

Roy's Sermon for August 28, 2022

Esther 6:1-12 'Man Preposes But God Disposes!'

Last time in Esther we looked at chapter 5:1-14 in a sermon I entitled 'Pride And Arrogance: The Danger Of Mountaintop Experiences!' On the back of Esther's words in chapter 4:14d "When this is done, I will go to the king though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." And I asked the question, I wonder how often throughout each day, we have that written upon our own hearts for our Saviour? I am your servant Lord. "Thy will be done." "And if I perish, I perish." Yes committing our way ahead to God in prayer and then being prepared to stand up in His Name come what may. And then being prepared to even take a hit so to speak for our faith in Jesus!

Well that's exactly what Esther has done. V2 she's gone to the king placing her life on the line, he points the sceptre at her so she approaches him. V3 he asks what she wants, he'll give it to her "even up to half the Kingdom." Esther doesn't answer but instead invites both he and Haman to a feast. V5 "bring Haman at once." The queen wants to party with me and my bestie! So Haman, (that enemy of the Jews, God's people) is riding high upon that mountain top of position and importance.

But as I said, the great danger about mountaintop experiences is that there is only one way to go. And that is down! Proverbs11:2 "When pride comes then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." In v6-8, again the king asked the question but yet again it goes unanswered. My king, you and Haman come to another banquet tomorrow and all will be revealed, Esther says! Verse 9, Haman is riding high but then he sees Mordecai. Not fearful, not cowering somewhere but simply going about his business as though nothing had happened. So Haman is "filled with rage" again, but v10a "he restrains himself" goes home, invites his wife and all his friends to tell them how amazing and how wonderful he is! V10b- 12. And yet none of this does him any good v13, because of that wretched Jew.

Then finally in v14, his wife and his friends say just kill this guy, by public execution and be happy. Good plan, he thinks to himself, so the gallows are built. And as I mentioned last time, it seems as though Mordecai's fate is sealed! And so we pick up the narrative in Esther6:1-12 Man Proposes But God Disposes! And in v1 we read "That night the king could not sleep."

Now in Jonah ch4, after having preached to the Ninevites that God's judgement would fall upon them within 40 days upon those murderous Assyrians, but with them "fasting and repenting in dust, sackcloth and ashes, and calling upon God in prayer because ch3:9 "Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his face anger so that we will not perish," and indeed that is exactly what happened, God did "relent and turn from his face anger" and salvation for a time came to a whole Pagan city. Much to Jonah's anger! He is so angry in fact that "he wants to die" as he complains to God with those very words. So he goes and positions himself upon a high hill with full view of Nineveh in hope, that God would still destroy the great city! So he built himself a shelter to protect himself from the heat of the day, and miraculously overnight, God makes a vine grow up over the shelter so the blazing heat does not beat down upon Jonah's head. And the scripture says that "Jonah was happy about the vine." But then the next morning, God sends a little worm, to chew the vine at its base so that the vine withers and dies in the blazing midday sun as it burns upon Jonah's head, so again he wants to die!

Friends God was teaching Jonah a valuable lesson about his out of control hardness of heart. Well what we in effect have before us in Esther chapter 6, is yet another little God sent worm gnawing away at the king's sleep, to bring about the Purpose and Plan of God to rescue His people! V1 "That night the king could not sleep." But why is it "that night?" He'd had a great day, partying and

feasting with his best friend and right hand man Haman at the banquet the queen had prepared for the king and his friend. The wine had flowed freely, the food would have been only the finest, and the queen of course was at her gracious best. And there was yet another feast to look forward to tomorrow. And also happily the queen was going to reveal her request and petition to the king! So why could he not sleep? What so troubled him? Well it is because God had sent another little worm gnawing away at Xerxes` Peace of Mind! I'm sure we've all been there at some point in our life. And actually I'm a terrible sleeper as you all know, so this sort of thing happens to me all the time, but yes I'm almost certain that at some point at least, each of us has had something on our minds that we just can't put our finger on until we find it, that gnaws away at us and keeps us from restful sleep. And that's what's happening to the king! He believes he has all his ducks in a row so to speak, and yet he still can't get any sleep. Yes that little God sent worm, is gnawing away at his peace of mind. And since he can't get any sleep and there's nothing else to do at this hour, he figures he may as well have a bit of a look through the chronicles of his records "that night" and finds it had to be "that night." Because tomorrow, the Queen's "request and petition" will be revealed, that she is a Jew, and doesn't want her people or herself to perish at the hands of this evil Haman. And also of course Mordecai is to be executed!

Friends yet again I want us to recognise the unseen Hand of God here throughout all of these things. Yes Mordecai had a plan and now Esther has a plan, and yet unbeknownst to them both they were one in the same. Because ultimately it was God's plan! Did Esther know that God was going to send that little earwig worm to gnaw away the king's sleep patterns? No, of course not. She was simply trusting in God and acting by faith within the plan that she had laid upon her heart. "And if I perish, I perish."

Beloved can you see? That God is not only the God of the vast, the monumental, even the seemingly infinite things within His Creation. He is also the God of the small and the miniscule, even the microscopic things of this world. And of course it is the same throughout the whole of our lives! Psalm 139:13 "For you created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother's womb." v15-16 "My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Matthew 10:30 "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered." Beloved can you see? And I know that I have said this before, but God is intimately involved with and concerned for your life. He "knit you together in your mother's womb." He "made you in the secret place," that place where life is created, the very mind's eye of God. Where only God, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) may dwell. Where all life is preordained! His "eyes saw your unformed body."

Have you ever tried to get your head around that? That all of the days ordained for you were even given to you by God Himself in His benevolence? Yes He has given them to you and not one of them can be taken away by anyone or thing. Yes blessed assurance Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine. Amen! Praise God! Psalm 139:1-2 "O Lord, you had searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar." Again, praise God.

Well this king doesn't know it, but to his condemnation he is also intimately known by God and is now being raised up by Him to deliver God's own people! "So he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign to be brought in and read to him." Now I actually find it amazing that he doesn't even do his own reading, but anyway. V2 "It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate king Xerxes." I guess we could even say, that here was this sleeping commendation, (which at the time had been recorded and yet nothing done about it) which had

now been awakened by the king's sleepless night. It is yet another piece of God's mysterious puzzle to be revealed at just the right time, can you see? V3 "What honour and recognition has Mordecai received for this, the king asked? Nothing has been done for him, his attendance answered. Now brethren I'm not sure, but it does appear that Haman also has had a sleepless night. Because the king asked the question v4 "Who is in the court?" Who of all the Nobles can we call upon at this hour? Well of course in that sovereign plan of God, v4b "Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace." It wasn't the inner court as Esther had done unlawfully, even Haman's vanity didn't stretch that far, but "the outer court" where the nobles would wait to be called upon by the king. Now friends if we were gambling people, who believed in chance or luck, (which of course we are not so we don't, because there is no such thing as luck or chance in the universe of God) but if we were, what would be the odds for all of these things too align just as they do? Surely the odds would be astronomical, and that's the point. God leaves no thing to chance!

The first banquet had taken place. Mordecai's appearance at the "king's gate," as Haman leaves the Queen's palace. The vanity of Haman moved by family and friends to take vengeance upon Mordecai. The king's sleepless night, the examining of the chronicles during that night. The lack of any recognition and commendation having been made for Mordecai at the time, and the only one in the court of the nobles who has just arrived, due to his own sleepless night, yet for far different reasons, is none other than Haman! "Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had built."

Yes Haman it seems, has also had his own sleepless night, and has arrived either while it is still dark or in the early hours of the morning, so he can be first cab off the rank so to speak. Yes he was there for his own evil reasons. And yet as we have been seeing and continue to see, what man intends for evil, God predetermines for the good of His people! Again, it seemed as though Mordecai's fate was sealed, the gallows had been built, all Haman needed was the king's say so, and of course it was a foregone conclusion. But no!

Beloved, why do we continue to pray for our lost family and friends? And for missionaries and situations both in Australia and around the world? Because though yes within the council of God there are indeed foregone conclusions, and yet we don't know what they are! As Peter Marshall put it some years ago when asking the question, Why do we pray? And with the simple answer being because Jesus did. And although God knows the end from the beginning, we do not!

In Luke 11:1, after Jesus had been praying one of his disciples says to him "Lord teach us to pray." But as John Reed pointed out not how to pray, but "to pray." Remember God doesn't need our prayers to fulfil his purposes but He has chosen to use them to do so. So why would we not petition Him on behalf of those whom we love? That is of course if indeed we do actually love them!

Well brothers and sisters now we can see how God turns Haman's murderous scheme, as well as his unbridled arrogance and vanity back upon his own head. Yes Man Proposes But God Disposes! v5-6. "His attendants answered Haman is standing in the court. Bring him in the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?" Well can't you just imagine that Haman's heart skips a beat and his eyes light up. Only yesterday he had been telling his wife and all of his friends, how wonderful the king thinks he is, and how he honours him in every way. The King's own authority is on his finger, he has feasted with the king at the Queen's palace and there is yet another feast today. Life just keeps getting better for Haman. "Now Haman thought to himself. Who is there that the king would rather honour than me?" But friends Jesus Himself warns us, when going to a banquet, don't rush in and take the best seats in the house, take the back seats, so we won't be embarrassed when the host comes to us and says, 'O I'm

sorry friend, but your seat is up the back.' Rather, having taken the worst seat in the house, the host may well come to you and say hey my friend, your seat is up the front with me.' Proverbs 16:2-5 "All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. The Lord works out everything for his own ends, even the wicked for a day of disaster. The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this, they will not go unpunished. And v18 "pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

Well arguably, perhaps never a man was heading toward a greater fall, in this life at least, then was Haman! "Who is there that the king would rather honour than me?" He thinks to himself, what's the best thing that I can think of to fan my own ego and pride, that I can have the king do for me? O I've got it! V7-9 "So he answered the king, for the man that king delights to honour, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with the royal Crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and the horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble Princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honour, 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 honour.'" Now Beloved I don't know about you, but to you think of such a plan off the top of your head in what appears to be a split second, does seem to tell us that as we have been seeing, this man was very full of himself. Yes Haman has eyes only for Haman.

We saw it last time, Proverbs11:2 "When pride comes then comes disgrace. But with humility, then comes wisdom." We must not think of ourselves more highly than we should. We must view ourselves or measure ourselves, (not against other people) but against the Lord Jesus Himself. The Son of God "came riding on a donkey." Not a horse, but "a colt the foal of a donkey." They would soon surely say of Haman, "O, how the mighty have fallen."

But Beloved it would not serve us well here, if we didn't hold the warning of this mirror up to our own eyes. The danger of course is, when we are looking at the bad characters in the Bible is to think to ourselves, 'O I'm nothing like that,' or 'I could never do something like that.' Where in reality Brethren given the right Providence along with our own circumstances, if it not before God's restraining Grace, we are all more than capable of all manner of sin! V10 "Go at once, the king commanded Haman." Yui Yui Yui Yui Haman is thinking, the view is great from the top. Let me just take a moment, I need to take it all in and appreciate this view and breathe in this rarefied air! "Go at once, the king commanded Haman. Get the robe and the horse. (Yes, yes) and do as you suggested (Yes, yes) for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." Well can you imagine? Yes just imagine what is running through Haman's mind. Perhaps the 75 foot high gallows that he is had purposively built to have that "man who the king delights to honour" publicly executed? Maybe the edict that he has slipped through under the king's nose while basically concealing the identity of the riff raff of a people, that he has sought the genocide of? Or perhaps the thought, that he was going to have to place a royal robe of the king, "one that he had even worn" no less (which made the garment of even far greater value) upon the shoulders of the man that he so despised, that he was happy to have hundreds of thousands perhaps even millions of people, "men women and little children" put to death. Yes we can only imagine what was going through his mind brothers and sisters!

Dear friends, perhaps one of the clearest lessons that we can learn here is to be on guard against clinging too tightly, to any given thing in this world and this life. In reality, we are but a breath in the scheme of eternity. "A mist that appears and is gone" the scripture says! Colossians3:1-2 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things." Beloved the reality is, that clinging too tightly to anything in this life, let alone our pride and vanity, will ultimately lead to

disappointment and heartache. There are only three things that are certain in this life, if I can put it this way. Birth, death and judgement. And each one of them is inescapable. At each one of them is in the hands of God!

So we really must try to seek as Christians, to “set our hearts and minds on things above,” because everything else including life itself, is slowly but surely perishing. All of which, Haman is now very, very aware. Position, Power, Favour and indeed life itself! V11 With everything in him I believe, feeling that he had to vomit and then crawl into some corner somewhere, so that he would never be seen again, Haman of course carries out the king`s command, dare I say, the royal decree! “So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, this is what is done for the man the king delights to honour.” Beloved as I close this morning, how clearly we have seen the all-powerful orchestrating Hand of God, over-ruling all things. Even seemingly insignificant things such as the sleepless night of a king, (his rest being gnawed away at by that little worm of the troubling of his mind) yes God is orchestrating all things, leaving no thing to chance, for His Plan and Purpose of delivering His people. Truly Man Proposes But God Disposes! And He does this on a universal scale, but He also does this within each one of our lives. Yes He leaves no thing to chance! Dear friends, what a tremendous comfort it is knowing that as in Romans8:28 “That God works all things for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose”

Amen! Let`s Pray!