blessing, the tribulations...etc...where is this all going? God knows...but we work by faith unto the building of His Kingdom and unto the glorification of our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This isn't about us brethren. Do you see that? Yes, we benefit, and greatly at that, but this is about the Son of God! And rightly so. And that is the only reason that we could hope (with a sure and steadfast hope) that great things are yet to happen here at Grace Reformed Baptist Church.

This morning, we move into Esther 2, where we will find the divine hand of God, at work yet again, in His glorious timing, passing over mankind's understanding and interpretation of history, setting up another critical piece in the puzzle of the Book of Esther, revealing His glory and majesty in the deliverance of His people. We come upon another sentence in the divine message, which God has jotted down through the means of His historical providences, so that we can hear His voice, sending us His message through that which He has accomplished in one slot of time, in a place called Shushan, the capital of Persia.

I. A Summary of the Events of Chapter Two

King Ahasuerus' wrath had finally subsided and his servants had advised him to begin looking for another queen. And so, officers were appointed from all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins in the kingdom, and to bring them to Shushan, where they would be prepped for a year with various oils, perfumes and ointments before meeting the king. From among these beautiful and thoroughly groomed virgins, the king would choose his new queen. Enter Esther.

Esther was a young orphan girl, whose mother and father had died when she was relatively young. Needless to say, the reality of her ever becoming a queen or prominent in any sense for that matter, would seem virtually impossible...if there were no God. But because we have a God who cares for the fatherless and the widow; a God who looks out for the poor and the underprivileged among His people, Esther would indeed beat the odds.

Being a man of high dignity and respect, and obviously a God fearing man, Mordecai, Esther's older cousin, winds up taking her into his custody, and cares for her as his own daughter. Mordecai is a Jewish man from the tribe of Benjamin, that tribe which was nearly wiped out during the time of the Judges and that tribe to which the failed King Saul belonged...showing once again the marvelous and gracious wisdom of God; for, what good could come out of Benjamin? And yet, we know that it is the same grace that chose Judah as the Messianic line, which chose Mordecai in this case, and which chose us for that matter. All of God's elective purposes are gracious, wise and past finding out. Lepers, prostitutes, murderers, adulterers,

thieves, harlots and sinners of every kind, find place in God's history of redemption. Well here, a Benjamite is the object and subject of God's grace. Esther is under the care of Mordecai.

Esther, being beautiful in appearance, is chosen by one of the officials of her province, to go to the citadel, to gather among the chosen virgins, as a potential candidate for becoming the new Queen. Under the care of Hegai, the custodian of the women, Esther is cared for and groomed for twelve months before meeting the king. Mordecai, naturally concerned for Esther, follows her to the citadel, and paces outside the court of the women's quarters each day, desiring to see how Esther is doing throughout the whole process. Favoring Esther, Hegai gives her more attention and puts her in the best place in the house of the women. After twelve months of cosmetics and grooming, Esther, like the other virgins, is finally given the opportunity to meet the king. Needless to say, the king loves Esther more than all of the other women, and sets the royal crown upon her head. Esther is made the new queen. The king then orders a special feast called, "the feast of Esther," where he celebrates his new queen with his officials and servants. And furthermore, he declares the day to be a holiday in all of the provinces, and he generously gives out gifts in celebration of the day.

And then, following all of this, we are told of a situation where two of the king's eunuchs were conspiring to kill the king, and somehow this matter became known to Mordecai as he sat within the king's gate. Mordecai had then passed this news on to Esther, who passed it on to the king in Mordecai's name. Searching the matter out and finding the conspiracy to be real, the king has the two servants hung on the gallows and ensures that the whole event is documented in the chronicles before his presence. And later on, we will see how God providentially uses this matter as a means of preserving and exalting Mordecai, when Haman seeks to have him killed.

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II. Where is God in all of this?

Again, there is no specific mention of God in this chapter, as is the case for the entire Book of Esther, but can we not see Him at work here, brethren? Can we not clearly pick Him out behind the scenes of "current events," building on the stage that was set in chapter one? We will come to see how He clearly uses the uncovered conspiracy from verses 19-23, later on in the Book, showing once again how God orders all events unto the preservation of His people and

unto the exaltation of His great Name, but consider His present handiwork in raising Esther up into the highly influential position of queen.

Notice what we are told in the following verses:

1) Verse 9: "Now the young woman (Esther) pleased him (Hegai, the custodian of the women), and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women."

Esther received accelerated and privileged treatment because she obtained the favor of Hegai, the custodian of the women.

2) Verse 15: "Now when the turn came for Esther...to go into the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her."

Esther entrusted herself to the care of Hegei, and she obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. Everyone liked and favored Esther.

3) Verse 17: "The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

Do we find a common pattern here, brethren? Can we not see the hand of God at work here, even though He is not specifically mentioned? Are there not Scriptural principles at work here, which clearly indicate that God's hand was upon Esther?

Compare these verses to some of the verses we read earlier (in our first Scripture reading), regarding all that had happened to Joseph, after he was sold into slavery by the hand of his brothers. [Read Genesis 39:1-6; 20-23]

Do we see any similarities here, brethren? What is mentioned in Joseph's case can very well be assumed in Esther's case, namely, that *God* had prospered Esther, giving her favor in the

eyes of all people. And so, God is very much present with Esther, prospering her the whole way, setting her up to be the deliverer of His people, and the magnifier of His great name. The lowly orphan will be used to magnify the all glorious King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And ought we not to expect that God, the Father of the fatherless, would use the lowly orphan to glorify His name in the deliverance of His people?

But notice as well, brethren, how elements of Esther's humble and submissive spirit are beginning to show here. You will begin to see that there is a drastic difference between the rebellious spirit of Vashti and the submissive spirit of Esther; a great God-given asset, which God surely used to enable Esther to win the heart of the king.

There are two events that help shed some light on the heart of Esther here. First, it is clear that she obeyed Mordecai from the moment she was taken into his custody and care. [Read verses 10 & 20]. Esther could have easily disobeyed Mordecai here, as she was now in the king's custody. But she did what was customary for her, for as long as she was in the care of Mordecai. She was obedient and submissive to her older cousin, who cared for her.

And then, secondly, Esther had the opportunity of taking anything with her, into the presence of the king. She could have mapped out her own course, but instead, she only took whatever was advised by Hegai, the overseer of her cosmetic care. And this act of confidence, trust and submissiveness was used by God to further win Hegai's favor, and the favor of all she met in the Citadel for that matter. Notice again what we are told in verse 15. Clearly, Esther had a quiet and submissive spirit, and this drew the favor of all toward her. Now this is not to diminish what we have already said about God's hand at work here. Rather, it confirms another general principle, namely, that God often uses the graces that He deposits in the heart of His people, to win the favor of others. In Joseph's case, God had granted Joseph much wisdom, especially in his ability to administrate and order the affairs of those who were in charge of him. It is all ultimately God's work, but I think we can also grasp here, in a very tangible way, how God's people cooperate with Him in the advancement and success of their God-ordained affairs. You never see a, "Let go and let God" type of attitude, promoted in Scripture, when it comes to serving God and furthering our sanctification. God turns the hearts of people; God oversees and directs the course of events toward our favor, but we always meet God with an active faith, cooperating with Him, as it were, though even our acts of faith, are rooted in His workings in us,

according to His good pleasure. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that, "we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Suffice it to say, that we will also find in the Book of Esther, clear traces of human responsibility, exhibited on the part of His people.

And so, where is God in all of this? Everywhere! At work in and by Esther, and turning hearts toward Esther, so that she could attain to the position ordained by God for her, unto the coming deliverance of His people, and the glorification of His great Name. And we also find the beginnings of God setting the stage for Mordecai's exaltation, as He reveals a key conspiracy to Mordecai, which will later, in due time, earn him great favor with the king. It is interesting to note that there is no attention given to Mordecai, for this great act at this time. Could not Mordecai have become embittered toward God and the king for this oversight? And yet, he maintains his faithfulness; he recognizes that he is just an unprofitable steward of God, performing his natural duty unto the "God who sees." And in due time, in God's perfect time, this faithful stewardship comes back to meet Mordecai with physical salvation and much blessing, by the grace of God. Mordecai, by his faithfulness here, has unknowingly sown seed unto his later blessing. He has ignorantly invested in his future exaltation, because God exalts the humble in due time, even as he brings down the proud.

III. Conclusive Thoughts

Brethren, in light of what we have gone over, let us conclude our time by considering a few applications:

1) Again, note that although Mordecai virtually saved the king's life, and although it was chronicled by the king, there was no reward given him, at least in the immediate sense. Let us be grateful simply to serve at all times, as unto God, not looking for repayment. Let us see ourselves as unprofitable servants, content with all that we have been graciously given in Christ. And often times, the Lord will indeed bring a return to us, in due time, as He does Mordecai, later on. Never underestimate what God can do with your faithful, small acts, done in faith, brethren. Let us continually sow to the Spirit and in due time, God will give the increase.

2) Recognize again how God uses the lowly and insignificant in this world, to accomplish much good. God's victories come most often not to the mighty, but to the lowly and the debased;

to those who are poor in spirit, so that all the more, He will receive the glory. Esther was an orphan to be pitied, and God raised her up to the position of queen, married to the most powerful man in the entire world. Do you have very little? Are you physically or materially or mentally challenged in some way? Are you a widow or a single mother? All the more, commit yourself to serving God, and watch Him do great things in, by and through you, for His glory. [Address young people here as well].

3) Women, take note of Esther and see the gentle and lowly spirit that she had. God is well pleased with such women, and honestly, they are hard to come by in our day and age. God is not impressed by the "Women's liberation movement." Rather, He takes note of the gentle, the quiet, the lowly and the submissive spirit in a woman. Much could be said about our failures as men, but in this context, sisters, it behooves me to address you. Let me ask you, do you look more like Queen Vashti; proud, arrogant, strong-willed and perhaps a gossip in the church. Or are you the kind of woman God is pleased with, pictured in Esther and described by Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-6? [Read 1 Peter 3:1-6].

4) Perhaps, we can see a picture of Christ and His special love for the church, here? Read verses 17-18. [Vashti, like Israel, fails to give the King glory. God divorces Israel. The church is His new bride. The crown is set upon her head and we look forward to a great feast...etc].

Amen

Benediction: Ephesians 3:14-21