

Not a Time of Heroes

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[0:00] I want you to just remember back to the first time you went through the gates at secondary school. Can you do that for me? Or if that's too far back, then remember the first time that you started your proper job, right?

The one that you really wanted and that was a little bit scary. Or if you've never had one of those, then remember back to the first time you went to a really big city.

You got off the train or off the tube. Maybe it was London. Remember that feeling. You know, the place that is so big that it could really swallow you whole and spit you out and not even notice the bones.

That place. Remember that feeling. So you're in school, work, and your boss says to you, I know there's an official process to follow, but can you just go around?

Or maybe your teacher says to you, In class today, I would like you to write, Allah is great, 25 times.

[1:12] Or maybe you're at work, and the boss says to you, there's a voluntary pride event going to happen, and you're all expected to attend. You're in the system. Now the system's asking you to do something.

What do you do when you live in a country that makes you sign up to a belief system or a politics that is not the politics of heaven? Sometimes much worse.

I don't know, maybe China springs to mind. Or could we be thankful that we don't live in China? On the other hand, there are things in our country that we are asked to do, say, believe, agree with, support, that are not good and not right.

And we live in a time when God's people are not strong. And when people shout loudly about their rights, at the drop of a hat, we don't have power. Others do.

When should we compromise? When should we hold our ground? There's lots of things happening. I've touched on some of them, didn't I?

[2:15] Why is there a cost of living crisis at the moment? How do we live in such times? Where are the heroes? Especially when it seems like the Lord is looking the other way.

And we're discouraged because so few people seem interested in the good news about Jesus. Or maybe it's more personal. Maybe you're in a situation and you think, am I really still God's child? Does he see me? Can he reach out from wherever he is and touch my life? Does he really act in history to save his people?

These are questions that the Lord answers in the book of Esther. And though we can't see him, the Lord is moving the pieces on the board.

Even through the outrageous appetites of an immoral king. And what does he want from us? He wants us to learn to trust him without seeing him.

[3:22] Let's read from Esther chapter 1. Esther chapter 1.

Esther chapter 1. This is what happened during the time of Xerxes. The Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Kush.

At that time, King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa. And in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials.

The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes and the nobles of the provinces were present. For a full 180 days, he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and splendor and glory of his majesty.

And when these days were over, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days in the enclosed garden of the king's palace for all the people, from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa.

[4:37] The gardens had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry marble, mother of pearl, and other costly stones.

Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality.

By the king's command, each guest was allowed to drink without restriction, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who'd served him, Mechumen, Bitstha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abgatha, Zithar, and Carcas, to bring before him Queen Vashti wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at.

But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

[6:04] Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in the matter of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times and were closest to the king.

The seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti, he asked. She has not obeyed the king of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.

Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king, but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes, for the queen's conduct will become known to all the women.

And so they will all despise their husbands and say, King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come. This very day, the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way.

[7:24] There will be no end of disrespect and discord. Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes.

Also, let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then, when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands from the least to the greatest.

The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice. So the king did as Memucan proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script, and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his household using his native tongue.

Thanks, Lucy. Just a little survey to start. Can you just raise a hand if you have a deep and abiding confidence in our government and an implicit trust in all its institutions?

Just raise a hand. One hand? Anybody? Even the civil servant doesn't raise his hand. Upstate. Upstate.

[8:50] Okay, and now, raise your hand if you get a headache when a politician starts speaking on the television. Okay. We think that's bad. I was reading about the Soviet Empire this week, especially under Lenin and Stalin.

They started by purging the aristocracy, the guys who have all the land and the money. And then they moved on to the middle class. And then it was worse under Stalin because they didn't just purge those guys, they purged the communists who weren't communist enough.

And then they started purging the Jews. And then they started purging the working classes who didn't look happy while they were starving to death. We think, well, thank the Lord that we don't live in a country like that.

But of course, a country like that started off as a country like this. Esther chapter 1 is teaching us that human empires are not safe places.

That's what's going on in the Persian Empire. All empires ultimately seek to control and conform everything to their way of being. Unless they are under the Lord.

[10:09] God tells us that human kingdoms are not safe places. What are they like? Verses 1 to 3. Where we find Xerxes.

Xerxes, who rules 127 provinces, reigns from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa. That's basically a capital encircled by walls. That's the administrative center of the empire. Full of civil servants. What a place to live. Sorry, Ian. And in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. And all the military leaders come as well.

It's everywhere, this empire. It covers the whole known world. Remember that map Ian showed us earlier? Everywhere that was civilized and known apart from Greece. And Greece was next on the list.

Like any empire, it imposes its culture and its language everywhere. And it's not safe to be different. Don't know if you're a Trekkie.

[11:12] If you're not, sorry, but I am. It's like this. We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile. What doesn't feel like we live like that?

And yet, the Persian empire is not so different from our time. Because if you don't assimilate, you stick out. And if you stick out, things can get unpleasant.

Alone, we cannot beat it, can we? Human empires are not safe places. But they are impressive. Verses 4 to 8.

Did you see this? 180 days display of the vast wealth of his kingdom. And he gives a banquet. He feeds everybody. Everybody in the citadel of Susa gets invited. There's enough food and wine for everyone.

You mentioned the coronation. You know what's happening in connection with the coronation? The crown jewels are going on tour. Did you see that? It's a little bit like that. Look at these objects of wealth and power that are doing the rounds.

[12:23] To remind you of who's really in charge here. It's as if that's happening. And the royal garden party. And the proms. And the queen's birthday all at once. That's what's happening in Esther chapter 1.

A huge display. If you're a Disney fan. It's shiny. Really shiny. And it could all be yours.

All you have to do. Is buy in. Come and have a taste. At my table. Says Xerxes. Of everything that the empire has to offer us.

You can't beat us. Remember we established that already. So join us. Human empires are not safe places.

And that comes through very clearly in the next verses. Doesn't it? I think we're going to read to them to 11. What happens? Here is the ugly side of Xerxes. He decides to wheel out Vashti.

[13:25] The trophy wife. And he puts her on display. He wants to parade her about. Like property. He's saying my trophy is better than all of your trophies.

your trophies. Just look and see. There's degrading posturing, isn't it, by a man who's drunk, not just on wine, but on power. And we want to say, where is the hero who will stop this kind of thing? Where is God? That's what the story is driving us to ask. Human empires are not safe places.

Thankfully, they are ultimately ridiculous, as we see in the next verses, 12 to 22. What happens?

Xerxes, the great Xerxes, sends his command, and he sends his agents to enforce his command, and Vashti says, not a rhetorical question, what does Vashti say? She says no. What's trending on Twitter that day? Vashti said no. Egg on the imperial face. Resistance, not futile. It gets more ridiculous, because what is Xerxes' solution to the problem that he has created between himself and his queen? He asks his advisors. A bit of shred of dignity left. I have advisors. Advisors, tell me what to do. His solution is a new law. Can you believe it? I'll make a new law, a law that says all women must obey their husbands, and all children must do their homework, and all pigs must fly. It's ridiculous, isn't it? How could you possibly enforce it? Knock on the door every month, excuse me, madam. Have you been obeying your husband this week? All the decree does is advertise the fact that the king can't run his own household. That's the big news that's spread throughout the kingdom. You knew it was coming. The emperor has no clothes, and now the entire empire can see it. And the reason that human empires ultimately are ridiculous, and we can laugh at them as God's people, is because no matter what they do, and no matter how much power they have, they cannot change a single human heart. Xerxes cannot reshape Vashti's will. The only person who can change a heart and reshape a will is the Lord. And we can point out that the emperor has no clothes, because even if it seems that the wicked flourish, in the words of the Bible, we know better,

don't we?

Psalms 92, verses 6 to 8. Senseless people do not know, and fools do not understand, that though the wicked spring up like grass, and all evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed forever. But you, Lord, are forever exalted.

Human empires are not safe places. Why? Because human empires are ultimately expressions of the human heart, aren't they? And unless there is accountability to someone or something higher, then in the human empire, might is right.

[17 : 16] And if we have anything better in our country, then it's because of God's mercy and grace, and his ways being followed to some extent. And we can be thankful that that is still true to some extent in our country. Human empires are not safe, but God's kingdom is not like this. How do we know that?

Well, we know that because of how our king treats his bride. We've seen Xerxes and Vashti, haven't we? Xerxes and Vashti are representative in some way as well. We can see that because of the command that gets issued after the debacle, right? Because the advisors say, this will have implications for everybody in your empire. So they are representative, and for us, they're representative for humanity.

Do you remember how God describes marriage once humanity had ruined it after the fall? Genesis 3:16, the man, he will rule over you. Well, that's Xerxes to a T, isn't it?

He domineers. He rules for his own selfish sake. And if you read the edict that he issues afterwards, it's almost like you're reading Genesis 3, the description of how marriage is supposed to work. Let every man be ruler in his own household. We have a better king. Jesus has everything that Xerxes has, but more, doesn't he? Power, glory, riches at his disposal, banquets that he invites us to, ultimate authority, but he has them forever.

[18 : 58] More importantly, Jesus uses his authority, all that he has been given, by sacrificing himself for his wife.

He gives himself up for his representative partner, the church, his people. And that's the complete opposite to Xerxes, and that's how we know that God's kingdom, as opposed to human kingdoms, is safe.

That is the place that we belong. This is the kind of leadership that builds real community. That is where we can flourish, no matter who we are.

But Esther also shows us that we will have to wait. It doesn't happen straight away, does it? And in the meantime, there are all kinds of empires, as we kind of talked about at the beginning, in our lives.

The school, the office, the playground, Upper Hale, maybe even our homes. If you're a teen and you're at school, the LGBTQIA club, protected, privileged, they're the guys you can't touch.

[20 : 22] All we have to do, this is a temptation, is identify with them, and you benefit from all of those privileges and protections. Now, like we said when we were talking about this topic, there is a sense in which we must care for and protect those who have been marginalized and treated badly.

So I'm not arguing with that. On the other hand, unless God has broken into any of those kingdoms that we are talking about, they are not eternally safe.

The only place that is safe is God's kingdom. But the temptation in the meantime is to blend in, isn't it? To believe I'm safer if I'm in that club.

To put your hope in that. And the message of Esther, in part at least, is don't be assimilated and don't despair.

Wake up in the morning and say to yourself, I am a citizen of God's kingdom. I'm adopted by him. I'm going to be with him in glory forever. That is who I am and where I belong.

[21 : 36] But if human empires are not safe places, as we can see, then surely, surely there's a hero to help us. Someone like Daniel, maybe? The other empire that we meet in the Old Testament, every story needs a hero, right?

Let's read Esther 2 and find out where the heroes are. I hope my second reader... Yes, Shilpa, thank you. Page 502.

Later, when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her.

Then the king's personal attendants proposed, Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of Israel to bring all these beautiful

young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa.

Let them be placed under the care of Haggai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of women. And let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.

[22 : 57] This advice appealed to the king and he followed it. Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin named Mordecai, son of Jair, the son of Shammai, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Among those taken captive with Jehoiachin, king of Judah. Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother.

This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Haggai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Haggai, who had charge of the harem.

She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately, he provided her with her beauty, treatments, and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants, selected from the king's palace, and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

[24 : 24] Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day, he walked to and fro near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

Before a young woman's turn came to go into King Xerxes, she had to complete 12 months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

And this is how she would go to the king. Anything she wanted was given to her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. In the evening, she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines.

She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

When the turn came for Esther, the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle, Abihel, to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Haggai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the harem, suggested.

And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month. the month of Tebeth in the seventh year of his reign.

[26 : 00] Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

Mordecai uncovers conspiracy. That's the heading. When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, but Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Biktana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king. Giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles.

[27 : 27] All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king. Thank you, Shilpa.

I wonder who your hero is. I asked once somebody, who's your heroine? And somebody said, yeah, no, it's a bit of a difficult word to use because of the other meaning.

So now I just say, who's your hero? But I do mean man or woman. Mine used to be a guy called Ravi Zacharias until he was found out.

Mark Driscoll, anybody? See, now I don't have human heroes anymore because the trouble with human heroes is they all have feet of clay, to use a Bible expression.

Just Jesus, that's who we need. Esther chapter two shows us that there are no human heroes. But it gives us glimpses of hope and of God's plan and it points us to who the real hero is.

[28:34] Let's think about Xerxes. He's certainly no hero, is he? How is he going to find his better queen? Better than Vashti? So better means they'll do what they're told.

More compliant. So you want somebody that's more compliant. How are we going to find them? A character assessment maybe? An interview? No.

Xerxes is going on physical attributes. It needs to be young, unmarried, and good looking. I don't know how you deduce whether someone's compliant from those characteristics, but that's what Xerxes is going for. And of course, the sad thing is this is not just a beauty pageant, which in some ways would be bad enough.

This is about who pleases Xerxes most in bed. It's barbaric, isn't it? And the end is either lifelong seclusion and celibacy in the king's harem, or a crown.

But the crown is pretty risky, as we've already seen with Vashti, isn't it? He's no hero. But it's not just women who are in danger in this particular human empire.

[29:51] What about the men who hope to marry these women who were gathered from the empire under the king's command to be interviewed by him? What about the 500 men that history tells us were castrated every year to go into the king's service as eunuchs, also mentioned in our account?

See, in this empire, everybody is in danger of abuse and objectification. And sadly, it doesn't take a lot of thought today to think about the parallels in our society.

No, Xerxes is no hero. What about God's people? Surely, there's a good example to follow among God's people. Let's find out. Verses 5 to 7, we finally meet them, don't we?

After the plan has been set up to collect all these women together, we're introduced to Mordecai, Mordecai the Jew. So when the word Jew appears in Esther, what we're supposed to hear is member of God's people.

Here's Mordecai the Jew. Who is he? He is a fourth generation exile. He lives in the Persian empire.

[31:12] He's a civil servant almost certainly in the administration. And there's Hadassah who is an orphan girl. Doesn't look very impressive, does it?

That's what the New Testament says that we are, of course. We are foreigners and strangers living in a hostile culture. And what is life like for them?

Let's look at verse 7. Verse 7 you notice that Hadassah isn't her only name, but she is also known as Esther. Why does the author mention that?

He mentions that because he wants to illustrate the fact that Esther and Hadassah and Mordecai live in two different worlds. They live in the Jewish world by their Jewish name and they live in the Persian world by their Persian name.

And as you will know if you live in two worlds, that is not easy. There is a tension there, isn't there? it is hard to know who you are.

[32:27] We feel that tension, the tension between who we know we are, we're adopted by God, forgiven citizens of heaven, and on the other hand, what the world expects us to be.

Have you ever felt that tension? A bit like Stretch Armstrong up there. Don't know if you guys have ever had that toy. Some days, being pulled apart.

No human heroes. God's people are vulnerable. What happens when the king's emissary knocks on the door at Mordecai's house?

Is there an angel there with a sword to stop them? No. Mordecai's powerless against the powers of his day, isn't he? There's a knock on the door, Esther is taken, no permission is needed, resistance is futile.

There are things in the world that we don't control and we are not safe from, even as God's people, and we need to be real about that. No human heroes.

[33:38] But as we read on, thinking particularly verses 9 to 18 here, we learn what Esther and Mordecai do in response to these events.

Does Esther struggle valiantly? Does she resist? Could she have? She does as she's told, doesn't she?

She goes, and then she seeks to win favor, first with a beautician, then with everybody, finally with a king. Could she have done otherwise? We don't know.

Not exactly martyr material though. And we're told, on Mordecai's orders, that they don't reveal to anybody their real names.

The fact that they are part of God's people. Secret identities, religion privatized, Christ, it's exactly what the world would have us do, isn't it?

[34:40] I'm very happy for you. Keep it to yourself. Should they have gone public? There was definitely anti-Semitism at that time.

Why was the family even there? If you know your Bible history, you'll know that the king before Xerxes had given the Jews a free pass to go home. time. So why is Mordecai here?

Why is Esther in this position at all? They could have returned to Jerusalem. Compromise. And of course, a degree of coercion.

Are they wrong? Are they right? Actually, that isn't the question that this book is interested in. Were you wrong?

Were you right when you did that thing that maybe felt like compromise, but you were a bit forced?

Isn't the question that Esther is interested in. The right question is, where is the hero who won't compromise and who will put right all of these wrongs?

[35:50] There's no human heroes. Finally, we see that actually God's people aren't rewarded even when they do do the right thing. verses 19 to 23.

Do you catch what happened at the end there? Mordecai is sitting at the king's gate because he wants news of Esther, and he overhears two people plotting against Xerxes.

And the Old Testament command to God's people in exile was seek the good of the city where you live. God's people will be so we can be charitable and say Mordecai was following that instruction and he was being loyal to the king, even the peace of work king that he had.

And he speaks up and the king is saved and some bureaucrat makes a note and nothing else happens. shouldn't expect to be treated with gratitude when we do what is right in a human empire. That's not how the Lord was treated. No human heroes. No human heroes but hints of hope.

[37:02] Where are the hints of hope? God has shown us that he's in control of the story, hasn't he? And he has shared something of the outline of his plan. If you're reading this, questions must be occurring to you.

You must be thinking, who put this scheme into the heads of the advisors of the king that meant that Esther was in the palace? Who has the power to make sure that somebody is born beautiful?

Who made sure that Esther gained favor? First with the beautician, then with everyone she met, and finally with the king himself. So all the other girls were beautiful too, otherwise they wouldn't have been there.

Who ensured that Mordecai was sitting at the gate at just the right time to overhear the plot? See, God, though we don't see him, is moving the pieces on the board.

He is the teller of the story. He is the great narrator. He is the hero. It's like we have the Marauder's Map, which doesn't show up very well on that, but hopefully shows up a little bit on that.

[38:10] Harry Potter fans will recognize this. There's a map that the hero got given. What can you see on the map? You can see other people moving around the castle.

You can't move them yourself, but you can see the pieces moving on the board, and that's what the Lord has done for us in Scripture. He's given us the Marauder's Map. We don't control the moving pieces, but we see enough to stay out of trouble, be in the right place at the right time.

We know what bad leadership looks like. We know what right thinking looks like, because he's told us. There are two elements of God's plan that are hinted at as well.

Did you notice that adoption is mentioned twice, quite deliberately? First, it's explained, Esther had been adopted by Mordecai because her father and mother was dead.

Then, when Esther is mentioned again, she does again mention that she's adopted. Esther belonged because she was chosen by Mordecai.

[39:25] In reality, she would have been nothing but a burden to Mordecai, another mouth to feed, and he would have had to find money from somewhere for her wedding as well. She would have brought nothing particularly to the family, but Mordecai adopts her at cost.

The Lord does the same for us. This is not the complete story, but it's just a little shadow of how the Lord works. Because he adopts, we know who we are.

We know where we belong, and we are safe. That is the big question for Esther and for Mordecai and for us. What, in the end, is going to determine our identity and our community and our destiny?

Will it be our Persian name? Will it be our Jewish name? Will it be the earthly empire that shines like gold?

Or will it be God's empire that is like a rolling mountain? Remember Daniel and his dream? Do we believe that God can save his people from being assimilated or annihilated, as we'll see later?

[40:43] Or not? What about you? Where do you belong? Are you safe in God's family? Can you laugh at the empire and its ridiculous moves?

things? We see also, or begin to see at least, that through the weak and powerless, that's how God works salvation. Esther the orphan, Mordecai the man who can't even say that he's a follower of the Lord.

That's how the Lord works. And it's kind of hinted at here, because Mordecai saves the king, doesn't he? He saves the king, and Xerxes doesn't even recognize it.

Maybe you're Xerxes today. The Lord has worked salvation for you, even for people like this unworthy king Xerxes, through weakness and vulnerability like Mordecai and Esther.

That's how he works. And there's a word for that, isn't there? When God gives undeserved kindness by adopting sinners, saving them, even though they are ungrateful, the word for that is grace.

[42:01] And it begins to shine through here, even when God seems absent. Too often, I think, as Christians, we judge what God is doing by what we can see.

And we make the mistake that we see everything. And that's exactly what Adam and Eve did in the garden. That's the human problem. We can see all possible outcomes and we know everything that's going to happen and therefore we know what God should be doing in our lives right now.

And Esther shows us that we can't see it all. And therefore we will make mistakes, just like Mordecai and Esther did. And yet that doesn't stop God from achieving his aims.

So what do we do in those situations that we've discussed? Well, you recognize that you are living in the tension that Esther and Mordecai lived in. And you do your best according to your conscience, God's word, and his Holy Spirit.

And you trust that God is at work, that he is bigger than you and your mistakes. And you remember that you are not the hero. You remember that you are adopted.

[43:19] And that your salvation is written in God's records, in the annals of the king, in his presence, to use the words of Esther. And you wait. And you remember Jesus' words.

Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed. Amen. Amen.