

For Such A Time As This - Lessons from the life of Esther

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[0:00] Esther, the book of Esther, for such a time as this. And we're going to look at the book together, God helping us. I've got 52 slides here.

We've got lots of scripture to talk through, but really we're just painting a broad brush look at the book. And of course the key verse of the book of Esther is this one, Esther 4 verse 14 it reads, And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Esther, she's a model for us in so many ways of her courage, wisdom, of her faith. And her story shows us really the need of the hour, the need of the hour.

And for such a time as this time, we can take a leaf out of Esther's book and hopefully learn something from her testimony. And not only Esther, but Mordecai as well.

The need of the hour. I put to you that we face a challenge in this day and time, for such a time as this time, will we respond like Esther did? Let's find some principles here that we can make application of in our time.

[1:11] Principles that we can learn not only from Esther, but Mordecai also, and how they handled themselves in this time of great crisis of test. First off, some background.

The setting of Esther's life is the Persian Empire. And the Jews here are in exile. They're living in this pagan culture in Persia, far, far away from Israel.

And here they were living under this hostile rule. And it can be for us too, as God's people, that we can ourselves find ourselves in challenging places, challenging times.

Yet even here in the royal court of the powerful king, of King Ahasuerus, we see that even in this place, in this time, God is at work.

God is at work. So we're going to unpack some of the story, just touching on really some of the key verses. So we're skipping through a few. You might want to read those in between times.

[2:07] You'll probably get more value out of the word of God than what I actually say. But we're going to go to Esther 1, verse 3, to kick it off. And here we read that it was in the third year of his reign, King Ahasuerus.

And he made a feast, it says, unto all his princes and servants, the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him.

The king was extravagant. He was showing off. It tells us here, this six-month-long party. Now we might think of the government of our day.

Talk about government waste. Look at this. The government waste of this king. It was outrageous. And he followed it up then with a seven-day feast as well, on top of that.

And then we read on verse 4, it reads, of the king when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom. It talks in the context there of the tapestries, of the majesty of the place, of the palace, of his glorious kingdom.

[3:09] And it tells how he showed off the honour of his excellent majesty, many days, even a hundred and fourscore days. Verse 5, And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

The next character that we meet is Queen Vashti. And she's hosting her own little feast just for the women in the royal house. Verse 10, So he beckoned through his servants that the queen would come with her crown her beauty, for she was fair to look on.

So he beckoned through his servants that the queen would come with her crown to show her off, as it were, to the multitude. But Queen Vashti refused to comply with the king's command.

This was really something very dramatic. It tells us there, verse 12, But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command by his chamberlains. Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burnt in him.

He was fuming mad. Queen Vashti refused to appear before the king. And this set in motion a chain of events that would lead to Esther being elevated to being selected as the new queen.

[4:43] Here next we read of Esther, an orphaned Jewish girl. So the king put Queen Vashti away and basically shut her away for good.

And he sought a new queen. And we read of Esther now, this orphaned Jewish girl. And her name, Esther, it means star.

And she was raised by her cousin, Mordecai. And Mordecai was a faithful Jew. He plays a critical role in protecting his people. Read there as we take it now to chapter 2, Esther 2, verse 5.

Now in Shushan, the palace, there was a certain Jew. His name was Mordecai, son of Jaya, the son of Shimei, the son of Kirsh, a Benjamite. But he had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity, which had been carried away with Jeconia, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had carried away.

So here was Mordecai. He was in this captivity. He had been taken to this land. And it says of him, chapter 2, verse 7, So here's Mordecai.

[6:09] He takes his cousin here. And she's the, this Jewish girl now becomes, as it were, his own daughter. And she would later become the very queen of Persia.

God has here a very specific purpose and reason for Esther. She doesn't know it now until the story unfolds. Life's like that, isn't it, for us as well?

We don't know quite what's happening sometimes and we wonder what's God doing here. But God is working out his purpose. We aren't always conscious for the moment. But in time, we may see the reason.

And it ends up here that the king chooses Esther to be the new queen. Verse 17. And it tells of the king, Aseris, the king loved Esther above all the women.

And she obtained grace and favour in his sight, more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

[7:18] So Esther's beauty and grace secured for Esther this position of queen. God's unseen hand was working. To place Esther exactly where she needed to be to save her people.

She was in this strategic position for God's purposes. And it's the same for you and me. God places us in different circumstances through life. There's a reason.

There's a purpose, a plan. We may not always understand at the time. We read further about Mordecai. And it tells us Mordecai is sitting in the king's gate.

It could be that he was a judge in the royal court. While there in the royal court, he hears about this coup to kill the king. It reads from verse 21.

Esther 2, 21. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wrothed and sought to lay hand on the king as heirs.

[8:23] And the king was known to Mordecai. And he told it unto Esther, the queen. And Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out. Therefore, they were both hanged on a tree. And it was written in the book of the Chronicles before the king. The picture here is Mordecai.

He hears about this plot. He discovers it, this assassination plot against the king. He uncovers this plot. He gives the names of these men who are trying to kill the king.

And their plans are thwarted. And their lives are taken instead of the king's life, which is saved. But Mordecai's not recognized for all of this that he's done. He's not rewarded yet.

Yet, that's the operative word, yet. This is where providence comes in. Mordecai will be rewarded, but not yet. And this can happen for us too.

[9:20] As we go through life's journey, we may forgive and live selflessly, but not get rewarded immediately. You won't get noticed yet for those things that you do.

At times, it can be that you might not ever be noticed on this earth. But the reward will come, amen? The reward will come. Notice how Haman has this hatred next for Mordecai.

Mordecai. Mordecai, this key character next is Haman. And he is a prideful, vengeful man. And he wants to destroy the Jews.

We pick it up there, chapter 3, verse 1. After these things, if king Ahasuerus promote Haman, the son of Hamadathah the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

So he was really a high official. And it says, verse 2, And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman. For the king had so commanded concerning him.

[10:22] But Mordecai bowed not. Nor did him reverence. Notice here, Haman's got this elevated position.

He's really high up there in the king's court. And everyone has to bow down and reverence Haman. But Mordecai bowed not.

Notice here, Mordecai, a man who stands on principle. Which leads us to, I put to you the first point I'd like to make, of the need of the hour, the need of the hour, the need of our hour is conviction.

Notice here, Mordecai had conviction. He stayed true. Mordecai models for us a man who will not be moved. He will not bow. He will not reverence Haman.

He refuses to bow to Haman. Why? Because he's showing his faithfulness unto God. And we're living in such a time as this, aren't we? That we have a need of conviction, of godly conviction.

[11:28] We see it reads on, chapter 3, verse 3, Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Why aren't you doing what you're supposed to?

And now it came to pass, when they speak daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand.

For he had told them that he was a Jew. Mordecai would not bow. He had conviction. As a Jew, he was unwilling to honour Haman in a way that was in conflict with his devotion to God.

He put God first. He wasn't going to bow to some man in some reverence of a pagan man. What about us? Will we bow down to the world in such a time as this?

What about our convictions? Will we obey earthly authority or will we stay true to our faith? That's a challenge for us too, right here. Verse 5, And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

[12:36] Another angry man right here. And Mordecai, this man of conviction, he refuses to bow to him. Haman is enraged. This is such an affront that he would be treated so in his prideful, arrogant way as this high, faluting man that he was.

And angry Haman, he schemes and he plots now against all the Jews in the kingdom. Verse 6, And he thought to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had showed him the people of Mordecai, wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Hateful Haman, he hates not only Mordecai, now he hates the whole lot of Mordecai's people. He plots the genocide of a whole nation, a whole people. And so he talks the king into making a decree against the Jews.

We pick it up, chapter 3, verse 8. And Haman said unto the king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws.

Therefore it is not for the king's prophet to suffer them. Haman is telling the king here, Look, we've got to make this decree that the Jews be destroyed.

[14:02] They're just too much trouble. The king gave Haman this power now, as he gave him his ring, to authorise this wicked plan with royal authority.

And then it says that letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces. So this letter, this decree, was then posted right across the land to all the different king's provinces.

The decree was to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day even, upon the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

To kill a whole lot of them, young, old, children, women, no matter what, and to take the spoil of them. Just take everything they've got as well. Haman persuades the king now to issue this decree for the destruction of the Jewish people.

So Haman, he sought to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom, the people of Mordecai. That's a million people, apparently, at this time. It's a complete wipeout, a genocide of the Jewish nation.

[15:16] Next up, we see what happens in Esther chapter 4. Mordecai and the Jewish people fast. They mourn. You could understand that they sought God.

Verse 1. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and a bitter cry. And he came even before the king's gate, for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province with us, whoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was a great mourning among the Jews.

And fasting and weeping and wailing and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. It was a sign of great grief. The message here is do right.

Mordecai did what was right. And we can know that when we stand for the right, there's a cost sometimes, a personal cost. But our commitment to our Lord should come before our own comfort or safety.

[16:34] Mordecai did not bow because it was the right thing to do. And now we reach a crisis point, a crisis point of the book and Mordecai's challenge to Esther.

Mordecai informs Esther now of the plot and he urges Esther to use her position to intercede, to advocate, to intervene with the king. And so chapter 4 verse 13, then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews.

He's saying, look, you're a Jew too. This is going to affect you. And he says, verse 14, for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed.

He's saying, even if you say nothing, you're going to be destroyed with your nation. And here's the pivotal verse now, Esther 4.14, the latter part, it's really one of the key messages of the book here. And Mordecai says to Esther, and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

[17:53] He's saying, this is a moment in time that it could be that God has a purpose and a place for you, a reason for why you are in this place of authority as the queen for such a time as this.

Mordecai believed in God's deliverance no matter what was going to happen, but he urges Esther, hey, do your part. Maybe the whole reason that you're queen of this kingdom is so you can be used of God.

God's got a purpose for you, Esther. God's got a reason why you're here. He says, cousin, this could be your finest hour. And Mordecai is saying to Esther, I don't believe that your appointment as a queen is accidental, but it's providential.

It's by God. God's placed you in this position. And though he's not mentioned, of course, God is certainly implied. It's such a time.

It's God's time. It's God's timing. It's God's providence. He's certainly implied. Because really, through the book, as I say, the name of God is not mentioned or even God mentioned, but he is at work behind the scenes, right through.

[19:10] It's kind of weaved through the book that God is there in the shadows, behind the curtain. Notice next, Esther's faith and fasting. Esther, not only did Mordecai show conviction, but Esther too.

Esther showed conviction as well at such a time as this. We see that her first step in this crisis, her first step is that she calls for a fast.

It's a sign here of Esther's reliance upon God, on his strength, to seek after God for such a time. It's such a time that we ought to call the people to fasting.

We could understand to praying, to calling upon the Lord God. And verse 15, it reads, Then Esther bade them return, Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast for me and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day.

I also and my maidens will fast likewise and so will I go in unto the king. But we're going to fast first. We're going to pray first is the sense, the intimation of it.

[20:22] I'm going to go into the king but fast for me. In other words, pray for me. I will go in unto the king which is not according to the law because it was an unlawful thing.

It was a dangerous thing. It was not the etiquette. It wasn't the done thing to do. It was something that was really unlawful.

There's times and things that people might think there's certain things that are not protocol. I know when there was a royal visit here in Playford.

I put my hand out and shook one of the royals and I was told, oh, that was, no, no, you're not supposed to do that. You're not supposed to put out your hand. You've got to wait for them to invite you to shake your hand first.

I broke protocol. And here's Esther. She's breaking protocol by going into the king's presence. But this is not just a naughty thing to do. This is the death penalty to do this.

[21:23] This was serious. This was, if I go into the king, I could be killed because I'm breaking this law, this protocol. And notice Esther, she didn't say pray and fast, but we can understand that prayer and fasting go together, don't they?

I know some of us might be all caught up in dieting and that's maybe a good thing to think about, but how much better to actually do some fasting? Do some fasting.

We don't always think about that, do we? That's a good thing. But of course, fasting is not the be all and end all. It's that we pray and fast, doesn't it? They go together, don't they?

And we might imply that when you fast, you're probably praying to God. And so what stands out really here, again, is Esther's conviction, her faith, her dependence on the Lord.

And Esther's faith is evident. She tells Mordecai, hey, get the whole community to fast for three days before I go to the king. And it shows her dependence upon God, upon his guidance and favour.

[22:28] And so she made this spiritual preparation. She didn't want to just run into the king. She says, fast for me. Three days. I'm going to be patient as I wait on the Lord.

As I fast, I want the whole community of God's people to fast. And so we, the next we see that Esther decides to approach the king, to enter the very king's presence, uninvited, risking her very life.

This could lead to her death. And she says, if I perish, I perish. What courage. What courage. This leads us to another need of the hour.

The need of the hour in such a time as this time, in this time of testing, which is life until glory is, we have need of courage, don't we?

Esther showed remarkable courage. She knew she was risking her life to approach the king without being summoned. And she knew that she had to advocate for her people. So she decides to act despite her fear.

[23:31] What about you and me? Will we have courage? Or will fear hold us back? The need of the hour, people of God, in such a time as this time is courage, boldness.

We're called to be willing to step out in faith, to have the courage of our convictions. We're called to act boldly for Christ, for the kingdom, for the glory of God, to dare to step out of the comfort zone. Esther could have stayed in the comfort zone, the palace. Maybe she could have hidden the fact that she was a Jew, which was hidden at that time, but she could have just stayed quiet, couldn't she, and said nothing.

We must ask ourselves if we are where we are for such a time as this. And so Esther approaches the king. Esther takes this big risk.

This is a risk. This courageous step of appearing uninvited before His Majesty the king. This was an offence punishable by death. This was serious.

[24:40] It was a daring step of faith. And so we see Esther 5 verse 1. Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house.

And the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house over against the gate of the house. Here's the king in his palace. Verse 2. And it was so when the king saw Esther, she was out there in the royal court.

The queen, Esther the queen, was standing in the court. And it says, And Esther obtained favour in his sight. And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand.

So Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter. A sign of his royal power, of his royal authority, of his royal pardon. We see that Esther touched the scepter as an indication of the king's acceptance of her.

And so the king received Esther favourably. And it reads on, verse 3. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, Queen Esther? And what is thy request?

[25:47] It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. So then Esther made her bold plea to the king. Now courage is not the absence of fear, but it's trusting God in the face of fear, isn't it?

Of course we all get afraid. Every time we go witnessing, every time we open our mouth for the Lord to tell another, to witness. I know someone was telling me this morning they've already got mocked for their faith.

That's a path for the course, isn't it? But we should nevertheless have courage to speak out when we trust God, when we step out in faith like Esther.

What happened next? Esther asked the king for a banquet to meet with him along with Haman. And so Esther, she's approaching this task, this challenge with careful planning and wisdom.

Again, she wasn't rushing this, she was taking steps to make this happen rather than immediately making the request of the king. She prepared two banquets, building trust, creating this moment, this opportune moment to reveal Haman's wicked plan, the plot against her people.

[26:54] And so they held the first banquet with the king and with Haman and herself. And then, we're skipping through verse 9, it says, she organized a second one.

And so meantime, in between the two, Haman's feeling really glad and gleeful. He's not the misery guts that he was before, angry, fuming Haman.

Now he's glad and joyful. It says that Haman was going forth from this first banquet. He was joyful and with a glad heart. He had a Cheshire cat smile on his face.

He was just beaming with the elevation that not only had he had one, one banquet with the king and queen. Now he was going to be invited to a second banquet. And then it says, Haman went forth that day, joyful and with a glad heart.

He was hopping and skipping and humming a tune. And then it says, but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

[28:01] He lost that smile, quick smile. He said, what is this? This guy won't even move for me. He's not going to bow down to me. He's not going to reverence me. And Haman was enraged even more against Mordecai.

Now here's another principle we would do well to learn. The need of the hour, brothers and sisters, is consistency. Isn't it? Mordecai didn't bow that other time and Mordecai didn't bow this other time as well.

We're living in a flim-flam world, aren't we? A flim-flam world where people are flip-floppers, a world where you can't count on people. They're not consistent.

They're not reliable. Let's be different. Let's be different. Let's be consistent. Be faithful. Mordecai was such a man.

He had consistency. The need of the hour for such a time as this. Let's be consistent with our faith. Chapter 5, verse 14, it tells us, Then said Zeresh's wife, she's addressing Haman now.

[29:11] He's had this pity party back at home saying, This Mordecai, he won't reverence me. He won't bow down. He was fuming mad. And so his wife

says, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high.

And tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon. Then go there merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman and he caused the gallows to be made.

Haman's wife said, Build the gallows. We're going to hang Mordecai on the gallows. And Haman thought, Yeah, that's a great idea.

A great idea. And then we see chapter 6. It reads, Of the night next, On that night could not the king sleep?

And he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles. And they were read before the king. He had a sleepless night. Sometimes God's in that. We can't sleep.

[30:16] Maybe get up and pray. But the king wouldn't sleep because God was intervening now. And he commanded the book to be brought, this dry, boring book to read, to maybe send him back to sleep.

You can imagine. Verse 2. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king, Azaris. He reads here of these two, these two chamberlains, these two servants who had plotted to kill him. And the king said, What honour and dignity had been done to Mordecai for this?

What have we done to acknowledge Mordecai who saved my life? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There's nothing done for him. We didn't do anything.

We didn't give any reward. We didn't give any credit. We didn't recognise him. Mordecai had uncovered this plot to save the king's life, but he'd never been rewarded for it. So, the king wonders, How can I reward this man?

[31:26] Meanwhile, Haman is wandering around nearby in the king's court and he'd come to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he'd made. So, the king invited him in and Haman came in and the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighted to honour?

Oh, Haman thought, Yeah, well, have you got a guy to honour or not? Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to honour more than myself?

And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought, which the king used to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal, which is set upon his head.

And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city.

Let's have a royal procession here. Let's make this a big thing and proclaim before and thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

[32:44] Verse 10, Then said the king to Haman, Make haste and take the apparel and the horse as thou hast said, And do even so to Mordecai the Jew that sitteth at the king's gate.

Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. So what a turn of events here. Haman had this idea, Hey, the man who the king delights to honour, of course that's me.

I'm the greatest. And then, Oh, no, it's for Mordecai. He's the man I want to honour and you're going to do it. What a turn of events here. And verse 11, Then took Haman the apparel and the horse and arrayed Mordecai and brought him on horseback through the street of the city and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

And Mordecai came again to the king's gate, but Haman hastened to his house, mourning and having his head covered. He was ashamed. He was red in the face.

He was so ashamed and embarrassed. Haman honoured Mordecai, the man he so hated. And Haman went home ashamed. Next up at the second banquet, now that comes the second banquet time, and Esther reveals now Haman's evil scheme to the king.

[34:07] She exposes Haman's plot. Again, she's risking her life, her own life, to save her own people because she tells the king, hey, she reveals her identity, hey, I'm one of God's people.

I'm a Jew. Here's another noble character trait of Esther. It shows her selflessness. She prioritised not her own safety, but she prioritised the people of God.

And even though she was the queen, she didn't hesitate to use her position to stand up for her own people, to show her commitment to them.

So Esther tells the king of Haman's plot, we read that there in chapter 7, verse 3, then Esther the queen answered and said, if I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given at my petition and my people at my request, for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish.

It reads here on about how this is going to cost the king dearly. It's such a loss of the people for annihilation of this people who are servants of the king. She says that if it was just that they were going to be sold into slavery, she may not have bothered the king or troubled him.

[35:26] But this was so severe, this was a total destruction of her own people and she could not remain silent. Verse 5, chapter 7, verse 5, then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he?

And where is he that does presume in his heart to do so? Who's the one who's going to kill you and your people? And Esther said, verse 6, the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.

Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. The king's heart is moved to protect Esther and her people. God can turn the hearts of people, the hearts of those in power.

Think of the people in power in our land. God can turn their hearts. He is in control even over those who do not know him. And what happens next? We see that Haman is hanged on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

What a turn of events. Not only was Mordecai honoured in place of Haman but Haman is put to death in place of Mordecai.

[36:39] And Haman's hanged on the very gallows that he prepared for Mordecai. We read that there verse 9, chapter 7 verse 9, Behold also the gallows that the servants tell the king, hey there's these gallows here, they're 50 cubits high which Haman has made for Mordecai who has spoken good for the king standeth in the house of Haman.

Then the king said, hang him thereon. Hang him, hang Haman on the gallows. And so verse 10, they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

Then was the king's wrath pacified. There's a biblical principle here that pride goeth before destruction. Haman, the one who the king delights to honour.

No. Now he's brought to shame and his own destruction. And the king gave the house of Haman to Esther now who sent Mordecai over it. The king gave the royal ring from Haman now to Mordecai and Esther pleaded again for her people.

The king issues a new decree now that allows the Jews to defend themselves, bringing them safety and victory. Read that there, verse 5 of chapter 8. I'm just touching on the key verses here.

[37:51] But the point is that the people of God were now free to defend themselves against this danger. The king couldn't reverse the decree as such, but he could make provision.

And that's what he did. And it says, verse 5, Esther, if it pleased the king and if I have found favour in his sight and the things seem right before the king and I will be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hamadatha, the Agagite, which he sought to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces.

So Esther's saying here, look, can you write another letter? And so Esther and Mordecai, they obtained permission for the Jews to defend themselves. And then we see in between time there was a great victory.

The Lord prevailed, the Jews prevailed over their enemies, showed again God's provision and his deliverance. And the date that was set for their destruction became the day of their deliverance.

Another turn of events. Now that was the date Haman picked it off his calendar and said, that's the date we're going to destroy them. But no, that was the date God delivered them for such a time, for such a time as this.

[39:01] Now God overrules the wicked plans of men. We see chapter 9 now, verse 1, now in the 12th month, that is the month of Adar, on the 13th day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have

power over them, though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them.

So the day that the enemies wanted to have power over them, no, the Jews had rule over them. Verse 2, then the Jews gathered to gather themselves in their cities throughout all the province of the king and Hazaras to lay hand on such as sought their hurt, and no man could withstand them, for the fear of them fell upon all the people.

So God overruled the wicked plans of Haman, the wicked intentions of the adversary of God's people. Think of the adversary of the people of God today.

Hasn't God got an overruling, an overreigning, that God is faithful for you, isn't he, to protect you, his people, to fulfil his promises? And then it winds up with a celebration time, a time of joy and jubilation, and the Jewish people still hold this today, the Feast of Purim.

It was this annual celebration, recognising, remembering God's saving work. It was a reminder of God's faithfulness to them across generations. And this time, this Feast of Purim was established as this time to remember God's deliverance.

[40:35] We've had a feast this morning around the Lord's table. There's a sense where we remember what God has done. We remember the Passover. We remember the delivering power of the cross, don't we, today?

And here we see that they remember God's faithfulness, that God's deliverance, they remembered it. They remembered it. They recounted it. And we too can think about God's deliverance, can't we? The victory that we have in Christ, the victory that is ours by faith. And we've got gratitude this morning, haven't we? Aren't you grateful? Aren't you thankful that you're saved? That you're S-A-V-E-D, aren't you, this morning?

That you've been delivered by the power of God. And we see the gratitude is the final sentiment of the book here. Verse 20, And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king, Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, to establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and the fifteenth day of the same yearly. So they say, hey, we're going to remember this day. We're going to remember this, what God has done. And verse 22, As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning unto a good day, that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

[42:03] For such a time as this, isn't it a good day? Isn't it a good day? A day I will never forget when heaven came down and glory filled my soul.

That's a good day, isn't it? When you get saved. He can turn a day of grieving into a good day. He can turn sorrow into joy. He can overturn the plans of the enemy for your destruction, but you can be a victorious, saved man, saved woman this morning.

And this God, He can turn things around, turning fear and dread into feasting and joy. There we have it. A summary of the book of Esther.

Through the book, we see God is at work. He's at work, just not overtly. It's like the pages of our life sometimes, isn't it? God is at work. We don't always give Him acknowledgement.

We can't always recognize at times, but God is at work in the humdrum, in the day-by-day, in our everyday life. And in the book, there's no actual reference to God, to His name, to prayer.

[43:11] No reference to faith, but it's all there, isn't it? It's there. God's providence is there. From the start to the finish, God's hand is certainly in it.

And it's the same with your life, isn't it? Brother, sister, we think of our life and God's hand has been on us even when things were going very well.

And the book shows us how every person, every person, regardless of their place in life, every person, you, have a part to play in God's plan.

God's got a place for you. What are some applications for today? Just to wind it up, for such a time as this.

A time, look at the time we're living in. Look at Australia. Look at our nation. Look at what's going on in the world. Such a time as this. A time of compromise, of carelessness, of Laodicea.

[44:13] Such a time of wishy-washiness, of sloppiness, of carelessness. Such a time that we live in.

The shoes that you walk in. How can we glean from Esther's life the themes here through the book Divine Providence we've seen. Courage, faith, justice.

God's going to overrule all the wicked plans of our adversary. We notice God's providential care.

God is working through every detail. We see Esther's inspiring example.

She had wisdom. She had patience. She didn't rush. She trusted. And she overcame all the adversity. Think of it of the principles of Mordecai, of Esther.

Conviction. Mordecai wouldn't bow down even though that would have been the easy thing to do.

That would have been the easy thing to do. Esther could also have done the comfortable thing but no, she had conviction.

[45:20] Her faith was in the Saviour. Conviction. The courage of her conviction. We see the courage of Esther. God used Esther in the deliverance of her people.

She had the courage to say, hey, I'm going to stand up and advocate. I'm going to speak up even though it would be easier to zip up. No. I'm going to speak up.

I'm going to use boldness to go to the king to speak up. And then we see consistency. Mordecai, he knew what it was going to do when he didn't bow down the second time, the third time, however many times.

He had consistency. He said, I'm going to stick with my convictions. I'm going to hold fast by faith. I'm going to honour my God. I'm not going to bow down in this pagan reverence that was a compromise.

No, I'm going to be consistent. I'm going to be faithful. I'm going to be consistent in my walk. And Esther, she showed a lot of wisdom in that she hearkened, she listened to counsel.

[46:32] Now, we'd do well to do that, wouldn't we? I know I need to listen to others more often to have a bit of wisdom, maybe seek counsel, seek direction, seek guidance, be teachable, be humble.

Esther listened to and she heeded Mordecai's guidance throughout her life, even while she's king. Now, even when we get older, we could do well to listen to older ones, couldn't we?

To listen to some elders, as it were, and actually don't act like Haman, all right? Esther displayed patience in her approach. She understood the value of waiting for the right time to speak.

Don't fly off the handle and do your own willy-nilly thing. Have patience and wait. Wait on the Lord. She says, pray for me, fast for me, three days.

Three days is a long time, isn't it? When it's a big decision, hey, I just want to jump in. No, maybe pray about it. Ask people to pray for you, fast for you.

[47:40] That would be a good thing, wouldn't it? To wait for the right time. And Esther showed the courage in faith. What about us? What about you and me? For such a time, for such a time as this time?

What about us? How can we step out in faith? How can we believe God? How can we dare to do something even that's scary, that's risky, beyond our comfort zone, or we're just going to stay over here?

Comfort zone. I've got my little boundary here. I'm safe here. I don't have to rock any boats, or take any risks, or dare to do anything.

I can just stay in my little comfort zone, and I'm not even going to step over the line. Or are we going to say, no, I'm not going to stay in the comfort zone. I want to be in the God zone.

I want to trust God. Like Mordecai, I want to stand firm, and be an example of righteousness, even in the face of opposition, even though the time's going to get tougher because I'm standing for the right.

[48:45] Stand for the right. The book of Esther encourages us, friends, we see God's unseen hand here, can't we? God's unseen hand is in the book. It's through the book.

And we can have courage and faith and wisdom like Mordecai, like Esther, conviction, courage, consistency. Esther stepped out for such a time, for such a time as this.

It's the same for every one of us, isn't it? All of us, we're all called to live out our faith, to be a bold, courageous one, by the grace of God, to live out our faith, even when the time is tough.

It's such a time, we've got to be such a people, that trust our God is at work and be willing to say yes to his purpose, stop being in the comfort zone and say, no, I'm going to get out of the comfort

zone, I've been there long enough, and be ready to be used of God for his glory, to be one who's faithful, who's consistent for the glory of God, ready to be used of God for his glory, no matter where he's placed us, he might place you on a royal throne, he might place you in Mordecai's shoes, he might place you in your everyday living of life, it's for such a time as this, that we ought to be the people of God.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that it's a good day when we got saved, and we can remember that day that we trusted you, pray that each one might have that same trust, that there is a day they trusted you, and if they haven't already, that today can be that day for them, a good day, the best day that ever was and ever will be, the day that we put our trust, our faith in you.

[50:43] We pray that each one might have that heart's trust, to know, as we heard before, the ultimate injustice, of the just, dying for the unjust. Lord, that you would take our pain and penalty and be our saviour, that you would be the great deliverer, as it were, from the hayman of our day, the adversary who wants to dog our steps and destroy us.

Lord, we know that we can have victory, and we can look back to that day, the day that we trusted you was a good day, and we can know you're saving, your love. Lord, we thank you for the example, the model, of Mordecai, of Esther.

Lord, help us to learn to be a people of conviction, that our faith will stand strong and won't waver, won't compromise. Lord, that we'll be a people of courage, that when the chips are down, we're going to step over the line, out of the comfort zone.

We'll have courage, and Lord, we'll have consistency too, that you're helping us, will help us to stay steady and true, to be consistent, to be faithful people of God.

Lord, for your glory we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.