

## **Esther's Sacrifice**

*Courage is risking worldly pleasure and power for others.*

Let's call to mind the story presented in the book of Esther.

After persistent disobedience, the bulk of the Hebrew people had been carried off into captivity by the Persians (Modern day Iraq). An opportunity eventually came to return to Israel but few took advantage of it due to business and intermarriage.

Those who chose to remain in exile were soon caught up in a bitter crisis that almost resulted in the genocide of the Jewish people.

In the providence of God, a precious young Jewess, Hadasseh, also known as Esther, is made queen.

A wicked man named Haman, a key counselor to the king, becomes angry because Mordecai won't bow down to him, he urges the king to let him exterminate all of the Jews throughout the realm. The king is persuaded and permits his authority to be put behind a death decree on all the Jews.

It turns out that Esther was Mordecai's uncle's daughter.

Mordecai urges Esther to go to the King and plead for his order to kill all the Jews be rescinded. Esther however, has not been called by the king to go in to him. To approach the King unbidden is a death penalty unless he gives his favor.

The Jews in the town fast while Esther goes in to intercede with the king for the life of her people. The king agrees, Haman's plot is broken, and he is hanged on the gallows which he had had erected to hang Mordecai upon.

The king issues a new decree permitting the Jews to defend themselves throughout the empire, and in the end the Jews prevail and their enemies are slaughtered.

**The Story of Esther is a remarkable story of faith and courage.**

*ah-haz'uh-EE-ruhs*

Haman is a non-Jew in a position of power in Ahasuerus (Xerxes) court. Haman hates Mordecai and the Jews and plots to have them all killed:

3:7-11; 4:8-17

*3: 7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, (ah-haz'uh-EE-ruhs)they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus ah-haz'uh-EE-ruhs,*

*“There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them.*

Haman hated the Jewish people who were living in exile among the Persians.

Why did he hate them?

Clue is in vs 8: *Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them.*

Here we find the unique characteristics of the Jews in exile.

Even though they no longer lived in Israel.

Even though they could not longer worship at the Temple.

Even though they could not sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.  
 Even though they were strangers in a strange land.  
 Even though they did not understand what their God was doing.

They chose to stand firm with their beliefs, their faith in Yahweh  
 and their customs.

That indeed is courage.

This is the first thing we learn about courage this evening:

**Courage is holding on to what is true even when you are  
 surrounded and pressured to compromise your beliefs.**

Our middle son Tim and his family currently live in Atlanta, GA.

By computer we have an audio and video connection to talk  
 live to Tim, his wife Kelly and our three grandchildren  
 weekly.



But one of our great fears is coming true.

We notice in Mark, the oldest grandson that his speech is  
 gaining a “drawl.” **“Hi grandpa and grandma how you all doing?”**

When you live in an environment long enough you begin to live  
 and talk like those in that environment.

That is why the Bible says in **1Cor. 15:33** ***Do not be deceived: “Bad  
 company ruins good morals.”***

To remain faithful to the Lord Jesus in your environment you have to make  
 deliberate choices on a daily basis.

**What choices?** You need to repeat a loud over and over what you know is true:

- **Jesus is Lord and he is the one and only Savior.**
- **I will not hold anger or bitterness but instead turn them over to Jesus.**
- **I will be faithful in marriage because Jesus has said this is the best way to live.**
- **I will walk in forgiveness because I have been forgiven.**

What we focus on will become our reality if we are intentional about practicing it.

The Jews concentrated on Yahweh and his mighty acts and laws, and as a result Haman hated them for it.

We need to take serious the words of Jesus. If we live for him in this world then we can expect the world to put pressure on us.

One of the reasons so many who claim Jesus are so ineffective is that their expectations of what they can expect from Jesus is a direct result of bad preaching and teaching.

To many preachers coax people to come to Jesus based on the idea that if you love Jesus you to be rich and healthy.

This false teaching can only be found in America.

Permit me to tell you how the Christians in Pakistan, India, Iraq, Nepal, Bangladesh, Russia and throughout the world view the result of believing in Jesus.

***John 15:18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.***

Haman had a plan to extinguish the Jews.

*9 If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries.” 10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. 11 And the king said to Haman, “The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you.”*

### **Haman exemplifies the problem with evil.**

Evil calculates and works to the destruction of others 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Evil is premeditated and determined to succeed.

Evil is vicious and cunning.

Evil is like a black cobra, the one of the most feared snakes in the world, because it never retreats. It is highly aggressive and will come after you until it bites you or you kill it.



We are all capable of horrible evil.

How do you defeat evil within?

The bible tells us *in Phil. 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

The way to defeat evil **within us** is to fill our hearts and minds with the truth of Jesus Christ. To dwell on the truth.

The way to defeat evil **outside of us** is not to ignore it, be indifferent to it, or hope somebody else will do it. The way to defeat evil is to stand up to it, call it what it is, and face it head on with the power of the Gospel

### **Mordecai's call to action:**

*4: 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. 9 And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."*

### **This is where the rubber begins to meet the road for Esther.**

She has become the queen. She is living the lap of luxury, she is comfortable, content, and has a great future.

The problem: She is also a Jew and Haman has tricked the King into issuing a decree to have all the Jews exterminated.

One of the great lessons that has emerged from the tragedy of 9/11 is this:

Airline passengers know that no help is coming when a terrorist is attempting to take over the airplane or set off a bomb.



The passengers themselves must act and act **NOW** or they all will die.

Thankfully that has happened several times since 911.

Esther cannot wait for someone else to act. She must act if the people are going to be saved.

**This is what we need to hear and understand tonight:**

Abortion will not end if we play it safe.

Marriage will be dishonored and discredited if we are willing to accommodate any lifestyle and call it equal to marriage.

The church will be told what to say and not say if we remain silent.

We cannot wait for a new **Martin Luther, or Martin Luther King.**



It will take YOU AND YOU AND YOU and ME to stand for and with Jesus against these evils, against the lie and to confront these things head on.

*12 And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

Silence is the worst enemy of the truth.

One of the most powerful statements outside the Bible came from a British Statesman Edmund Burke **'All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing'**

Mordecai reminds Esther that her silence will not save her. She must speak and speak now.

### **Picture of Esther**

*15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” 17 Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.*

Esther realized that she was the only one who could make a difference.

Perhaps this is why she had become Queen.

Perhaps she was the Lord’s instrument, like King David, like Moses, like Nehemiah to set his people free.

Esther greatest danger and enemy in this story was not Haman or fear of the king.

The real enemy, the real danger, what Esther’s heart:

What enemies and dangers did she have to defeat?

The danger of position:

The danger of “yes” men:

The danger of self-preservation

The danger of riches

The danger of comfort

The danger of indifference

**Esther’s real courage was *risking worldly pleasure and power for others.***

She did face her greatest enemies and won the day with the King and the defeat of Haman. She saved the Jewish people and has become an eternal model of what it means to risk everything for others.

Tonight Jesus is speaking to your heart and mine. Here is what he is saying, **“Tom, are you willing to risk your comfort, your wealth, your life for me?”**

Say this aloud with me but put your name in first.

**“\_\_\_\_\_, are you willing to risk your comfort, your wealth, your life for me?”**

### **Yellow Card**

**\_\_\_\_\_ I will ask the Lord Jesus for the courage of Esther when I face evil in this world.**

**\_\_\_\_\_ I will, with the Lord’s help, never be silent again when I see evil and injustice.**

**\_\_\_\_\_ I will stand up for Jesus in the public arena even if it costs me everything I have.**