

**SERMON 23rd AUGUST 2020**  
**Esther: Chapter 4**

**Friends:**

When God “rewards” His people in Heaven for faithful service, some of us will “miss out” on “rewards” because we were “fearful” rather than “faithful”!

- Will someone else be “rewarded” because they “participated” in God’s plans where perhaps you were too “passive”?
- We need to understand that our fearfulness, passivity, and selfishness will not prevent God’s ultimate plans, but they will “diminish” our eternal rewards!
- On a Tuesday evening in 1925, “Gladys Aylward” had her “sour stirred” for the sake of missions by a young man she hears preach in England!
- Gladys became “burdened” for China and know “SOMEBODY” needed to go there and declare the good news of Christ!
- She “decided” to contact every important person she knew and ask them to consider going to China! She approached doctors, bank manager, clergy and solicitors!
- “When” they turned her “down”, Gladys turned to her brother Laurence!
- He was not particularly interested to see the lost come to Christ but God would use him in Gladys’ life!
- Lawrence said to her:  
*“If you’re so “keen” why don’t you go “yourself”?”*
- After “trying” to convince every man she knew of the great “need” for missionaries in China, Gladys finally realized the “somebody” God wanted to use was “her”!
- Gladys “prayed” .... “O God, here is my bible, here is my money, here am I. Please use us, God, please use us”!
- God used her in amazing ways in China because against all odds, she went to china “unsponsored” and would ‘never again’ ask someone to do a job God was asking her to do!

**Friends:**

You know I’m going to ask you this “questions”! What is God asking “you” to do? And we know that God “isn’t” impressed with excuses!

- In Chapter 4 of Esther, Mordecai will “challenge” Esther to be the “somebody” to help meet the needs of her people, the Jews!
- Maybe the Lord is saying to you:  
*“I have put you in the “position”, now be “faithful” with what I have entrusted to you!”*

- Our joyful “obedience” is God’s ordinary means for accomplishing His “extraordinary plans!
- Verse 1:  
*“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the city wailing loudly and bitterly!”*
- In a “time of crisis”, let us be more concerned with confessing our “FEARS and FEELINGS” than with concealing “our faith”!
- Mordecai finds out about Harman’s plan and knows his own defiance ushered in “consequences” for so many more than “just himself”!
- Landon Dowden, pastor of a Baptist Church in Georgia, USA said this:-  
*“My sin” but “our consequences”!*
- The “point” is that “our sin” never just affects us as individuals; there tends to be “consequences” for our families and faith families!
- Mordecai grieves deeply!
- He tears his clothes, a well know sign of grief!  
(Num. 14:6)
- He puts on sackcloth and throws ashes over himself, another “signal” of deep distress!
- He wails “loudly and bitterly” in the city, so that all can hear as well as see his “misery”!
- Such actions are implicitly associated with “prayer”, and although prayer is never explicitly mentioned in Esther, it seems natural to “assume” Mordecai “prays”, for his actions in Verse 1 are always associated with prayer in the O.T.!
- Mordecai identifies himself with the people of God – the men and women in the Empire under “sentence” of death!
- Mordecai could now only go as far as the king’s gate! **(V2)** He can’t now belong to the World Empire, Mordecai is – “for now” – an OUTSIDER!
- Verse 3  
*“In every province to which the edict and order of the King came, there was great “mourning” among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes!”*
- What Mordecai does, his people through the 127 provinces also do: “fast, weep and wail”!
- This is deep grief of men and women who “understand” that they are “under judgment”!

- We know as reformed believers we interpret one scripture by looking at another!
- Verse 3 is repeated in Joel 2:12!
- Joel 2:12 says:  
*“Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with “fasting and weeping and mourning”!*
- I “believe” the link is “intentional” and the author of Esther wants us to interpret this phrase “fasting, weeping and mourning” through the lens of Joel 2:12!
- In the threat of “impending judgment”, God commands His people through the prophet Joel using these words:-  
*Joel 2:12-14*
  - *“Even now” declares the LORD, “return to Me with all your heart”, with fasting and weeping and mourning”.*
  - *Rend your heart and not your garments.*
  - *Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity!*
- “Who knows”? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing!
- Prayer is usually assumed to accompany fasting in the Bible!
- Did the Jews naturally pray for “deliverance” as they “fasted”?
- Is the “who knows” of V14 in Joel 2 linked with the “who knows” of V14 in Esther 4?
- Has Esther coming to her “royal position” the means by which the LORD God might turn and have pity on His people, relenting from sending calamity!?
- Verse 4... Esther was in “great distress”! Her distress is of a different nature than Mordecai’s grief.
- Mordecai grieves because of the threat of Jewish genocide, Esther is sad because of Mordecai’s grief!
- Esther at first was thinking like the World, all Mordecai needs is a “change of clothes”, that’ll fix him! **(V4)**
- It doesn’t cheer him up, so Esther sends Hathak to find out what really is troubling him! **(V5)**
- She talks the “first step” from superficiality to substance!

- In Verses 6 to 8 we see the “need” for a “MEDIATOR”!
- One “great theme” running through the whole Bible is this idea of a “need for a MEDIATOR”!
- Every since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, “mankind” needs a “Mediator” to approach the Holy God!
- God spoke through Noah, Abraham, Moses, David but none of them were perfect!
- God set up the sacrificial system of priests and sacrifices; but the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, that’s why these annual sacrifices had to be repeated daily!
- “Only” the Son of God; God in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only “Mediator” between God and Man!
- No ‘priest’ no ‘pastor’, no ‘Pope” can bring us to the Holy Eternal God!
- “Jesus”, the perfect “mediator” between God and us, took our sin on Himself, paid the price for our sin, and “reconciled us to God”; we now “rejoice” we are “no longer” God’s “enemies but “friends”!
- Mordecai sends a message to Esther to inform her in detail what is going on! **(V7)**
- Notice how Mordecai uses the worlds “destruction” and “annihilation” to press home the “serious nature” of this edict from the King! **(V7, 8)**
- And the “crunch” comes in Verse 8:  
*“to instruct Esther to go into the King’s presence to “beg” for mercy and plead with him for her people”!*
- Since her parents died, Mordecai has been like a father to her, she always did what he asked her to do!
- But now Mordecai instructs her to go to the King and please for HER PEOPLE! **(V8)**
- Will Esther “acknowledge” that the Jews are “her people”?
- Jews all over the Kingdom are wailing publicly and being identified as Jews!
- Mordecai wants “Esther” to “identify” with the Jews especially when these people are under the edict of “destruction”!
- It was ‘never going’ to be an easy ask!

## Friends:

How do we “react” when we get “bad news”?

- Do we “panic”, or do we “pray”?
- Do we go to God “first” or “last”?
- Prayer is the most tangible expression “of” trust in God!
- “Why” does it “often” take God’s using “drastic” matters to get us to the point of repentance, remorse, dependence, or even wanting to communicate with Him?
- Receiving and Empire – wide “decree” giving those who live in our village “permission” to slaughter each member of my family would certainly “get my attention”!
- The LORD, I believe, would not have to use drastic means to get our attention if we were “committed” to daily waling with Him in “humble” obedience!
- The greatest “gift” of the gospel is that God gives us Himself!
- God “reconciles” us for the “purpose” of a relationship! Losing ‘sight’ of this great grace is always to our “detriment”!
- “Like Mordecai” we should encourage others to “leverage” their positions of “influence” for the “sake of the Kingdom”!
- Mordecai wanted Esther to “intercede” on behalf of all the Jews!
- The time for “secrets” was over!
- “Passivity” was not an option!
- In Verse 11 Esther “wavered at Mordecai’s prompting and “understandably”!
- Esther ‘educated’ Mordecai on royal “protocol”!
- Even though she was Queen, her “access” to the King was restricted!
- The ‘penalty’ for breaking royal protocol was “DEATH”!
- Then Esther reveals that it has been a month since she was summon before Xerxes, which in any other circumstances would probably have been a blessing!
- Esther’s people, the people of God were in big trouble, “but” instead of immediately jumping at the chance to help them, “she hesitated”!
- Esther’s “first” thought was not their deaths but her ‘own’! She was not certain she wanted to take a risk!

- I would be the “last” to throw a stone at Esther!
- Like her, “you and I” may also be hesitant to seize opportunities the LORD ‘entrusts’ to us for His sake!

**Friends:**

You may even be deliberating “right now” about a “specific situation” in your life!

- But “why” was Esther ‘hesitant’?
- Maybe she thought she could ignore the announcement and remain safe in the palace!
- Maybe Esther thought it was not her problem!
- Esther “thought the worse”, and believed the King would not grant her permission to be “in his presence”!
- Esther knew there was no room for “playfulness” in the royal protocol!
- Entering the throne room and asking, “Xerxes did you call me Sweetie?” would bring a swift response: “No kill her”!

**Friends:**

What is “encouraging” to many of us is that her “obedience” was “not” “immediate” and “courageous”!

- “Like us”, Esther may have had a “natural proneness” for seeing difficulties rather than “anticipating” what God could and would do!
- A “wife” once said to her husband who was a pastor:  
*“If you were not in ministry you would be in “insurance” because you can assess all the ways something can go “wrong” in about 5 seconds!”*
- “Examine” our own “hearts”!
- How can I “overcome” having a critical spirit?
- A “critical spirit” is “NOT” difficult to recognize. Someone with a critical spirit is “prone to complaining”, seeing the glass half-empty, sensing failure in others more than in oneself! And of course being “judgmental”! Critical spirits are no fun to be “around”; “neither” are they fun to “possess”!
- “Critical spirits” are destructive, tearing down both the recipient and the giver of the criticisms!
- The apostle Paul said:  
*“If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not “consumed by one another”!”*

(Gal. 5: 14-15)

**Friends:**

Do you have a “critical spirit”? If so, repent of it and ask the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing!

- Perhaps since Esther had not been in the King’s presence for 30 days, she reasoned that she was “not” the right Mediator! **(V11)**
- Maybe you have been there in the past!
- Maybe you are there “now” and are listing all the “reasons” that you are “not” the right person for whatever opportunity God seems to be granting!
- We all tend to set our gaze on our deficiencies or disqualifications “rather” than the Lord’s sufficient grace and empowerment!

**Friends:**

If God “calls” you, He “will” equip you!

- What Esther says makes “perfect sense”!
- But we also know that the fate of the people of God hangs in the balance, so we “hold our breath” as Esther’s “words” are taken to Mordecai!
- One last thing I want to say before going on to Verses 12 to 14 is this:  
*If you are “delaying” obedience out of “fear”, that is actually “disobedience”!*
- Mordecai in Verse 13 sends this reply back to Esther:  
*“Do not think that because you are in the King’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape! **(V14)** 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’s “response” is arguably the “most significant” “message” in the whole book of Esther!
- Esther, the Queen with two names, is going to have to “decide” which identity she will “embrace”!
- Mordecai wants Esther to know that she can’t escape the impending genocide!
- Even in the palace there would be “no” exemptions!
- We “sometimes” have to be extremely forthright in exhorting “one another” to do the “right thing” in God’s eyes!
- Your “best friends” are those who “love you enough” to be genuinely honest with you!
- Let’s “humble ourselves” and “accept” God’s ‘rebuke and chastisement’ often given through other brothers and sisters in Christ!

- Proverbs tells us: “the “wounds” of a friend are trustworthy!”
- “Regardless” of Esther’s actions, Mordecai was “certain” God’s people would be preserved!
- If she “faltered”, it would be to her detriment; but God’s people would be delivered!
- What is “clear” is that even if Esther does “nothing”, something ultimately will be “done” for the good of God’s people!
- Why was Mordecai so “confident” when visible circumstances were so “dire”?
- He “didn’t” have some ‘supernatural vision’ from Heaven but He did have God’s Word, God’s covenant, God’s “promise” to Abraham; “reiterated” to Isaac, Jacob and then all the children of Israel!
- God “promised’ that Abraham’s people will be more numerous than the sand on the seashore or the stars in the sky, and the whole world will be blessed through Abraham!  
(Gen. 12: 1-3)  
(Gen. 15: 1-6)
- If God is to keep His promise then Mordecai believes the Jews “cant” be “annihilated”! This is Mordecai preaching the gospel, that salvation is only found in God’s righteous work! We must believe it! Our faith must be “in God”!  
(Gal. 3:8)
- Verse 14:  
*“Who knows but that you have come to your “royal position” for such a “time” as this?”*
- Maybe the “reason” Vashti defied the King and was dismissed nine years before “didn’t just happen”; “perhaps” the “reason” the King’s advisers “suggested” the beauty contest and Esther “won” wasn’t “just change”; maybe all this happened for a purpose, so that Esther can mediate with the King for the “rescue” of her own people, the people of God!
- Maybe “Esther”, God will use your “courage and faith” as His “instrument” to rescue His people!
- Esther has come to your “royal position” for a “purpose”!
- “Authority and leadership” comes with “responsibility”!
- Esther was “entrusted” with an “opportunity” and with the “obedience” she needed to “give” for the sake of her people!

**Friends:**

We should be asking ourselves:

*“What work has God especially for me to do because He has allowed me to be “alive” at this particular time in history?”*

*(Acts 17:26)*

- God “determines” both when and where we live!
- God is “not less intentional” with “your life” than He was with Esther’s and Mordecai’s!
- And just in case you need a reminder this morning, “today”, “now”, is our “only time” to “make disciples”, because time “decreases” each and every day!

**Friends:**

May our lives be gripped with gospel urgency!

- In the “final verses” we see Esther’s and Mordecai’s “resolve”! **(VV 15-17)**
- For the “first” time in the story, Esther gives an “instruction” to Mordecai!
- We are going to see a remarkable transformation in this pretty young woman, who has been so passive and compliant up until now!
- We are going to see her become a Queen of initiative, courage, faith and wisdom.
- What Esther says to Mordecai expresses first dependence upon God!
- The “instruction” to get God’s people to “fast” for 3 days and nights **(V16)** expresses utter “dependency on God”!
- Esther herself will fast with her domestic staff!
- Then Esther pledges that she will go to the King. This is a moving and courageous “decision”!

*“I will go to the King, even though it’s against the law. And if I perish, I perish!”*

- Of course we don’t use “fasting” to impress God and earn His acceptance! We are “only” made acceptable to God through the work of Jesus; “not” our work!
- Like Esther we can “fast” to express that our confidence and trust are NOT in ourselves BUT in God!
- In fasting we are able to say to God:  
*“We hunger for you God “more” than anything else. We can do without some things but “NOT” without YOU!”*

- So we see Esther shift away from “self-preservation” to be willing to “sacrifice” her life if necessary!

**Friends:**

With each “opportunity” the Lord “gives” us, our responsibility is “obedience”, “not results”!

- “Neither” Esther nor Mordecai knew “how” things would turn out!
- “Abraham” didn’t know how things would turn out when he was “offering Isaac”! He just knows God had asked him to do it!

*(Genesis 22)*

- “Shadrach Meshach and Abednego” didn’t know how it would turn out when they said:  
*“King Nebuchad-Nezzar we don’t need to defend ourselves in this matter. God is able to deliver us from this “blazing furnace”, but even if He doesn’t we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you set up!”*

*(Daniel 3)*

**Friends:**

We live by “faith” not “sight”!

- We don’t “need” full knowledge of the future; “but” what God needs is our faithful “obedience”, and we leave the “results” to Him!
- There has only been “one perfect person” God used in accomplishing His purposes! For the “rest” of His agenda God uses “imperfect” people like “YOU and ME”!
- God uses our daily and ordinary obedience to accomplish His “extraordinary plan”!
- Perhaps you have “concealed” your faith for “far too long” or “compromised” with the world too much!
- Esther and Mordecai provide us with “hope”! We can see what they did was wrong at times “BUT” it didn’t “disqualify” them from being “used by God”!
- So often we are full of fear rather than faith! So often we tend to “hide” our grief and struggles rather than “share” them openly! Only in Jesus are we “safe eternally”! Only in Jesus are we “safe from God’s anger”!
- Esther didn’t perish to save her people BUT “Jesus” did! Let’s sacrifice “ourselves” for Jesus this week!

**Let’s Pray**