

May 8, 2016

Heroes of Faith, Part Two

A series on Heroes of the Old and New Testament

"The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd," Hebrews 11:3 The Message

"Esther: (Mandy - Children's Ministry Director) For Such a Time as This"

"If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

A. The Inspiring Story of Esther...

1. **Time:** 486 B.C.
2. **Setting:** Persian Empire. The empire stretched from India to Ethiopia with Susa being its capital. It spanned three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) and controlled more than 2.9 million miles with 50 million people living under its control with roughly 44% of the world's population. King Xerxes, son of Darius the Great, is reigning.
3. **Background:** Previously, many Jews were carried into Babylon and taken captive. Although more recently, they had been given permission to return to their homeland, many had established homes and did not wish to uproot their families.
4. **Cast of Characters:**
Lead Role - Esther (Jewish name - Hadassah) Esther was a young, beautiful, Jewish, orphan girl, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was raised by her cousin.
Supporting Roles -
King Xerxes only reigned about 3 years but was quick to show his power, his wealth, and his extravagance was unimaginable.
Mordecai was the Jewish cousin of Esther who raised her as his own. He actually lived within the castle complex. Esther 2:5
Vashti was the first, beautiful queen of King Xerxes who was divorced. She was divorced because she refused a command of the king to parade her beauty in front of the drunken king and his drunken associates.
Haman became second to the king and was chief advisor to the king on all matters.

5. **Plot:** This is the story of a beautiful, young virgin who became queen. Her very life and the lives of her Jewish people were threatened when Haman sought to destroy all Jews in the kingdom.
- #### **B. Sequence of events...**
1. Vashti refused the king's command, was divorced, and sent from the palace as an example to all women.
 2. Esther was entered in the queen's beauty contest and was selected as the next queen.
 3. Mordecai, Esther's cousin, heard of a plot to kill the king and the guards were found treasonous and eliminated.
 4. Haman, the second most powerful man in the kingdom, required all people to bow down to him when they would see him.
 5. Mordecai would not bow down, infuriating Haman as he already hated the Jewish people. Haman devised a plot to kill Mordecai and the rest of the Jewish people because they would not obey the king's laws. He built a 75-foot platform to impale Mordecai.
 6. Esther was persuaded by Mordecai to appeal to the king on their behalf in spite of the fact that she may lose her life. So...she went to the king and invited him and Haman to a banquet.
 7. That night, the king couldn't sleep, so he read history books and remembered he never rewarded Mordecai. He asked Haman how to reward a faithful servant.
 8. The king and Haman attended the second banquet and Esther revealed the plot that Haman had devised.
 9. The king left in a rage and when he returned, he found Haman appealing to Esther. Haman fell onto the couch where she was reclining. The king believed he was assaulting the queen!
 10. Haman was impaled on the same platform he had designed for Mordecai. The Jews were honored all over the empire and given the right to protect themselves.
 11. Mordecai was appointed to Haman's position. He was privileged to serve the king and his "daughter" in the palace. Thus the Jewish Feast of Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people and as written in the book of Esther.

C. God has a plan...

1. God created each of us for a purpose.

2. God has a plan in how we are created: our appearance, our intellect, our family, our gifts, our talents.
3. God will use all of these characteristics of who we are to bring glory to Him.
4. God will use our life experiences to bring glory to Him.
5. God has perfect timing for all that is happening in our lives.
6. God places us in just the right place to make a difference and will protect us.
7. God has the right time for us to speak and to use our words to direct others to Him.
8. God is working, even when we can't see it!
9. Prayer and fasting does make a difference.
10. God has given us our position or platform to use our influence for Him.

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:10

D. What is God asking you to do?...

1. Begin by giving thanks for who you are, how you were created and the gifts and talents He has given to you.
2. Realize that all that is a part of your life is there for a reason. Ask forgiveness for failure and ask Him to redeem it.
3. Thank God for perfect timing and positioning.
4. Surrender your platform or position to Him and be willing to use it to reach others for Christ.
5. Be willing to give whatever you have to see God's plan, His purpose, and His will be done!

"And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:26-28

Next week...May 15 -

Who is Your Neighbor? - The Life of the Church 2015-2016

May 22- "John: (Pastor Mike) - A Life of Love and Loyalty"
"Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—"
John 21:20a

"When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, 'Dear woman, here is your son'." John 19:26