

done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

Esther 4:16

- The similarities here between Esther and Jesus are uncanny. Jesus dies on a cross and three days later brings spiritual life to those who know him and love him. Esther calls for three days of prayer and fasting and she too is going to put her life on the line in order to bring life to the condemned Jewish exiles in Xerxes' Kingdom.
- What is God calling us to do at this time, either as an individual or as a church? Has our time to act, like Esther, arrived. Has God been preparing us 'for such a time as this'? Esther 4:14

#### 2.4 What results

- As with all calling Esther has a choice as to whether she is going to respond: 'On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.' Esther 5:1
- What humanly speaking should have failed, succeeds with God: 'When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre.' Esther 5:2. Esther gains the King attention and then invites him and Haman to a banquet she has prepared: "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him." Esther 5:4
- Now for reasons that are not clear, Esther still waits to make her petition, maybe she realised the moment was not quite right and she invites Xerxes and Haman to further banquet the following day: 'let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question.' Esther 5:8
- However come the following day, Esther conducts the seventh banquet mentioned in the Book of Esther and finally delivers her petition: "If I have found favour with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request." Esther 7:3
- Now the tables are turned, Haman's treachery is out in the open. Everything that Haman had planned for Mordecai is now turned on him: Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Hang him on it!" So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.' Esther 7:9-10

#### 2.5 Conclusion

- So what about us? Are we right with God at the moment? How are the relationships with our family, friends and neighbours? Are these relationships healthy, or are we harbouring some racial resentments towards certain people? Can we honestly say that we are 'loving our enemies'?
- Are we like Esther facing a significant meeting this week? Have we sort God's guidance and power through prayer and fasting? Are we trusting God for the solution?
- Has God been preparing us 'for such a time as this' Esther 4:14 and are we ready to step out of comfort zones and trust Him?

#### 3. Questions to consider at home

3.1 Why does Esther petition King Xerxes?

3.2 What was Esther's 'Mission Impossible'?

3.3 How can Esther be sure that this 'Mission Impossible' has come from God?

3.4 What are the similarities between Esther and Jesus?

3.5 Has God been preparing you or your church 'for such a time as this' Esther 4:14?

Matthew Street 9<sup>th</sup> August 2015



## The Parish of Wellow

### Esther 4:4-5:7, 7:1-10 - The queen's petition

#### Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

#### 1. Talk Passage - Esther 4:4-5:7, 7:1-10

4 When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people. 9 Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, 11 "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold sceptre to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king." 12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 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 royal position for such a time as this?" 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." 17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. 2 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre. 3 Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." 4 "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him." 5 "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks." So the king and Haman went to the banquet



Esther had prepared. 6 As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”<sup>7</sup> Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: 8 If the king regards me with favour and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question.”

1 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther, 2 and as they were drinking wine on that second day, the king again asked, “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favour with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. 4 For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.”<sup>5</sup> King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?”<sup>6</sup> Esther said, “The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman.” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. 7 The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realising that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.<sup>8</sup> Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?” As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, “A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.” The king said, “Hang him on it!”<sup>10</sup> So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

## 2. Talk Notes

### 2.1 Introduction

- When was the last time you went to a meeting at which your own future or the future of others was a stake?
- The future of approximately 15 million Jews hang upon the success of Esther's petition to her husband King Xerxes: “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.” Esther 5:3
- Four years has passed since Esther was crowned Queen. She was probably 18 or 19 years old by this stage. Let us consider:
  - i. How has this drastic situation arisen.
  - ii. How do Mordecai, Esther and their fellow Jews react to their potential extinction
  - iii. What results.

### 2.2. How has this situation arisen

- This Jewish genocide has come as a result of rivalry between two court officials which has got out of hand. One of these court officials, Haman was a proud arrogant man, who measured his self worth by how much influence he could exert over other people. He was furious with Mordecai who refused to come under his influence. Mordecai, Esther's uncle, who was a Jewish exile has already thwarted an assassination plot on King Xerxes and correctly comes under the influence of the King's authority.
- Haman, fuelled by his ancestral hatred of the Jews, decides to destroy not only Mordecai but the whole Jewish race. Hatred between the Jews and the Amalekites went deep, in fact this hatred can trace its origins all the way back to Jacob tricking Esau of his birthright.
- Haman successfully hatches a plot not only to be rid of Mordecai but also every Jew in Xerxes Kingdom: “There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best

interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.” Esther 3:8-9

- Hopefully none of us are like Haman, where our jealousy and hatred of an individual and his/her race has got so seriously out of control that we are plotting racial genocide. Jesus tells us to love our enemies. Who are those people who get under our skin? How loving are we being towards them?

### 2.3 How do Mordecai, Esther and their fellow Jews react to their potential extinction.

- How would we react to an edict ordering our destruction: *Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.* Esther 3:13. Would we run around in a panic or trust God for a solution?
- Mordecai, Esther and the many of the Jewish exiles in Xerxes kingdom clearly trust God: ‘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.’ Esther 4:3 They fast and pray for God to intervene in this dire situation trusting Him to save them.
- Mordecai believes that Esther's time has indeed come: ‘And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this’ Esther 4:14. He also puts on the traditional Jewish clothing of mourning, sackcloth, and goes to gain Esther's attention: ‘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. But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it.’ Esther 4:1-2
- Esther was indeed ‘in great distress’ Esther 4:4 to see her uncle dressed in this way so she sends Hathach, one of the King's trusted eunuchs assigned to her to find out why Mordecai is dressed in sackcloth and ‘wailing loudly and bitterly’ Esther 4:1.
- Having gained Esther's attention, Mordecai via Hathach shows Esther a copy of the King's Jewish genocide edict: ‘He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation’ Esther 4:8. Mordecai then begs Esther to perform what he knows will be a mission impossible: ‘to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people’ Esther 4:8.
- Everything about this idea is madness and both Esther and Mordecai know it:
  - Firstly Esther even though she is Xerxes husband simply cannot interrupt him whilst he is conducting affairs of state, to do so courts certain death: “All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. Esther 4:11
  - Secondly, Xerxes has not spoken to her for over thirty days: ‘But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.’ Esther 4:11
- Calling has a Biblical pattern that we see again and again. We see this pattern here again in the Book of Esther: God's calling pattern involves a ‘Mission Impossible’ that will require those involved to rely on God's power and not on their own skills and resources and to trust God as He calls them to operate outside of their comfort zones.
- Esther knows that if this ‘mission impossible’ is going to work she will need God's power to be released which is why she calls the Jews of Susa to three days of prayer and fasting: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is