

Redemption in Esther

Esther 4:14

PW Emerson – 03/24/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

This Lenten season we're doing a series on Redemption

- First we looked at Ruth – how redemption came to an unlikely place
- Last week we look at redemption in Jeremiah – being reminded that God is the potter and we are the clay

Today looking at the book of Esther, seeing how redemption came to the Jews

I'm giving you the abridged look at Esther because

- Time constraints
- Many details are not relevant to the underlying story of redemption

Let me set the scene

- This takes place in the Old Testament during the time when the nations of Israel & Judah had been conquered
- God's people were living in exile, under Persian rule

The king was looking for a new wife, for a queen.

He his previous queen, Vashti, had been disposed of her position and thrown out of the royal court for disobeying the king.

So the king is looking for a new wife.

Esther 2:1

Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king.

One such woman is Esther.

Her parents were killed, most likely when Babylon conquered Jerusalem.

So she was raised by a cousin, Mordecai

Esther goes to the palace to audition, to see if she might be chosen by the king

Mordecai commands her NOT to tell about her heritage, not to say that she is Jewish.

Low and behold, Esther was chosen by the king.

Esther 2:17

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.

Well ... Mordecai hangs around outside the palace to get glimpses inside, where he would see Esther.

To see what Esther, the girl he raised, had become was a great joy to Mordecai.

He's having proud parent moments.

One day, Mordecai is hanging around the king's gate – place outside the palace. He hears men plotting to kill the king.

Esther 2:22

²²But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai.

And the plot is foiled.

AND Mordecai gets some big brownie points with the king.

One of the other nobles, Haman, hated Mordecai.

Mordecai would not bow before Haman, to show Haman the respect normally accorded to a noble.

So Haman hated Mordecai.

Esther 3:5

⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

Haman hated Mordecai so much that he manipulated the king to give orders to kill all the Jews.

Mordecai pleads with Esther to speak to the king about this, to get the king to spare the Jews.

Esther is nervous.

- Remember, the king doesn't know that she is of Jewish descent
- If she says something that displeases the king, she could be thrown out of the court or killed

But Mordecai pleads with her.

Esther 4:14

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 your royal position for such a time as this?"

So Queen Esther & Mordecai all prayed.

Esther 6:1-4

That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. ²It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

³"What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked.

"Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

⁴The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him.

The king calls in Haman and asks for advice on how to honor someone – but the king doesn't say who.

Esther 6:6

⁶When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?"

Haman assumes the king wants to honor him, not Mordecai.

Esther 6:7-9

⁷So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, ⁸have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head.⁹Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'"

The king says – that sounds great. Go get the horse and robes and everything and pay the honor on Mordecai, the Jew.

Now Esther speaks to the king about sparing the Jews.

Esther 7:3-6

³Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. ⁴For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

⁵King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?”

⁶Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!”

Esther 7:9

⁹Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, “A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.”

The king said, “Impale him on it!

Not only did the king spare the Jews, he gave them authority to pursue anyone who would harm them.

In this story of redemption, we see a couple important lessons that we should really follow.

I DO WHAT IS RIGHT

Mordecai didn’t have to report in about the guards plotting to kill the king.

Mordecai had never met the king at that point.

But it was the right thing.

Haman was manipulating circumstances and twisting things to get the king to act in his favor.

It's didn't work out that way.

Esther spoke up to the king about the Jews

Esther 4:14

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 your royal position for such a time as this?"

In other words, Mordecai says to Esther that maybe it was God's will that you be queen so that you would be in a position to help the people!

WE need to DO WHAT IS RIGHT

It's not always easy ... it's not always popular ...

The Apostle Paul in the New Testament emphasizes this

Galatians 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Or from the sermon on the mount ...

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

In was November of 1960. A federal judge had ordered New Orleans to open its public school to African-American children. The white parents decided that, if they had to let black children in, they would keep their children out. They let it be known that any black children who came to school would be in for trouble. So the black children stayed home, too.

Except Ruby Bridges. Her parents sent her to school all by herself, six years old.

Every morning she walked alone through a heckling crowd to an empty school. White people lined up on both sides of the way and shook their fists at her. They threatened to do terrible things to her if she kept coming to their school. But every morning at ten minutes to eight Ruby walked, head up, eyes ahead, straight through the mob.

Two U.S. marshals walked ahead of her and two walked behind her. Then she spent the day alone with her teachers inside that big, silent school building.

Harvard professor Robert Coles was curious about what went into the making of courageous children like Ruby Bridges. He talked to Ruby's mother and reported what she said. "There's a lot of people who talk about doing good, and a lot of people who argue about what's good and what's not good," but there are other folks who "just put their lives on the line for what's right."

A Pretty Good Person, by Lewis Smedes

Mordecai & Esther put their faith in God and did what was right.

We should do the same.

II SEIZE THE DAY

Seize the moment!

Carpe Diem

Make the most out of every opportunity!

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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 your royal position for such a time as this?"

Mordecai is saying to Esther – Here's your chance!

Don't just sit there ... do something!

God gives us opportunities ... what will we do with them?

- Live as if each day was the most important day of your life
- Both seeing and seizing the God-ordained opportunities that are laid out before us
- Be present, fully in the moment right now
- Understand that every day is a gift from God and in turn choose to rejoice and be glad in it
- Discerning the promptings of the Holy Spirit
- Recognizing those holy moments, those teachable moments, those defining moments when they are laid before us

Ephesians 5:15-16

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Mordecai & Esther made the most of the opportunities before them.

Will we?

CONCLUSION

A gathering of friends at an English estate nearly turned to tragedy when one of the children strayed into deep water. The gardener heard the cries for help, plunged in, and rescued the drowning child. That rescued child was Winston Churchill. His grateful parents asked the gardener what they could do to reward him. The gardener hesitated, then said, "I wish my son could go to college someday and become a doctor." "We'll see to it," Churchill's parents promised.

Years later, while Sir Winston Churchill was prime minister of England, he was stricken with pneumonia. The country's best physician was summoned. His name was Dr. Alexander Fleming, the man who discovered and developed penicillin. He was also the son of that gardener who had saved young Winston from drowning. Later Churchill remarked, "Rarely has one man owed his life twice to the same person."

Ron Hutchcraft, *Wake Up Calls*, Moody, 1990, p. 22

We owe our redemption to God, not just once, or twice, but more times than we can count.

Let's make the most of our redemption!