

# The Reluctant Convert

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, your word is going to take us into some hard places for Christians and non-Christians today. But Father, we know that every word that you say to us in your holy word, it's not meant to terrify us or belittle us or push us away, but every word that you write, you've had written in your word, Father, is meant to draw us to yourself.
- That even when you confront us, you confront so that we will connect with you. So we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would gently but deeply come into our hearts to quiet and still our hearts and fan into flame a great longing and yearning to know you and to trust you, to find our identity and our purpose in you.
- And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. Please be seated. So we're going to be looking at Esther 4, if you want to try to start to find that in your Bible.
- But I have to give you all a bit of a warning this morning, especially if you're a guest here. The text today is going to force us to talk about divine judgment.
- And that's the text is going to talk about the fact that human beings are under God's judgment. And let me tell you, all of the experts on church growth tell you not to talk about things like this on a Sunday morning in a church in Canada, because nobody anymore becomes a Christian as a result of being reminded about the judgment of God, a judgment of God that goes on beyond death.
- [ 1 : 3 4 ]     But one of the things that we do at this church, and if you're here today as a guest or as a seeker or as a skeptic, you should be actually very happy that one of the things that we do here is that we preach through whole books of the Bible.
- We do that mainly because they're written as books, not as a series of quotes, but it's a book. And the other thing is, you don't have to worry that if you're considering the Christian faith, or even if you're mocking the Christian faith, or if you weren't interested in the Christian faith before, but you're here and so you're curious to see what I'm going to say, we're not like a salesman who tries to get you to buy something and then hopes you don't read the fine print.
- Like we want you to read the fine print. And that's why we go through books of the Bible. There's not going to be any surprises to you if you end up becoming a Christian, and I hope you will become a Christian.
- And for us who are Christians, it's good to know the fine print. And so we're going to look at Esther 4. And we've been going through the book of Esther. So this is, in a sense, episode 5.
- If you think of the, even though it's chapter 4, it's episode 5. It's the middle episode of a nine-episode series on Netflix, so to speak. And what's just happened in the previous episode, and I'll catch up with some of the other elements as we go along, what's just happened in the previous episode, is that a man by the name of Haman has reached the pinnacle of power in the Persian Empire.
- [ 3 : 0 1 ]     Under King Xerxes, the emperor, he is the next most important and powerful person in the entire emperor, just underneath him. And it turns out that Haman is an anti-Semite.

He hates Jewish people. And he's triggered by something that happens to give him an excuse to unleash his rage against the Jewish people to come up with a plan of genocide.

And he comes up with a plan to make sure that every Jewish person in the empire, every man and woman, every old and young, even the children and babies, that every single one of them will be killed.

And he's come up with a plan that's going to do two types of things. He's going to both mobilize the power of the state so that the governors and the military and whatever they have, like the police and the judges, that the entire apparatus of the state is going to be geared on a particular day in 11 months' time to kill every Jew.

And the other thing that he's done is that he's mobilized the population. He's basically said, And everybody who's not Jewish in Persia has permission to kill a Jewish person on that day, that we encourage you to do that.

[ 4 : 13 ] And not only should you kill them, after you've killed them, take what they own that you like. And it's a very, very telling moment. You know, it's one of those things which is just psychologically so true that after Haman has convinced the king to do this, and after he's approved the plan, and after he's had all the plan, because he's a good bureaucrat, I'm not putting down bureaucrats, I'm not, good business person as well, whatever, I'll just be equal here about all that, and he makes sure all the paperwork's right.

And after he's got all the paperwork right, he puts his stamp on it, and after he gets the last stamp on all of the paperwork so that the whole thing can begin, he says to the king, Boy, it's time to have a beer, don't you think?

Yeah, I'd love to have a beer. And that's how it ends. The order to kill all the Jews goes out. And Haman and the king go off to have some beer, or wine, or scotch, or whatever it is that they drink.

I don't know what they would have drank back then. And then what happens next? Well, that's where our story keeps up. The next day. Verse 1. Then Mordecai learned all that had been done.

And Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

[ 5 : 34 ] I'm just sort of paused there for a second. One of the things to catch up on is that the story begins when we meet Mordecai, we discover that he's a Jewish man who's not living as a Jewish man, but living as a Persian.

Mordecai actually means worshipper of Marduk, which was a Babylonian deity. And so he had a Persian name or like a pagan name. He lived like a pagan, dressed like a pagan, ate like a pagan, looked like a pagan.

He was a pagan. And several episodes ago, we see the conversion of Mordecai, who goes from being a man who lives like a pagan, a pagan, to saying, I am now part of God's covenant people.

It's his conversion. And here we see, so he is a Jewish man, even though he doesn't have, I mean, now people think of it as a Jewish name, but at the time it wasn't a Jewish name. And he hears of what's going on, and he just reacts with the deepest grief.

He's just been told that the power of the state and all of his neighbors have been turned against him and that 11 months they have permission to kill him and steal everything that he has.

[ 6 : 42 ] And so, you know, one of the things which is so wonderful about the Bible, sometimes I have to talk to couples about this because there's a tragedy.

I remember there was a couple quite a few years ago, and they, very tragic, they lost a child. And the husband and the wife mourned and grieved very differently. The woman, everything that was going on inside of her was outside.

She would cry and sob and just be as public as possible about it. And the guy, I mean, this is almost like a bit of a stereotype, but the guy was a stoic guy.

He was a very, very, very introverted man, and he dealt with it all introvertedly. He hardly ever seemed to cry. And she kept worrying that he wasn't grieving the right way. And I had to tell her, you know, the Bible doesn't tell us one way to grieve.

We all grieve differently. And I had no reason to doubt that he was grieving. And it's a neat thing here. The Bible's not saying that if you have something terrible happen to you, what you need to do is tear your clothes, wear sackcloth, put on ashes on your head, and go screaming out into the street and scream and scream and scream.

[ 7 : 52 ] It's not telling you that, but, you know, if that's how you grieve, that's fine. And that was a very, that's, for that time, that's how people grieved, actually. Whether you're Jewish or pagan, that was how people grieved. And they would have all known, everybody in the town would have known.

By now they would have known that Mordecai was Jewish. They would have known why he was grieving. And he was grieving. Verse 2. So he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, just the entrance, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.

And just a little bit of a thing here. The king's gate is actually like a building. It's not like a gate that you just walk, like that you think, why, why, he doesn't want to open the gate and go through?

Like, it's not a garden gate. It's actually the name of a very large building, probably around this size, actually, where the king's business was done. So it would be just as if, if one of you happened to grieve by yelling and screaming, they probably wouldn't want you to show up at office doing that.

Like, it just wouldn't do. And that's what's going on here. So verse 3. And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

[ 9 : 06 ] When Esther, and now you meet Esther, when Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, the queen was greatly distressed.

She sent garments to clothe Mordecai so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. Just sort of pause. Just if you're not familiar with the story, Mordecai, Esther's parents died when she was young, and Mordecai, who's related to her, adopted her as his daughter, and he's been, so he's Esther's dad.

And in the second episode, we see how Esther becomes one, not the only, but one of King Xerxes' wives. And so she's a queen. And, you know, this story as well, it's such a very powerful thing if you think about it, isn't it?

She doesn't know what's going on. Like, we'll see that in a moment, but she doesn't know what's going on. But isn't that so often the case? I mean, we, like, even in this digital world, we might not know if there's some great persecution going on in China or some great massacre going on in some part of the world.

We know about it if certain, you know, reporters go there or if it's somehow trendy. But, and in fact, even in our own lives, there could be a terrible thing going on amongst our neighbors, and we just don't know.

[ 10 : 25 ] And that's what's going on here. Esther doesn't know. She lives in the palace. And Esther is also living like the way Mordecai lived before. She's not living as a Jewish person.

She uses her name. She has a Hebrew name, but nobody, she doesn't go by it. She's named after the goddess Ishtar. And so she eats like a Persian, worships like a Persian, looks like a Persian, has a name that's Persian.

Nobody knows she's Jewish, and she's the queen. And the other thing which is so interesting about this story, look at it again here. Just think about it. She sends garments. You can imagine if she sends garments, I mean, that Persian king is rich.

Okay. Like, he didn't send a cost, she didn't go to Costco to buy a few things that are in the discount pile to clothe Mordecai. I don't even know where expensive, I should have come up with preparation as to where the expensive suits come from.

I don't know. Some of you know, or talk to somebody, not me afterwards. But this is expensive stuff that she's giving Mordecai. And this is the thing, it's really interesting, just before we go on, I want you to notice it.

[ 11 : 29 ] You know, it's so interesting. So much of our life is caught up with material stuff. And so many, so often we think, if I could just get that suit, if I could just have that sunglasses, if I could just have that car, if I could just have, you know, that t-shirt, you know, if I could just have that.

And so much of what we want is connected with material things. But we see right here, when it actually comes down to a life and death situation and Mordecai's dying, material stuff means zip.

Like, if you're going to die a horrible death in 11 months, having a \$5,000 suit doesn't do much for you. Or a \$5,000 handbag.

Like, at the end of the day, having more stuff and having money doesn't help you at the moment of death. And you know, and this is really important when we start talking about judgment, if it doesn't mean anything at the moment of death, why does it mean so much to us when we live?

I'm not saying we all have to dress like dowdy. I'm not saying, it's not against money. It's about money and possessions and all becoming the thing by which we get our identity, we put our hope in, we satisfy ourselves with.

[ 12 : 47 ] And at the end, this story here shows in a very, very way that he won't, Mordecai doesn't accept it. So, verse 5. So, you know, they go back, they tell Esther that he won't take it.

So, verse 5, then Esther called for Hathak, one of the king's eunuchs. By the way, just if you don't know that, a eunuch is a man, this is one of the cruel things of the empire.

He's a man who, the king cut away his testicles. That's what a eunuch is. You want to make sure you have obedience and you want to have him working around certain types of things, they cut off his testicles.

So, Esther called for, verse 5, Hathak, and one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed to attend her, that's Esther, that was, and that was why it was.

Sorry, sorry, I skipped a line when I was reading. He'd been appointed to attend her and ordered him, Esther orders him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. Because Esther doesn't know.

[ 13 : 51 ] So, Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews.

Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and notice this, and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people.

Now, just sort of pause there for a second. Mordecai just outed her. He just outed her.

He gives her a copy of the decree from her husband to kill all the Jews and he told the eunuch that Esther's a Jew.

He just outed her. And doesn't tell you how she reacts.

[ 15 : 10 ] But he goes to verse, it's going to be important for the rest of the story that he outed her. And, you know, maybe you can tell me different. I don't know, but I have a feeling that in bureaucracies there can be gossip.

I don't know, has that ever happened in like your office at work? Or maybe if you're in the free market, you know, the private sector, is there ever gossip? If one knows before you know it, I'm only going to tell you nobody else, okay?

Esther's Jewish. Next verse. I'm going to tell you and you, Esther's Jewish. Before you know it, everybody will know. Verse, so what happened? So, well, where am I? Verse 8. Verse 9.

So Hathak went and told Esther what Mordecai had said, probably including that Hathak said, I didn't know you were Jewish. Verse 10, and then Esther spoke to Hathak and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, because Mordecai, so Mordecai said, you got to go speak to the king, okay?

So there's a bit of edge to her answer here. All the kings, verse 11, all the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces, in other words, duh, Mordecai, duh, like, even the servant guys, Mordecai, and you're a bureaucrat, middle to upper level bureaucrat, they all know, verse 11, so that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law to be put to death.

[ 16 : 46 ] Except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come into the king these 30 days.

Now just sort of pause here for a second. Interestingly enough, there's an ancient historian called Herodotus who in fact says in his history of this time period that that in fact is the law. That if you tried to go in to see the emperor where he was, the king where he was in his private sanctum, if you tried to go in there without getting an invitation, the penalty was instant death.

Remember, this is a man who if you want to serve him in certain positions, not all the positions, but many servants, if you're a guy and want to serve me, cuts out your testicles. This is a guy who went and twice now at least has just rounded up women to satisfy him for one night of sexual pleasure.

This is a man who has many wives and isn't at all opposed to just getting rid of one if she does something that doesn't please him and at the same time goes ahead and penalizes every woman in the entire land. And this is a man who has no problem with saying, I'm going to kill every Jew in my entire kingdom and I'm going to encourage people to kill him so you can understand this is a brutal age, this is the rule, this is the law.

And this king has more than one wife, it's not maybe surprising that he hasn't had seen this particular wife for 30 days. And Esther is by implication saying, I have no idea how long it will be. And you know a thing that must be really rubbing Mordecai very hard, it must even be hard as Esther is saying this, and this we learn not from the text but from Herodotus, is that the seven top bureaucrats in the entire land had constant easy access back and forth to the king and Haman was the top of that seven.

[ 18 : 26 ] And so it must have been driving Mordecai wild to know that the man plotting his destruction could go in and talk to the king whenever he felt like it. And Mordecai is helpless.

The only way he knows to deal with it is for Esther. He's the only person who's close, she's the only person close enough to maybe go talk to the king. And now Esther just tells Mordecai this thing, that if she goes there and takes this risk, if the king isn't in a particular like Esther-friendly mood, and who knows, you know, maybe for all Esther knows, two or three of the other wives have been telling the king how terrible Esther is and how she's fat and ugly and says mean things about him and who knows how often they've been poisoning his mind about her.

And so you know what we would tell, what would we tell Esther? We'd say, Esther, that's outrageous, you have to go to that. Like, why don't you just wait? You have 11 months, like, just wait. Like, I'm sure eventually he'll want to see and then you can deal with it.

But we all know if you get the whole bureaucracy of an entire nation pointing one way, it can be pretty hard to turn it another way. Mordecai knows you don't have 11 months.

So she says this to Mordecai. So how's Mordecai going to respond? Well, verse 12, and by the way, in the next couple of verses, the entire meaning of the book and the crux and the center of the book is in the next few verses.

[ 20 : 07 ] And we're going to talk a little bit about it today and in some ways the rest of the episodes or the parts of the book will keep coming back to this because it's the center of the book. It's the turning point of the book.

Mordecai's answer and Esther's response. Verse 12, Mordecai's answer to Esther that she's going to die. And so Mordecai, they told, verse 12, they told Mordecai what Esther had said.

And Mordecai would have known that she risked death. He wouldn't have known maybe that she hadn't been there in 30 days, but he'd know that it risked death.

So verse 13, then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, listen to this, do you not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews?

He's sealed her death warrant by outing her. She has to sort of think about that and think, do I trust all the people around me?

[ 21 : 12 ] I mean, I have some expensive stuff and the king's pretty bloodthirsty. Do I even trust these other wives not to strangle me in my sleep or just put a dagger in me and take my dresses and my emeralds and my gold?

I'll say that again then. Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place.

This is a profound act of faith. Mordecai is showing that he believes that God is present, powerful, and active even if he is hidden and that he will keep his word to protect his covenant people and that he has no idea how it will happen.

He's not talking about a miracle although he'd be open to a miracle. He's just saying to her, God is going to deliver us. Will it be through you or somebody else?

But he will deliver us. And look at how it goes on. Here's where we have to talk about it. But you, I'll say that again, verse 14, for if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place.

[ 22 : 36 ] But you and your father's house will perish. And this is a word of perishing. It's sort of like a word of ongoing perishing.

It's actually an image for hell. It's an image for hell. And who knows whether you have not, here's look this beautiful one.

Many of us, the only thing we know about Esther is this next bit. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this. I haven't talked about providence at all throughout the entire book.

In the next few weeks, we'll talk about it a lot. In other words, what he is saying is at the same time, the king is being bloodthirsty. So Vashti is just being a B, da-da-da-da-da-da, and the king is being a J with some other letters after it, and he's bloodthirsty and he's powerful, and Haman is scheming, and Mordecai is doing this, and everybody's exercising their free will, and everybody's responsible for what they do, but at the same time, God is still king.

He has never relinquished it, and he has brought Esther to this place for such a time as this.

- [ 23 : 58 ] This book teaches us the doctrine of providence, not by statements, but by story. So verse 15, and Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, go gather all the Jews to be found in Susa and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day.

I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.

Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him. This is the conversion of Esther. Why is it a conversion of Esther? It has everything about a conversion.

There's a reversal. Up until this moment, she's looked like a Persian, eaten like a Persian, worshipped like a Persian, everything Persian. At this moment, so her entire life is as if it's going this direction, and at this moment, they call the sermon a reluctant convert.

She didn't wake up that morning thinking that she was going to find out that she was in danger of dying. She didn't wake up that morning thinking that she would be outed in such a threat.

- [ 25 : 17 ] She did not wake up that morning thinking that she would have to consider whether or not she would take the risk of dying at the king's hand to go and intercede for the Jewish people, and situation has moved her to this point.

She's probably been aware of Mordecai's conversion. She's probably been aware of his growing faith in Yahweh, the Lord, the God of the coming, but her life has been in this direction, and by external circumstances, she has stopped in her tracks.

And it is put before her, you have a choice. You can continue in this path, and if you continue in this path, you will die. You will perish.

Or, you can turn and walk towards Yahweh, the one who delivered his people from slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them that he would be their king, that he would care for them, they would be his people, and they were to live, now that he had redeemed them, they were to learn how to live as his redeemed people.

And she turns, and by calling for a fast, it means she's calling for three days of intensive prayer. And at the end of it, she will choose to live under God's hand and under his authority, even if it means she dies.

- [ 26 : 57 ] And let me tell you, generally, if somebody says, I guess I'll be a Christian, even if it kills me, they're a reluctant convert.

convert. You know, in many ways, just as an aside, when I, just before, I came to the point where I knew that I was going to become a Christian, and I was a reluctant convert.

It was like, oh, dang, I guess I'm going to become a Christian. Sort of inconvenient. Like I wasn't doing dancing.

If you have a conversion that makes you dance, praise God. But some of us don't. Some of us are reluctant converts. She's a reluctant convert. So what's going on here in this whole story to try to sort of bring some points home to us?

And there's some very, very challenging things here. There's this idea that she's under God's judgment, that if she's not under, if she doesn't do, she's going to have a type of judgment under God that will mean that she will perish forever.

- [ 28 : 09 ] And so if you could just point, and by the way, I'm not saying these things because if you're a guest here today, you know, listen, I'm a Canadian, eh?

And, I was supposed to be a joke, eh? And if it was up for me, I'd never talk about hell because Canadians don't talk about hell. And if it was up to me, I would never talk about God's judgment because Canadians don't talk about God's judgment.

I'm very Canadian. I'd rather talk about the senators or NFL football or politics or anything other than this. But the text forces us to grapple with this.

So if you could put up the first point, Andrew, that would be very good. This text puts before us that you can live and die under God's judgment or you can live and die under God's covenant.

You can live and die under God's judgment or you can live and die under God's covenant. You see, one of the myths, we have a whole pile of myths that we live under us secular Canadians and we Christian Canadians start to breathe in the air.

[ 29 : 14 ] It's as if, don't do this because if you do this, it might cause you to die. Like, that's what we would say to Esther. But here's the thing, here's the myth. It's as if, don't do this because if you do this, you might die, but it's implying that there's a way to live that means you'll never die.

But that doesn't, that's not an option to any of us. Everybody's going to die. It's not if you live a certain way you won't die. You're going to die. Like you will.

It's very un-Canadian to tell people, do you know you're going to die? That's very un-Canadian. But it's, and you know, is that really, why is that un-Canadian to tell people, remind them, why is it viewed as impolite to tell you that you're going to die?

I mean, like what fact is more certain? Like what does that say about us as Canadians that it's a terrible, impolite thing to say that to people?

And if you think about it for a second, you see, what's said before Esther is that no matter what she does, she's going to die, right?

[ 30 : 21 ] So some of you might say, well, if she's going to die anyway, like why bother that? Why doesn't she choose to live a little bit longer? Well, I mean, that's generally speaking the type of way that you find people who aren't going to have courage and other types of things which we view as actually very admirable in the human life.

But some of you might say, well, if he's going to die earlier, why bother? And why bother even doing anything for a God who's so mean and spoils our fun and wants to judge us and all of that? But, you know, because we as Canadians don't ever want to talk about death, it means we also don't want to ask what death means.

Just think about it for a second. I mean, I haven't had the courage to talk about this lately. I have talked about it occasionally at St. Arbux, but generally it doesn't come up.

But if it does, I try to have the courage to press in. Like, what does death mean? Like, why is it that Canadians don't want to ever, why is it that we don't even want to look at philosophies or theologies and spiritualities that actually say, well, here we have a great fact of existence and, like, let's ask the question, what does it mean?

Like, what does it mean? And when you ask what does it mean, why is it that we view it, everybody views death as not natural? But it is natural, isn't it?

[ 31 : 46 ] But why is it that we think that there's something not really natural about death? That there's something wrong about death? Why is it that we think that there's something right about life but wrong about death?

Why is it that we think, why is it that we human beings can't not do what is wrong? Why is it that if we, if we found some psychologist or some spiritual practice that said that if you follow these spiritual practices or follow this psychology, you'll never do another wrong thing for the rest of your life?

Like, why is it that virtually all sane people wouldn't believe that? Like, why is it that we don't believe that? Why is it that we know that there's something wrong, that there's something about us that keeps doing wrong things?



And why do we call it wrong and not right? Like, why is there something wrong about wrong? So why is it that there's something wrong about death? Why is it that there's something wrong about what is wrong?

Why is it that there's something right about goodness? Why is it that there's something right about love? Why is it that there's something right about life? Only Christianity explains this.

[ 32 : 56 ] Only Christianity explains it. You see, death signifies that human beings who cannot fix themselves or do right, that death signifies that you and I are under God's judgment, that every human being is under God's judgment.

But if that's all that the Bible said, it would be unbelievably depressing. But the Bible says something different. It says, and this is what the text says, Esther, you can continue to live, but if you're living, you're going to live under God's judgment.

And when you die, you're going to die under God's judgment. But you have an option. There's something before you, a choice before you today. You can choose to live the next three days, and we don't know whether in three and a half days you will die, or if you won't die and you'll live longer, but you can live under God's covenant with Yahweh as your Lord, who will care for you and provide you because he has redeemed you and he loves you.

And you can live under God's covenant and die under God's covenant. So for many Canadians, the very natural thing when something like this is brought before us is to say, okay, in fact, the last time I actually had a conversation in a St. Arbutus about this with a person.

It was actually one of those awkward times where she asked me, George, do you think I'm going to hell? I hadn't woken up that day thinking somebody in a public place was going to ask me if I thought they were going to hell.

[ 34 : 43 ] I say this. I have no idea whether I give a good answer or a bad answer. I probably look like a deer caught in the headlights moments before the car gets hit. But here's the wonderful thing.

You know, just bear witness to Jesus. You don't have to do a perfect job. Just be open to being used by him. That's all I can say. Just be open to being used by him.

And God will redeem your mistakes. And he'll teach you. And everything doesn't depend upon you doing a perfect job. So just do it.

Okay? And then in this particular conversation, she went on because she'd learned from another barista about this.

And her response was, and she said this to me. It was sort of a compliment to me. And I'm not telling you because it was a compliment. She said, I don't think you think you're better than me.

[ 35 : 39 ] But he thinks he's better than me. The guy who told her about hell. He thinks he's better than me. And she said, but he's not. And she said a few catty things about him.

And I don't think you think you're better than me. But do you think I'm going to hell? By the way, I told her that I did tell her that, even though I probably blah, blah, blah, blah. But I did get to the point.

I said that he and I agree. But what I did say is this. God takes no delight in the death of a sinner. But rather, every sinner would turn and live.

And that God so loved the world that he did not, God so loved the world that he did not send his son to condemn the world. But that by believing and trusting in Jesus that we will live.

And in particular, I said, any Christian who communicates that they will not go to hell because they're good, doesn't understand the vaguest thing about the Bible. It's all about grace.

[ 36 : 41 ] If you could put up the next point. And those of you who know Tim Keller, shameless borrowing from Keller. Just Jesus is the true and greater Esther.

You see, Esther is forced. Jesus chooses. Esther, by her actions, might not die.

Jesus knows that he will die. Esther does this partially for herself to go to speak to the king so that she will not die in the genocidal purge.

Jesus doesn't do it for himself, but he does it for others. Esther takes a risk. Jesus takes your doom and mine. Esther risks death to intercede.

Jesus dies and intercedes. If Esther dies, she can't intercede. But when Jesus dies, he does intercede. Esther's death means she fails.

[ 37 : 44 ] Jesus' death ends by saying, it is accomplished. Esther's death means that God finds another way.

Jesus' death is the only way. Esther does this for the Jews. Jesus died for Esther and Mordecai and King Xerxes and Haman and me and you.

Esther needs to see the king of Persia. Esther is the king of all creation. Esther means that as a Jew, she will have to continue to follow the law to be part of the government people.

But Jesus' death would be followed by resurrection and the free offer of grace. Esther is part of the old covenant people.

Jesus' death and resurrection bring in the new covenant. Jesus is the true and greater Esther.

[ 38 : 59 ] and his death is a death that ushers in a new covenant that means that Jesus has done all that has to be done to make us justified, to make us right, to make us righteous so that we will one day stand in the new heaven and the new earth walking in the garden in the cool of the day with our heavenly father, the creator and sustainer of all things.

And we will be fully transparent and unashamed. And it's all because of Jesus and nothing because of me and nothing because of you.

If you could put up the next point, if you live under God's judgment, you will perish. If you live under God's covenant, you will grow into blessedness.

the Bible says that we are being prepared for an eternal weight of glory. And in the first John text, which we opened with, one day we will see him and when we see him, we will be like him with a resurrected body that can no longer die, that is fit to commune with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for all eternity in the new heaven and the new earth.

And only God can do that. And when we put our faith and trust in Jesus as weak and reluctant as we might be, that is our identity, that is our destiny, and nothing can take us from his hands even if we die a gruesome death, even if our obedience means that we perish.

[ 41 : 02 ] And if you could put up the final point, Andrew, the gospel shapes you and me to see each day from the perspective of for such a time as this.

In Jesus, your life is not meaningless. In Jesus, even if you've lived a terrible life by the earthly standards, unbelievably like if the big, if from the eyes of the world everything about you has been failure, failure, failure, failure, failure, or if your life has been success, success, success, success, when you put your hands in Jesus and he takes you as his own, he redeems your past.

And he means that you're present in your future for every situation you are in, you can think I am here for such a time as this. I am here for such a time as this.

You have been placed in your apartment for such a time as this. You've been placed there to pray for your neighbors. The place, your dentist, you see that dentist for such a time as this.

If you are sick, from the eyes of the world, that's a terrible thing, you can't accomplish anything, but you know what? On your bed of sickness, on your bed of death, you can do things that bring God glory because you are there for such a time as this.

[ 42 : 34 ] If you have to make a stand for the gospel or for righteousness in Canada that leads you to lose your job and get 150,000 or 150 million angry tweets, you did that in such a way and you are completely publicly humiliated where you are, God can use that because you are there for such a time as this and that can be a place where God's glory is spoken of and his grace is revealed because in God there are no little people and he will use you.

Our day is for such a time as this. Just close. I've told you before, I'm going to get emotional, I don't mean to get emotional, but when I was first ordained, young 28-year-old guy, I can tell you theology, I can't tell you about life, and I was forced by my boss to go visit somebody at the Brier Center and I hated visiting Diane, that was her name.

She had, I can't remember her disease, but she had come to the point in time her family had abandoned her, her husband, her kids, nobody saw her. The only person who came to visit her was me and I would go reluctantly once a month and I hated going to visit her because I couldn't make her well.

All she could do, she had a little thing that came here and she had to use that to speak. All she could do was whisper. She couldn't move a single move body, a muscle in her body. I hated visiting her.

But she loved Jesus. She ministered to me in a very powerful way. I went to visit her, but she really visited with me.

[ 44 : 15 ] You see, for every day, even in, from what a point of view, from a husband and kids in the world, her life was a waste. Now we would say, you should have killed her, the doctor should have killed her years earlier.

That's what Canadians would say. She should have died years ago. She didn't want to die. And she knew that she was there for such a time as this. Please stand.

You know, if you have never given your life to Christ, you are here for such a time as this. The Lord has brought you to this time, to this place, to give your life to Christ.

And I'm not going to tell you words that you have to think are magic. You just say, Jesus, be my Savior and my Lord. I want to be like Esther. I'm walking one way. I want to now walk towards you and thank you that you never let me go.

Use your own words and maybe even just physically, if you're a physical, you know, like more, like that type of person, maybe you just even wanted to stand there and turn the other way as a way of enacting that you've given your life to Jesus, but there is no better time than now you are here for such a time as this.

[ 45 : 23 ] And for each one of us, we are here for such a time as this. That God will bless us and use us in our lives where we are. It doesn't mean we can't have ambition and want to go different places, but wherever you are right now, in whatever situation or station of life, you can ask God, God, why have you put me here for such a time as this?

How can I bring glory and meaning to my life? Glory to you and meaning to my life right here, right now, where I am, whatever it is I do. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, thank you so much for Jesus.

Thank you, Father, so much that he died on the cross for us. Thank you, Father, that he is the true and greater Esther. Thank you, Father, that in him our lives can have meaning and purpose, that you will use us in ways that bring you honor and glory, that our repentance can bring you glory, our success in living a good life can bring you glory, our generosity can bring you.

Father, that you use us, whether we're rich or poor, smart, or low IQ, well-educated, not well-educated. Father, that you can use us, that you have called us to be your people, that you can use us to bring you glory.

Father, help us to be so gripped by the gospel and so gripped by who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross that day by day we understand that you are shaping us to bring you glory where we are.

[ 46 : 48 ] And we ask and thank this all in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.