

Date: September 27, 2026

Texts: Esther 4. 12-17; 9. 20-22

Title: "What's Your Story? : Esther"

Intro -

The story of Esther is a story of oppression and humiliation.

It begins not with Esther but with another queen, Vashti -
who refuses to exhibit herself in front of a banquet hall
full of leering, drunken men, and so loses her position.

Why does the storyteller begin here?

cf. - to illustrate the crude and cruel world into which Hadassah,
the young Jewish woman, is about to be introduced.

When Xerxes, the Persian king, realizes he has lost the beautiful Vashti,
(who apparently had standards...)

his advisers suggest a search of the kingdom for a new queen.

In this search the young women are powerless -

they have value to the extent that they please the king and
his leering men.

(luckily... we have moved on from that in our day and age...)

Esther (named now for the pagan goddess Ishtar - the hits just keep coming
for her...) survives and thrives in this world - because of her compliance.

But then the moment comes -

her people are threatened with extinction -
(a little bit of the backstory would be helpful here...):

Mordecai and Esther live peacefully as diaspora Jews in the Persian empire
at the time of King Xerxes...

as Mordecai rises in the Persian court, having foiled a plot to
assassinate the king, he runs afoul of a Persian nobleman - Haman,
who was also favored by the king - but to whom Mordecai
refused to bow down in servitude...

Haman vows to avenge this perceived slight by destroying not only Mordecai,
but also all the Jews in the Persian realm

(if this is at all familiar as a story, it might be because it is
the root of the Jewish Festival of Purim... and -
common fodder for many a tale of
palace intrigue)

which brings us to Esther... in the court of King Xerxes...

and a position where she might be able to intervene -

Esther, at Mordecai's prompting (and - strengthened by the prayers
of her people...), throws caution to the wind and declares (vs. 16)

I will do as you say, and -

"If I perish, I perish."

what can we learn from her story...

for the living of ours?

I) A Core Truth...

cf. - one way we can approach this is to find here -

the teaching of a core truth:

a story about those moments in our lives when God's call -
and our individual lives -

come together in a way that demands an answer.

It was Esther's time...

...and the continued existence of the ancient people of God
depended on her.

"Do not think that because you are in the king's house that you alone
of all the Jews will escape..."

"And who knows but that you have come to royal position
for such a time as this..."

Esther's response to her uncle seems to indicate she understood this...
she bought into this...

she would "give an answer"

and in her individual life -
would do what needed to be done
cf. - as a big step...
an important decision...
she knew "where she was..."
and she recognized the importance of where she found herself...
but she realized that it's not enough to "know where you are..."
- that has to lead you to something
i.e. - you're in a Mall... find yourself in an airport...
you don't know where you are -
so you look for a map... with a red arrow on it...
that tells you:
"You Are Here"
fabulous...
but what's next?
is it enough to just know where you are...?
or - should that be the basis for doing something?
(i.e. - actually finding where that store is relative to where you are...
and going there...
i.e. - coming to the realization you are in the wrong terminal altogether,
and heading out to catch a shuttle to the correct departure...)
do you know where you are...?
Esther had a vague sense of where she was -
the royal court of King Xerxes...
(and - it was pretty luxe...)
but that was about all she knew
until Mordecai came to her -
and impressed upon her the importance of where she was...
and what she could do from there
relate - sometimes...
we might find ourselves in the same situation -

we try and follow God...

we know where we are...

but -

we don't know what to do about it...

we don't know why we are in our present situation:

why am I in this job...?

why am I living in this city...?

why am I at this school...?

and that's alright

- sometimes, we don't need to know - at least... not yet

there can be ambiguity in terms of following Jesus...

God sometimes deals with us via "gradual revelation..."

not offering up a detailed plan for the next 50 years, but -

guiding us along each step of the journey -

until we find ourselves in the circumstances that call for

a response -

as did Esther... here...

have we done all that we can - in terms of grounding ourselves in God's word,

in prayer, in service, in being a part of the faith community...

... so that we can answer with the same courage and trust

as she did?

cf. - that's one way to look at this, and -

it's a good way...

it unwraps a "core truth" that can lead to impactful actions...

actions that we are the better for undertaking, and -

actions that are oriented outward, for the benefit of

folks around us

and couldn't we use a little more of that...?

but there's another to look at this... -

II) ... or, So It Seemed

cf. - Esther has a great response here...

she serves as a model for all of us, living in a “hesitant age”

think twice before you get involved...

don't stick your neck out...

the nail that sticks up... gets hammered down...

just “walk on by...”

but hear again what Mordecai has to say -

“if you remain silent at this time, God will raise up other means
of relief and deliverance...”

i.e. - this is a story about the “hidden God...”

about the “silent God...”

a story about what do we do...

how do we live...

when God doesn't speak?

how do we hang on to the larger story of God's justice...

when the immediate events / situation

seems to suggest anything but...?

God is faithful...

but where is our place within that story?

again -

we will find our place more readily (if not more easily...)

when we have a grasp of the context that frames
the story... the situation...

i.e. - when we have done the work needed to

lay the groundwork - in the same way as

a garden needs to be turned over and weeded

so that the seeds to be planted can grow...

in the same way that concrete footings must be placed

before we erected the building...

for us - as we face situations that - if not exactly rising to level of
existential concern as that which confronted Esther...

but -

when we find ourselves in those moments in our lives when God's call -
and our individual lives -
come together in a way that demands an answer...

yet God seems strangely silent...

oddly absent...

how will we respond?

cf. - by having already done the work -
spent time in his word...

spent time in prayer...

spent time in service...

spent time in fellowship - time that refreshes and encourages us...

because that is where we find the reservoir
that helps us give the answer
we need to give

that's where - as with Esther -

we can face those times with a spirit of openness -
trusting that God will lead
(because he already has...)

we can - as with Esther -
be willing to take risks
(because we have already seen God to be faithful...)

we can - as with Esther -
be "agents of change"
(because God has already brought about change in us...)

all we need to do...

is make ourselves available to God