

The Star and the self-absorbed narcissist

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 July 2021

Preacher: Mark Rayfield

[0 : 00] So, first of all, recounting Steve's talk from last week, a few soundbites that Steve helpfully gave.

I like your rhetoric, by the way, Steve, where you told the story again. That's very helpful. So he said pampered girl to strong woman. I like that one.

Queen in name to queen in truth. She puts her line on life on the line. So she foreshadows Christ in that regard.

Concubine to queen. We saw that. She puts her comforts aside. And I like your phrase, Steve, the battle is on. The battle is on. And it is battle, isn't it? Between good and evil, between God's kingdom and the kingdom of Satan.

And even though God's not explicitly mentioned in the text, he's behind all these things. And we do see Satan at work as well, really.

[1 : 08] And the master player is at work. The master player being Esther, Queen Esther.

So that was last week. Some of Steve's soundbites. So my talk tonight is the star and the self-absorbed narcissist.

The star and the self-absorbed narcissist. Episode five, chapter five, the best. And there you can see the beautiful polka-trudinous Queen Esther.

And below the self-absorbed narcissist, Haman. So it's a chapter of two parts, really, as we just read.

So first of all, the star player. I say the star player because Esther in the Persian language means star. And she is the star. Verses one to seven.

[2 : 14] So who's in control? Sorry, that's bad English. My typo there. Who is control of Westminster, the Kremlin, the Pentagon, China?

It's a good question to ask, isn't it? Who's in charge of the world, the world's affairs? Remember, this text is from when the Persian Empire was the only big empire around.

And for us, we sort of ask that question, don't we?

Who's in charge of our nation? Who's in charge of the world? And the camera here is still in the citadel in Susa. The pace has slowed down.

There have been many years that have rolled on and on. And now we're sort of honing in to what's happening in the most important place in the empire, in Susa, where the king lives, where the queen lives and where the top officials live.

[3 : 23] And we have another climax in the narrative, another cliffhanger. Esther, what is going to happen to God's instrument, God's deliverer, Esther, the star? It seems like a 50-50, doesn't it?

Is she going to live or is she going to die? And if she dies, the people die. So Esther has fasted, as well as the people dispersed in the empire and perhaps prayed.

It doesn't say that actually Esther prayed, but normally fasting and prayer go together. So we can presume that there was prayer as well, as God's people were in imminent danger of annihilation.

Will God answer and save his people from annihilation? This is a massive moment. The tension is immense. Can you imagine living in that scenario as a Jew, knowing that you might not live, all your people might be wiped out?

So all the people's hopes of being saved are in this vital meeting of Esther seeing the king.

[4 : 54] What's going to happen? Is she going to be received and is there going to be mercy? And remember that she hasn't been called in to the king for 30 days.

So from her point of view, perhaps the king has taken umbrage with her, disfavor. So in some ways, perhaps it doesn't look good for the queen, Queen Esther, God's deliverer.

What's going to happen? And in verse one, we see she puts on her royal robes, not a seductive dress that perhaps one would wear for the king.

How will this capricious tyrant react to God's deliverer? Yes. He sees her and he's pleased with her. He finds she finds favor in verse two. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the golden scepter.

[6:07] Whoo. Everyone's relieved. Can you imagine the partying if we're going to be a lot of partying tonight if England win? Can you imagine the Jews partying?

They've realized. Yeah. Bit of a jig. Thanks, Phil. They've been saved. Esther. Esther's done it. Actually, God's done it.

And Esther must have been mightily relieved. Her life is spared. And the scepter is offered. And sure enough, as Steve would say in his rhetoric, she sure is going to touch that scepter.

Clemency has been offered and she accepts. Amen. And isn't this like God's favor to us? He reaches out to us like that scepter.

The king offers his grace and mercy. And. We don't deserve it. But we are touched by this.

[7:12] His scepter of love. And we are punished. Brothers and sisters. It's very similar. We are in a similar position that we've been let off, as it were. Amen.

And in verse three. You see that. The king calls her Queen Esther for the first time.

What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? She is his royal consort. And ironically, now she is calling the shots.

Do you see that? Delicious irony. A Jew is dictating what's happening in the palace. She's in charge, actually. Not this King Xerxes nor Haman.

What is your request? Even half the kingdom will be given to you. Actually, God is really in charge behind all these things.

[8:17] In his providence. He's moving the hearts and strings of the king and Haman and the people. The star player.

And this. This this refrain in verse six. Even half the kingdom will be given to you. It's there in verse six. It's mentioned twice.

You notice that. Also. I think in verse eight as well. I can't see it now.

Oh. Yeah. In verse six. There's another. Twice it said. Apparently this is not literal. But the king is saying, hey, Esther, I'm in a good mood.

He would never give half the kingdom to Esther. I mean, she wouldn't ask for half the kingdom, would she? To be honest. So I guess it's a bit like when we say, yeah, I'll do anything for you.

[9:27] Go on. You say it and I'll do it. Not a problem. Yeah, it's not literal. And interesting in Mark's gospel, when Herod speaks to, I think it's Salome.

When. What's the name? It's Herodias. His daughter, I think, is dances for Herod. He says the same because he's delighted with this lady.

And he says, ask of me and I'll do anything you want. He doesn't actually mean it. He's so pleased with her. He's in a great mood. So in verse four, we see that she invites the king to a banquet.

She has prepared for him. So. She's already made plans for this. So. Most probably she was confident that God would intervene.

An act. And my question is, why does she invite Haman, the Jew hater of all people? It seems that she has a plan.

[10:38] Why she's invited Haman to this banquet. And we see more wine. In verse six.

And the king asked, come on, Esther, what do you want? I'll give it to you. And interestingly, she says, no, no. No, wait.

I won't tell you now. Come back tomorrow. And I'll tell you. Why does she wait? Another interesting question. It seems like she's a shrewd lady.

Toying with the emperor, emperor of the known world. She's calling the shots. And I think for us, we need to be shrewd as believers.

In Ecclesiastes, it says there's a time to speak and a time to refrain from speaking. So we need wisdom daily, don't we? Some of us are better than others.

[11:39] Some of us tend to put our foot in it sometimes. I've learned not to blurt out what I think once sometimes. I'm learning. And it seems as though she's waiting for the best time.

It's not easy. I think it's been nine years she's perhaps waited for this moment. And for us, sometimes we need to earn the respect, don't we?

To be able to witness. Rachel was talking about a friend, Mira, through the school connection. And she's had to sort of earn the right to witness to Mira.

And she has witnessed. But she had to build up that friendship for years. And then she had the opportunity that she earned that respect. So it seems like similar to this situation.

Do you notice there was a lot of pleasing in this chapter? Esther pleases the king a lot. It rings a bell. This is my son of whom I love.

[12:48] With you I am well pleased. Mark chapter 1. When Jesus is baptized. God the father says to the son, I'm well pleased with you.

And in Luke 2.52. Remember when Jesus is preaching in the temple as a young boy. It says Jesus grew in favor with God and man.

Interestingly, with men as well. And I think that's true. We can grow in favor with man. Some people do reject us and think we're crazy.

Sneer at us. But there are people that see our lives. And grow in favor with us. And see the difference that Christ makes.

And we have the chance to witness. A bit like Esther. So let's move on in the text. Verses 9 to 14.

[13:47] The self-absorbed narcissist. Haman. So he enters the stage. He's in a jovial mood in verse 9.

Happy in high spirits. After these banquets. With the king and the queen. His ego has enlarged even more. As we'll see. But Mordecai is a thorn in his self-centered side.

What's going to be done with this Mordecai. This Jew who doesn't respect me. He doesn't kowtow to Haman. In his presence.

And neither trembles. In verse 9. Neither rose or showed fear in his presence. And this enrages Haman.

But he manages somehow to restrain himself. The Lord is obviously behind this. And then he boasts about himself to his wife.

[14:57] This is Haman. And friends about his wealth. His sons. His family. And his status above others. Did you see that? In verse 11. How the king had elevated.

Honored him. And elevated him above the other nobles and officials. He really thinks he's the bee's knees. Doesn't he? Haman.

I think this is deluded self-grandeur. Often people. I think in this position. That have so much. Think.

They're just amazing. The world revolves around them. I was reading a quote in my magazine from Sarah Vine. Sadly.

Sarah Vine. She was the. Perhaps that is the wife. Michael Gove. They're getting divorced. Sadly. But this is what she says.

[15:56] About. Yeah. Michael Gove. The problem with the wife. Who has known you since.

Way before you were king of the world. Is that she sees through your facade. She knows that deep down inside. You are not the master of the universe. That you purport to be.

That's quite interesting. I guess politicians and influential people. Think they are the bee's knees. But actually. They're not.

They're not. And it's interesting. Isn't it? The. It's laughable. Really. In verse 12. I'm the only person. Esther invited.

Wow. I'm so special. Well. Heyman mate. I don't think. That's what Esther thought. You see that in verse 12.

[16:57] She probably didn't really want him there. Perhaps it was her plan to inflate. He's already massive ego. So we can laugh at verse 12 guys.

And as we'll see later. Next chapter next week. His ego is going to be deflated big time.

But he can't stand. But he can't stand Mordecai. What's to be done with him. Verse 13. Well impale him.

On an ostentatious pole. 23 meters high. Can you imagine that? I think that's the size of a house. Perhaps even taller.

I'm not very good at my calculations. And the pole is as big as Heyman's self-importance. Isn't it? It's just ridiculous.

[18:01] How big this is. How tall it is. Surely the king will say yes to you Heyman. Then it will be well. You'll feel much better for the evening toiree.

Oh no. Esther's plan might be in jeopardy. If Mordecai is killed before the second feast. So concluding thoughts. Imagine if the king. Hadn't offered clemency to Esther. The Jewish people. Would have been exterminated. Terminated. Abraham's seed. Would have perished. No Messiah. No hope for humanity. No church. No Christians. How sad it would have been. But that didn't happen.

And. We can praise God tonight. For his master plan. Through Esther. And through Christ. We have a banquet.

[19 : 05] To celebrate. To go to. That we're looking forward to. Another. Another. Thought is egos. Overflattered entitlements.

It's easy to laugh at. Heyman. At his massive ego. But. I think if we're honest. We are. We can just be. The same. And we can. Have.

Big egos. No matter. Who we are. Where we are. We have to be careful. I think. Of. Of that. And. We need.

Humility. I think. The boldness of Esther. Comes through here. She's a great role model. She counted the cost. We saw that last week. And this week.

She put a neck out. For. For her people. And let's put our necks out. For Christ. We can pray for the courage. Of Esther.

[20 : 02] Willing to sacrifice. Her life for the people. She's a great role model. And the bigger. Esther is Christ. Isn't it? He knew.

He wouldn't be spared. Esther was spared. He wasn't. He was sacrificed. For his people. For us. We can praise him tonight. He is the real star. Of the show. For our father.

Forgive them. For they don't. Do not know. What they are doing. What compassion. What mercy. He had. Even for those. That hated him. And we know.

Who's really in charge. Of Westminster. Don't we. Brothers and sisters. Who's in charge. Of the world. It's not fate. Apparently. In this empire. Fate.

Was the. The belief. Que sera. Sera. Whatever will be. Luck. But no. That's not true. God is pulling. The heartstrings.

[20 : 58] Of humanity. He's dictating. Things. And we can be. Comforted. With that. Amen. So. Hopefully.

That's encouraging. For you. This evening. And my question. Is what are your thoughts. So. I open the floor up. And it'll be good to hear. From your. Your views.

And be good to turn those. Into prayer. I have. A thought. About. Haman. He.

In some ways. I think he's sort of. Put up as a phantom. I think he seems. Comical. But. Perhaps. We should. I mean.

As you've been. Describing him. This. This evening. He's a horrible. Person. And. I've just. Been thinking. That his. His significance.

[21 : 54] In. In history. I mean. Pardon the illusion. But. But should we think of him. As being like Hitler. Actually. You know. A terrible. Terrible.

Figure. Capable of doing. Terrible. Terrible. Things. And. That that's. That's the character. Who. Who we've got. Described here. There's some sort of analysis.

Of his. The way he thinks. The way he acts. And. Of course. If he was as. Sinister as that. It makes Esther's. Invitation to him.

All the more courageous. Really. Doesn't it. She's sort of. Really. Playing with fire. In. In. Inviting him. But I don't know. What other people. Think about that. Yeah.

That's very helpful. Phil. I think. I think you're right there. In. In. Haman's description. He is that. But also. When. When. When.

[22 : 47] When. His wife. And the other people. Suggested. This grotesque. Hold to be put up to. Get rid of. Mordecai. He.

He. He. He. He. He. He. He was. Weak enough. And miserable. Enough. To do it. You know. So. He was being. Fed. As well. As. His own ideas. He was being.

Fed. All this. Horrendous things. And he was. Taking it on. As some sort of. Glory. That he. Seems quite pliable. Yeah. Very pliable. It's going to be a glorious thing.

You know. Oh. God. So. They were fluttering. His. Fluttering his. Ego.

Ego. Yeah. Yeah. That. Another part of the narrative. Isn't it? That he.

[23 : 42] Just gets. Inflated. By. By all this. And. Indeed. It's part of the narrative. That his family. Are involved. In his. His. Plotting. Because they. Come a cropper later in the story as well.

So we need to. But. The difference is. Of course. The way Esther. To use. Since it's a football. Analogy. The way Esther. Keeps her eyes on the ball. Doesn't she? I mean. She. Didn't actually have known.

What was going to happen. That night. Yeah. For some reason. She knew. That it wasn't the right moment. You could easily. Have been swayed. By. When's X. He said. I'll give you half my kingdom. She could have.

Said. Oh. What should I ask for? Well. But. What's swayed? She keeps. She keeps her eye on the ball. On the. On the prize. What she's there. She knows what she's about.

And. So. Yet. Wait. And as you say. Tells him to wait. She. and then he got into business with this sleepless night that Xerxes says something else that's interesting to me is that Haman um no not Haman who am I talking about yeah Haman he he was totally unaware completely unaware of how evil and horrible he was there was no remorse in him there was no it was just ego ego ego ego there was nothing you know we all have some good and bad in us don't we but he seemed to have no no good yeah it's hard to believe isn't it um how inflated his ego was um yeah he might have had a disorder mightn't he uh sort of yeah uh but is that letting him left are we letting him off by saying that true yeah that might be the case yeah I mean it's

[25 : 48] I'm just thinking about our politicians thinking about Matt Hancock and how he felt that he could get away with something that he he knew he was telling other people that they shouldn't do so he must have had some sort of thing going on in his head to say I'm so special it's okay for me and I wonder whether this is something that power does I mean clearly Haman is filled with power filled with a sense of power sense of his importance and just how deceptive that is I suppose flip it around how important it is you you you