

A Way of Access is Granted Through the Golden Scepter

Call to Worship: Psalm 24:1-6

Hymn #704- *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross*

1st Scripture: Ephesians 2

Hymn #195- *Alas! And did My Savior Bleed*

2nd Scripture: Esther 5:1-8

Hymn #127- *Let Us Love, and Sing, and Wonder*

Introduction:

Last time, we found Queen Esther in a very difficult predicament. She had learned of Haman's wicked plans and was charged by Mordecai to plead with the king on behalf of her people. For, the decree had already gone out for every Jew (young and old, man, woman and child) to be killed in every province of Persia. However, Esther had not been called into the king's presence for thirty days, and it was against the law to go before the king, if he had not called you. In fact, to do so, would be to the risk of your own life. For, unless the king held out his golden scepter, death was the penalty for all who dared enter his presence without being called.

And so, Esther had charged Mordecai to gather all of the Jews in Shushan together, and to fast for three days (eating no food and drinking no drink), as they sought the Lord's grace and protection for Esther, as she prepared to break the law, in going before the king. Esther and her maidservants would likewise fast.

This morning, we come now to consider what happens following the three day fast, when Esther stands before the king, in the inner court of his palace. Let us then move on to consider a summary of the events of chapter 5.

I. A Summary of the Events of Chapter 5

The three day fast is over. Esther removes her mourning clothing and puts on her royal robes. She heads for the inner court in the king's palace, and stands in view of the king, waiting to see if she will receive the nod of the golden scepter. If Hollywood got a hold of this, we

would spend a few minutes in silence right here at this scene, with sweat dripping down our foreheads, waiting to see the king's response. And we would break for a commercial, before having our anxious curiosity wholly satisfied. But in the real world, things just happen as they do, and so, the king sees Esther, and we are told that Esther "won favor in his sight." God has responded to the fast of the people; He has once again given Esther the favor of the king, and the king holds the golden scepter out to her. Unlawful access is granted to Esther by means of the king's golden scepter.

Esther then comes forward and submissively touches the top of the scepter, leading to the king's gracious questioning, found in verses 3-4. "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you--up to half the kingdom!" Clearly, this was the kind of response that Esther wanted to hear. In answer to the prayers of her and her people, it further confirmed that she had owned the favor of the king. Now, we ought to understand that the king's words, "up to half the kingdom," were not meant to be taken literally. That was a common phrase used by kings who were ready, desirous and willing to grant someone a blessing or a request. It indicated very firmly that the king's favor was upon you, and he was more than ready to grant you whatever you desire. It whole heartedly invited the individual's request. You might recall that King Herod gave the same response to the daughter of Herodius, when she had impressed Herod and his guests with her dancing. And of course, she asked for the head of John the Baptist. Needless to say, hearing such words from the king, was about as good as it could get, for Esther!

Esther, then biding her time, and acting wisely (after all, she was preparing to accuse the king's highest ranking official, on behalf of the Jews), asks the king to come with Haman to a feast that she has prepared. Promptly, the king calls for Haman and they attend Esther's feast. Having a delightful time, and enjoying the drinking of wine in the process, the king then repeats his question to Esther, concerning the request that she has still yet to make of the king. And again, he offers her the same favorable words in verse 6, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" Biding more time, and delaying her question for one more day, Esther responds, "My petition and my request is this: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition

and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said" (vs. 7-8).

Apparently, even as Haman had cast pur to find the right time to set out and fulfill his plan to destroy the Jews, Esther was searching for just the right moment to set out and fulfill her plan to destroy Haman. She wanted to be absolutely certain that the king's heart was wholly with her, and by the time he had agreed to attend another feast tomorrow, she could prayerfully assume that her request, which was indeed serious, and which would indeed shock the king and Haman, would be granted. And furthermore, unbeknownst to her, her divinely ordained delay, would allow God to set forth a few key, additional providences, that would further add to the package of His glory, which would be greatly revealed at the end of this dilemma. And so, the king leaves, joyfully prepared to grant Esther's request. Haman leaves filled with a heap of pride, as he relishes the fact that the Queen greatly favors him as well...so he thinks. And Esther leaves with a sure sense of God's blessing upon her endeavor, as she owns the favor of the king.

II. Some Thoughts on the Events that have Recently Transpired

1) Let's hone in on the life of Haman for a moment. Here is a man, who at this very moment in time has it all, and has no idea that the rug is about to be pulled out from underneath him. He is living it up at the top of the hill, and he has no idea that the grim reaper is right behind him, soon to strike. Let's enter his mood for a moment:

Haman holds perhaps the second highest position in the kingdom. He has been exalted to a position above all of the princes. The king has ordered all of the people in the king's gate to bow and pay homage to Haman. His desire to have Mordecai and all of the Jews killed has been transferred into a royal decree, sealed by the king's signet ring, and has already gone out to all of the provinces. He enjoys a drinking engagement with the king, and basically has the king in the palm of his hand. And now, he has been given the rare and unique privilege of being *alone* invited to a drinking feast with the king, by the Queen. The man has power. The man has prestige. The man has wealth. The man has popularity, and the man has thorough success. He only lacks one thing...the Lord! And in all of the short lived "high living" he is currently enjoying, he has no idea that his number is up, and everything is going to go downhill very

fast...in but one day! Today, he is ecstatic and at the top of his game....tomorrow his life is required of him, and he must stand before God to give an account.

Some of you may be living the good life right now. Things are all falling into place for you. The career is kicking off. The home is receiving its finishing touches. The wonderful boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife is in place. Finances are looking good. You just received a good bill of health. You just made the college basketball team. You are starting to rise in popularity at work or in school. You are set for that upcoming luxurious vacation. Whatever it is...you are really enjoying life and taking it all in. But, in all of your life endeavors, you have no relationship with God, and you fail to process the fact that there is a plot of ground somewhere awaiting you...calling out to you, as it were.

Now that is the inevitable case for all of us, but what if that day comes upon you and you are not ready? Are a few measly days of joy and comfort on this earth worth the giving up of eternity in glory? Will you wrap your arms tightly around breaking, fading, dying, temporal things in this life, only to wrap your arms around fire and brimstone and eternal torment in hell, forever in the next? What would it profit you if you gain the whole entire world, and yet lose your precious, never dying soul....you? What would you exchange your soul for? How many of you covet the life of Haman? He had it all, didn't he? Do you suppose your end is really that far off? When will your number be called? God knows, but I can tell you one thing for sure. People like Haman, did not expect it and were unprepared. But you can be prepared! Let me borrow a picture from our text here, to tell you *how* you can be prepared.

2) In our text, the law had stated that a person could not come before the king unless he was called by the king himself. A violation of this law brought certain death to the transgressor. However, there was the hope that the king might just be gracious and put forth his golden scepter, thereby allowing the transgressor to come before him. This was the only means of accessing the king. No amount of money, religion, political clout, fancy words or anything else, could grant a person access to the king. The king alone could grant this access by putting forth his golden scepter, which is exactly what happened in Esther's case.

Friends, unlike the king's law, God's law is most holy and just, representing the very character of God Himself. And we have all violated that law, forbidding any access to God as

our Father. And we will all stand before God one day, having to give an account to Him for all that we have done in the body. And unless the scepter of God's grace is put forth, you will perish in your sins, when you stand before God. There is no other way to God, but through the gracious means that He has provided through His Son, Jesus Christ. And you can come before God's glorious throne with confidence; unlike Esther, you can come with the assumption that you will be accepted, beforehand, if you come to Him through Jesus Christ! Jesus is that golden scepter, as it were. If you repent of your sins now and believe into this Jesus, you will be saved from your sins, and delivered from the penalty you have earned in the breaking of God's holy Law. And so, this morning, I want to encourage all of you who are outside of Christ to consider the big picture; to think about the destination of your never dying soul. And put your hand out by faith, onto the golden scepter of Christ, so that you can be certain that you will be granted access to God now (in prayer and by His Spirit), and beyond the grave, when you stand before Him face to face, as it were.

3) Lastly, brethren, consider this blessed observation that Matthew Henry has made, when viewing this scene. Isn't it a wonderful thing to know, brethren, that our most Holy God not only has no such law that forbids His people from coming before His presence, at any time; not only is our God never burdened by the presence of His subjects, but He continually bids us in Christ, "Come!" "Come, enter within the veil of the Most Holy Place, and have sweet fellowship" with Him? And why are we so hard pressed and too busy to take advantage of this glorious welcome, brethren? We had no access to God before we were saved, and now we have full and total, unhindered access to God, at any time, in Christ! And though our present sins would weigh us down, our God bids us to come, to confess them and to cast them upon the back of His once crucified, forsaken Son, so that we could yet, have sweet fellowship with Him. Oh brethren, will we be consumed with the trifles of this world, when we have constant access to God and His Christ? Will we tamper with rusty metals and worthless Styrofoam, when we have the most precious gold of Christ? God help us to recognize the riches that are ours in Christ, brethren, so that we would come before the King, who ever receives us with open arms and eternal blessings! God help us! For then, we would find ourselves resting in the center of every storm, firmly rooted in the steadfast love of God!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Ephesians 3:14-21