

The townspeople were in total disbelief and despair. A fire which started in a diner was rapidly spreading and threatening to burn down the entire shopping district. Although they tried, the small fire department did not have the resources combat it, and the crowd who gathered to watch were helpless to do anything about it.

When all seemed lost – suddenly, out of nowhere, a truck filled with farm hands came speeding down a hill towards the fire with emergency blinkers flashing and horn blaring. The crowd moved back as the truck drove right into the flames. The farm hands quickly jumped out of the truck – hooting and a hollering, stomping and beating the fire with their coats – until miraculously, they brought the fire under control.

The officials of the town were so grateful for the men’s bravery and courage that they honored them as heroes with a ceremony, gave each one a plaque, and rewarded each with \$5000. After the ceremony, a news reporter interviewed the driver of the truck and asked him what he was going to do with all that money.

Without hesitation, the man replied, “Well, the first thing I’m gonna do is to fix the brakes on my truck.”

We might say the guys in this truck were “*all in*.” They were totally committed – they had to be – their lives depended on it, and in our passage for this morning, we are going to see Queen Esther do the same – go “*all in*” – without knowing the outcome, to finally deal with Haman – the enemy of the Jews.

Last week, we finished with **Esther 6** where King Ahasuerus turned Haman’s world upside down. If you recall, Haman wanted to kill Mordecai, and on the very night that Haman was erecting a tall wooden stake to impale Mordecai – King Ahasuerus was sleepless and he wanted to review the book of records, probably hoping they would bore him back to sleep.

As a servant reads to the king from volumes of journal entries, he comes to a portion of the record which documents an incident involving Mordecai the Jew that had occurred five years earlier. Mordecai had saved the king’s life by reporting an assassination plot, but his loyalty had never been honored. The king now wants to right a wrong, he wants to see Mordecai recognized and rewarded, and at just the right time – Haman shows up early in the morning. He comes to plea for Mordecai’s execution, but before he can make his case, the king commands Haman to honor Mordecai, and with that command, there’s no way Haman can now say to

the king, *“I want to kill the guy that you want to honor.”* So, instead of impaling Mordecai as planned, Haman had to parade Mordecai through the city square as a hero.

Haman is a wreck. His family and friends see this strange turn of events as a sign of doom, and before he has time to think, Haman is whisked away to the second banquet prepared by Queen Esther for himself and the king.

This was a banquet that Haman had once desired, but now I suspect he dreads it, and that brings us to **Esther 7**, beginning with **verse 1**.

¹Now the king and Haman came to drink wine with Esther the queen. ² And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.”

Once again, it’s just the three of them: King Ahasuerus, Queen Esther, and Haman – each lying on a separate couch with a drink in hand, and just like the king did at the first banquet, he asks Esther *“What’s on your mind?”*

The king knows that something is troubling his queen – and likely Haman does as well, but neither of them can put their finger on it. The king had asked her the same questions in the presence of Haman at the first banquet the day before, but at that time, Esther apparently sensed the moment was not right, but now it would seem that things have swung in her favor. Although we are not told, I suspect that Esther had heard the news that her cousin Mordecai was paraded around the city square as a hero by none other than Haman.

So, for Esther, it’s time to go all in.

As Solomon once wrote, *“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven . . . a time to be silent, and a time to speak.”*

For Esther, silence was once necessary – but not now. I suspect her heart was pounding out of her chest, but once her husband – the king opened the door again with his question *“What’s on your mind?”* – she spoke carefully.

Beginning with **verse 3**, this is what she tells the king in front of Haman.

³Then Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; ⁴for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be

killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king.”

So, Esther makes her request of the king, in the presence of Haman, and she asks that her life be spared as well as the lives of her people. She says we have been **sold** by an enemy, which is her subtle way of pointing out she is aware that Haman offered to foot the entire bill to exterminate her people. Esther knows what occurred behind closed doors, and then she adds, that her people and herself are to be **destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.** **Why those words?** Let’s go back to **Esther 3:13.**

Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder.

Esther recites the exact same words – “**to destroy, to kill and to annihilate**” that were written in the extermination order – the exact same words that Haman had dictated to the royal scribes.

On one special day, at the end of the year, the people in the Persian Empire will be given a license to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews. These are things that King Ahasuerus should have known – he’s the king, but he apparently knows nothing. He did not know that the “certain people” Haman had falsely accused were the Jews – the Jews who were favored by his father and his grandfather before him – both kings of Persia. Instead, King Ahasuerus blindly and foolishly trusted Haman and allowed him to do what he wanted with these “certain people.”

Esther continues and tells the king that if her people were only being **sold as slaves**, she would not bother him, she would have kept quiet – but this is a matter of life and death for an entire race of people.

Now if you notice, there are several things that Esther does not say here. She makes no reference as to the identity of these people who are to be exterminated. She does not mention the Jews by name. Also, at this point, Esther does not mention Haman by name either, and she carefully avoids telling the king that the extermination order was authorized with his own signet ring, for that would make the king look bad and as you recall with Vashti – the former queen, he does not like to look bad.

It's also important to note, that up until this point, neither the king nor Haman know that Queen Esther is a Jew – and even here she does not come out identify herself as a Jew, but at this moment, I am assuming that at least for Haman, he has put the pieces together and has come to the horrible realization of who the queen really is. Haman is the enemy of the Jews, and therefore, Queen Esther is his enemy.

Haman has got to be shaking in his boots right about now, but the king is clueless, wondering who in the world would do such a thing, and beginning with **verse 5**, it goes from bad to really bad for Haman.

⁵ Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?” ⁶ Esther said, “A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!” Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen.

The king still had not connected the dots, and so he asks, *“Who are you talking about?”* *“Where is he?”* *“Queen Esther, point him out to me,”* and she does – it's the **wicked Haman**.

No way! Haman is the number two man in the Persian Empire. He's the king's closest confidential adviser – deeply entrenched in the affairs of the empire. King Ahasuerus thought he could completely trust Haman, but now this – this is mind-blowing, and we are told in **verse 7**,

The king arose in his anger from drinking wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king.

Now we are not told why the king walks out to get some fresh air in the garden, but maybe he is rehashing what had happened, struggling with himself and his own foolish role in the extermination plot, frustrated that he blindly trusted Haman, even gave him the signet ring to authorize the order to kill his own queen and her people.

The king is in the garden, trying to make sense of this shocking information all the while Haman remains with the queen to plead for mercy – to **beg for his life**. There is a sense of irony here. In our story, Haman was filled with rage because a Jew named Mordecai would not bow down before him, but here, it's Haman whose groveling before a Jewish woman begging for his life.

Then we come to **verse 8** where it goes from bad, to really bad, to really, really bad for Haman. We are told,

Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, “Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?” As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.

So, the king returns from the garden, and when he walks back into the room, at the exact same moment, Haman – who is probably somewhat faint from desperation and weak in the knees, falls upon the couch where Esther was reclining, and that was a bad move.

Let me say, that while studying this passage, I did find something rather humorous about this particular moment. Although not biblical, there is a Jewish writing which says that the angel Gabriel pushed Haman – gave him a little nudge, so he would fall on Esther just as King Ahasuerus was coming back into the room.

Anyway, whatever happened, Gabriel or not, Haman did the wrong thing at just the right time, and instead of simply falling on the floor, he fell upon Esther. Haman had touched the queen and that’s death, but worse than that, in the king’s anger he assumed the worst – Haman is now trying to sexually assault his wife.

That was the final straw for Haman, and while words were still coming out of the king’s mouth, the king’s servants **covered Haman’s face** which meant only one thing – Haman was a condemned man prepared for execution.

So, it went from bad, to really, really bad, and now it gets as worse as it can be for Haman, for we are told beginning with **verse 9**,

9 Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who were before the king said, “Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman’s house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on behalf of the king!” And the king said, “Hang him on it.” 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king’s anger subsided.

Somehow, in the previous 24 hours, it had become known to this eunuch that Haman had prepared to kill Mordecai. This was the king’s first knowledge of Haman’s plan to kill the man who had saved his life some five years earlier, and so in an ironic twist of fate, Haman is caught in his own trap – impaled on the very stake he had prepared for Mordecai.

I want to conclude this morning by reading a passage which sums up the entire story of Esther up to this point in Chapter 7.

If you have your Bible, turn to **Psalm 73**, beginning with **verse 1**, and on this occasion, I'm going to read this from the New Living Translation. It reads,

- ¹ *Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.*
- ² *But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.*
- ³ *For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.*
- ⁴ *They seem to live such painless lives;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.*
- ⁵ *They don't have troubles like other people;
they're not plagued with problems like everyone else.*
- ⁶ *They wear pride like a jeweled necklace
and clothe themselves with cruelty.*
- ⁷ *These fat cats have everything
their hearts could ever wish for!*
- ⁸ *They scoff and speak only evil;
in their pride they seek to crush others.*
- ⁹ *They boast against the very heavens,
and their words strut throughout the earth.*
- ¹⁰ *And so the people are dismayed and confused,
drinking in all their words.*
- ¹¹ *"What does God know?" they ask.
"Does the Most High even know what's happening?"*
- ¹² *Look at these wicked people—
enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.*
- ¹³ *Did I keep my heart pure for nothing?
Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?*
- ¹⁴ *I get nothing but trouble all day long;
every morning brings me pain.*
- ¹⁵ *If I had really spoken this way to others,
I would have been a traitor to your people.*
- ¹⁶ *So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper.
But what a difficult task it is!*
- ¹⁷ *Then I went into your sanctuary, O God,
and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked.*

- 18 Truly, you put them on a slippery path
and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.*
- 19 In an instant they are destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors.*
- 20 When you arise, O Lord,
you will laugh at their silly ideas
as a person laughs at dreams in the morning.*
- 21 Then I realized that my heart was bitter,
and I was all torn up inside.*
- 22 I was so foolish and ignorant—
I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.*
- 23 Yet I still belong to you;
you hold my right hand.*
- 24 You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.*
- 25 **Whom have I in heaven but you?**
I desire you more than anything on earth.*
- 26 My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart;
he is mine forever.*
- 27 Those who desert him will perish,
for you destroy those who abandon you.*
- 28 But as for me, how good it is to be near God!
I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.*

This is a psalm that presents us with age-old questions – **why do the Haman's in this world seem to prosper? If God is in control, and He is, then why don't the plans of the wicked immediately fall apart? Why do the righteous seem to suffer while the wicked seem to flourish?**

In this psalm, the writer struggled with these questions, as we might, but then he was able to see things from a different perspective and he understood that there was a truth that went beyond what he experienced in here and now. The writer understood that the wicked who seem to have it all – those just like Haman, were on a very slippery slope, and they would fall at just the right time – if not in the here and now, most surely in the hereafter, for that is their destiny.

For the writer, instead of pondering on *why* this happens and *why* that happens – questions that never seem to go away, his focus shifted to “*Whom have I in heaven but you?*” and that’s where our focus needs to be.

Instead of becoming fixated and consumed with the things that occur around us in this world, we are to look upward and ask, “*Who is my God? Who do I belong to? Who is always with me? Who is in control even when my life seems to be out of control? Who knows the number of hairs on my head? Who has engraved my name in the palm of His hand? Who loves me more than I could ever know?*”

In spite of the wicked Haman’s in this world, we must not lose sight of the God of our salvation who works behind the scenes, who is perfect in all His ways, and whose timing is just right. Look up, draw near, and go all in with God.

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