

Things Are Not What They Seem

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[0 : 00] Well, amen. It is a privilege to be with you. I have been able to pastor in a number of different places and be in a number of different places in Canada. And it's amazing that you fall in love with wherever you are, at least if you are part of the family of God, which I have been for quite a while.

Although we came up, my family went to Whistler. They're in Whistler waiting for me to drive back there. And when we finally got to the lower mainland, my wife grew up in Gimli, Manitoba, where the plane went down, if you know that area, near Winnipeg.

And she was very glad to get out of there. I always wanted to be in Calgary, which is where I grew up. But when we came out to British Columbia, which was the only place we didn't want to go in following the call of God, we have decided never to leave.

And so we love Cloverdale, where we're at. And yet when we come here, the beauty and majesty of creation is overwhelming sometimes. And we went up the gondola. We'd never done that before. I now have a granddaughter, so we took her.

And I find that although the majesty of the mountains is amazing, the beauty of a granddaughter is even better. So I'll tell you that. How many of you watched Team Canada game yesterday? No hockey fans? Oh, a few hockey fans here.

[1 : 17] Finally, we got our gold medal back, so we won, if you care, which clearly you don't. Do we have Canucks fans here? A few? Well, I'm a Flames fan, so I suppose that means you can stop listening.

One of the questions that I have been asking, I have the privilege of being a part of a number of different organizations that are seeking to see a renewal, of seeking the glory of God, of being radically God-centered and radically God-oriented in Canada.

And we've been asking this question, especially, I suppose, with what we've been through over the last two years. But we've been asking the question before that. If we were to say, what does a church in Canada need to be alive and vibrant and impactful?

What's the greatest struggle that the church in Canada is going through? And as we ask this, we hear a number of different answers. It could be that we need to pray more, and I actually think we do need to pray more.

We need to love one another more effectively, and I would agree with that critique. We need more biblical preaching and godly discipleship. And I think there are so many holes that we can fill that sometimes when you ask that question, it's really difficult to settle in on one kind of all-consuming thing that would allow us, as Christians in Canada, much bigger than just local churches, but as Christians in Canada, to see a renewal and a revival and a devotion to God that supersedes everything else.

[2 : 41] But as we've been praying about it and seeking to understand that, the one issue that we've settled on, and I'll try to share it with you today, to encourage you to have this kind of full devotion to God, is that in Canada, it seems like we've slipped into a place where we've forgotten about God.

Now, as Christians, we remember God on Sundays. There are lots of people gathered on Sundays, perhaps not as many as we would like, but lots of people that gather on Sundays. There is a devotion to God in song that we seem to sing, but it seems like us, those of us who have gathered, living as though God is real and relevant in everyday life has disappeared.

It's almost like we know God exists, we're happy that God exists, but is He really real for me? Is He really relevant for my life in Squamish or Cloverdale or British Columbia or Canada or wherever it is we're from?

We've kind of seen a devaluing of God and His glory. We've kind of seen this removal of Him as the centerpiece of everything, the one we exist for, the one we glorify, the one who is there in everything.

And I think as we live in a spiritual battle that includes our flesh and the demonic realm and the world, they would love to see us distracted from that all-consuming passion.

[4 : 06] They'd love to see us to be those who say we believe in God and yet don't believe, and this is now from Hebrews 11, that He exists and rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

So how can we in a nation like Canada that seems to be drifting farther and farther away from God and from the Bible be those who are alive and vibrant and spirit-filled and see fruit that impacts not only our churches, this church here and the church that I represent and love in Cloverdale, but also the nation?

How can we see God move even when it feels like God is silent? If you have your Bibles here with you this morning, and I hope that you do, if you could open them with me to the book of Esther. Esther chapter 6 is where I would like you to go. Now you might be saying, why Esther? Esther, you could pick any book or chapter in the Bible, and Esther seems in some ways to be one of those that very few would pick.

Well, let me tell you first that Esther is my wife's favorite character, and I like to honor her, but she's not even here. I think Esther is a great selection for this subject for a number of reasons, but the main reason is this.

[5 : 17] Esther is a book that some have said is almost irrelevant because it's in the kingdom, in church history, because it doesn't mention the name of God. There is no prayer.

There is no pursuit of God by name. It's almost like God has disappeared and abandoned the people of Israel, and yet all over this book we see the hand and character of God.

And I think if we as followers of Jesus today can be reminded that when God looks like he's not there, when God looks like he's not moving, he is still sovereign, he is still personal, he is still relevant, he is still working, then we can step back and trust him and in anything we're going through, rest in his love and then serve him with radical devotion.

So really what I want for you is to see the unseen God. The unseen God in Esther, he's not there, and yet he's there in massive, majestic ways.

And I hope what it will do for us is in our own lives, in a personal way, allow us to open our eyes to see where sometimes we've forgotten in work or home or brokenness or COVID or whatever it is, where sometimes we've forgotten the amazing, majestic reality and imminence, closeness of God, allow us to reestablish that.

[6 : 47] To, as Psalm 16, 8 says, set him before us always. And because he is at our right hand, to never fear anything, to pursue holiness and love and a full devotion to him.

Now in Esther 6, we're invading a story that's already been going on, and I would love for you, if you have time sometime this week, to read the entire book. It's really a book that should be read in its entirety. In Esther 6, we've already seen tragedy upon tragedy upon tragedy.

If you go back to this time in history, Israel has disobeyed God. Because of their disobedience, they have been put into exile. Now some of those who are obedient and passionate about Jesus, or I suppose the promise of Jesus, have gone back to Israel, but some have stayed.

And we're introduced to an orphan. And her uncle, or perhaps as some translations would say, her cousin, I think her uncle, we're introduced to these two people that almost seem embarrassed about God and embarrassed about their heritage.

They're quiet, and you don't see anything in them that would set them apart as heroes, and yet we'll see that God chooses to notice them and use them and accomplish really the redemption of us, the saving of Israel, through their response to what is incredibly difficult and broken.

[8 : 12] Esther, who is amazing, we're introduced to her as an orphan, exile girl. In this culture, it is horrific to be orphaned.

It's almost like you're left alone and there's no one to take care of you. It's horrible to be in exile. You're looked down upon. In fact, we'll see in this story, even sometimes so brutalized that the whole nation you're in wants to kill you.

And then we see her as a person who responds to a call for a beauty pageant for a king that is evil. And we sometimes romanticize this. I would strongly recommend you don't because you'll miss the power of the story and the picture of God that he is painting.

She enters a beauty pageant with an evil king who is sleeping with every one of these girls to decide which one he enjoys the most. Now, God uses that sinful sick situation to bring her into a position of power.

Still not a very friendly position. In fact, you will know if you know the story well that she realizes that Haman wants to kill all of the Jewish people because Mordecai won't bow down to him.

[9 : 23] And so she steps out and she wants to engage the king. But even to engage her husband puts her own life at risk. I love Esther 4.14. Esther 4.14, you have this amazing, beautiful woman saying, while being told, hey, listen, maybe you exist for such a time as this, oh, orphan girl, in a horrific, broken situation.

Maybe God has chosen to put you here for such a time as this. Well, when we get to Esther 6, we see that her plan is already at work. She's called for a dinner date with her husband.

He's allowed it to happen. The king has said, you can continue to live. She's engaged Haman, the hated man from a Jewish perspective, the really second in command and in many ways the most important person in the kingdom.

And she's got these dinners going, but there's something going on beneath the surface that is as horrific as this attack on the whole Jewish people. What's going on in this broken world in the midst of all this despair is so horrific that the one person who protected Esther, who won't bow down, probably because of his Jewishness, although the text doesn't tell us, won't bow down to Haman, which would have been culturally friendly and the right thing to do, is now given a death penalty.

And Haman raises these, well, we don't know what they are. It's to hang him on or skewer him on 75 feet high. Everybody would have seen him. The rumor mill would have been rampant.

[10 : 55] And Mordecai now knows he's in trouble from an earthly perspective. And really, as I just set up the story, I want to read the whole thing to us and then stop in three brief places. This is a broken world filled with broken people who have forgotten God completely.

And I want us to look into this story, especially Esther 6, and see that the forgotten God is fully engaged. I think if I could do this without being misunderstood, I would call this message, as luck would have it, because over and over and over and over and over again, we're going to see coincidences that aren't coincidences, because God is so powerfully at work.

Things aren't always as they seem. In fact, if God is real and relevant, if God is powerful and personal, transcendent and imminent, if you want to use historical, theological words, if this is the true God we worship, then not only does He exist when we sing praises to Him, but He exists when our marriages fall apart or our children aren't doing what we want or at work we're struggling or our government isn't perfect or our health is struggling or my case right now, my parents sick and failing, dad with cancer, mom, horrible fall.

And sometimes we cry out, where are you, God? And again, I think a story like this will answer that question for us right here, right now.

Psalms 46, a very present help in trouble. So I hope we can see with eyes that are spiritual and alive, not only to fall more in love with Esther, but I hope her God, who is sovereignly taking care of her.

[12 : 49] And as we notice, no reference in this book to God or worship or prayer or sacrifice. To see its importance in driving us to rest and trust and rejoice in the great God of the Bible.

I want us to read all of Esther 6. It's not very long. It will take a few moments and then slow down and settle in on three stops, I will call them, and then hopefully drive these things home so that every person will leave here different in terms of understanding the reality of God and his intimacy, his relationship with us in terms of the fact that he is real.

And he is relevant. And he is so big and all-powerful that no situation is outside of his control and so intimate and present that he knows what you're going through, that he loves you, and that he's here with you in it and through it.

On the night, on that night, the king could not sleep, as luck would have it. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorial deeds and chronicles that they were read before the king.

I just comment a few things on this with your Bibles open. So this would have been very boring, but here's an arrogant man. You can study him in history. He's the man that went to Greece and was fought by the Spartans and then was defeated and then went back again.

[14 : 15] And probably his willingness to kill all the Jewish people was a grab for money. Probably he had spent his money, history would tell us, not in the text, on these wars.

And these wars had been massive failures. And he's got his own biography being written and he wants it read back. A little bit arrogant, very boring.

And as luck would have it, my edition, now back to the text. And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bithana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold and who had sought to lay hands on King Asherus.

And the king said, what honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this? The king's young man who attended him said, nothing has been done for him. And the king said, who is in the court? Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

Here's interesting again, as luck would have it, the king can't sleep. And Haman is so excited to enter a hateful situation with Mordecai that he'd come in early in the morning.

[15:24] So you've got a king who can't sleep and probably a servant of the king, Haman, who can't sleep either because he's so hungry to kill Mordecai. So in he comes early in the morning, the king's still awake after he had had this read to him.

And the king said, well, let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said to him, what should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor? Haman, filled with pride as well. In fact, you could do a whole sermon on this text just on pride.

He said to himself, whom would the king delight to honor more than me? And Haman said to the king, for that man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set.

And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

I just want to stop for a minute here and just notice, basically what he's saying is, I want to be equal to the king. There's a sense of magic on riding the king's horse, a sense of ownership, a sense of value.

[16:32] I want to be seen as equal to the king. Oh, king, you want to honor me? I am so great. Let's do this. In fact, maybe even forgot his hatred of Mordecai for a moment.

Now the horrible switch. Then the king said to Haman, Hurry, take the robes and the horse as you have said, and do to Mordecai, the Jew, who sits on the king's gate.

Leave out nothing that you have mentioned. So Haman took the robes and the horse and dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning with his head covered. And Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife, Zeresh, said to him, If Mordecai before whom you have begun to fall is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

I wonder, Oh, Zeresh, where was your counsel before? But she is right. While they're yet talking with him, now the story continues.

[17:42] The king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared. When God is silent, God is at work.

Maybe in your life you've felt the silence of God. Maybe you've experienced heavy, heavy brokenness that some here don't even know. This is the kind of story, I think, that causes us to realize that nothing happens by chance.

So let's look a little bit deeper just so that we can again seek to understand and apply God's word to our life. Not just understand the story better. I hope you will do that after this message. But actually to seek to live it out, to live in the presence of this great God.

And so the first thing I want us to notice, to stop and if you take notes, to write this down and to go back and review it, God is present. Especially when we think he is not. Especially when it is so silent and as Esther, the entire book has displayed, if you know this book at all, there is no mention of his name.

It's exile, orphan, despair, sin, consequences. God is present. On that night, the king could not sleep.

[19:04] Isn't it wonderful that God can even work in evil kings and prime ministers? Isn't it wonderful that God's people need never despair no matter how far out of control they feel?

Isn't it wonderful when the earth has its kings that there is a king of kings and lord of lords who reigns supreme over the universe?

See, if we really believe this, it gives us a rest, a relaxation in him and then a passion to please him and to serve him and to live for him with every breath that we take and a liveness and a vibrancy. See, as you walk through this chapter and God is not mentioned, you see the fingerprints of God all over this. Some shouting out, he's not in the picture. Me saying back, no, he's the painter of the picture.

See, here's a king who can't sleep and God is in that. God is actually keeping him awake, this pagan, evil man who thought life existed only for him and perhaps even demanded worship from his followers.

[20 : 14] God kept him awake. Not only did God keep him awake, God put in his mind, Proverbs 16 talks about this, directed his heart so that he would choose to read something from his biography and not only did he choose to read something from his biography, but get this, if you just think chances, God actually had the exact right thing to be read at the exact right time and he hears it and God not only had the exact right thing to be read at the exact right time, but he had this situation with Mordecai and his saving of the king read at such a time that he stepped back and he said, well, what have we done to reward this guy?

By the way, again, just to understand this time, kings were in danger from people trying to kill them and one of the ways they fought this traditionally was they would reward those who were loyal. I mean, he has to reward this guy.

It's horrifying that he hasn't and as luck would have it, as God is painting the picture, he hadn't rewarded this guy yet and so he knows he has to do something.

He can't sleep. He awakens. He's had this read for him. God's at work. God is present. Then as luck would have it, Haman's all excited to kill a child of God, Mordecai.

He's built the gallows. He's excited to go get permission from the king. He's going to do it right away. I can't wait to kill this guy and as luck would have it, he's noticed and as luck would have it, he's drawn into the whole presence of the king and he's asked this question, what should be done to one whom the king delights to honor and his answer is to respond and again, what I just want you to see is where it feels like God is silent.

[21 : 55] God is present and powerfully at work. Again, I just want us to see in the story that we've read and now are reviewing a little bit if you wonder where God is, he is with you.

He's present even in darkness. I might shout out to you, especially in darkness. See him. See him in Esther 6.

See him in your life but not only see him, see that he sees you and that's the second place I want to go. God is present. Now I want to just say God perceives. God sees everything that is going on. God is aware. He is, as Hagar so wonderfully says, the God who sees. You remember her story? Here she is.

She's a servant of Sarah. Sarai, I suppose. And Abraham can't have a child. Abram can't have a child. And so they bring her in in service to them and she is really a child bearer.

[23 : 08] It's kind of gross. I love how real the Bible is. And she has a baby. And she loves that baby. And she's excited to have that baby be a part of this family and yet she is hated and rejected and abandoned.

And in fact, so harsh is the story, you can read it in Genesis 16, that they kick her out to die. And she travels and feels exhausted and she stops and she puts her child over to the side.

If you have a child or a grandchild, it's even worse. You know how horrific this must have been and she just weeps, puts her child to die and moves over and cries one more time out to God and then God sees her.

And she cries out back to God after it's explained and she is met with this peace and this hope in her life that is so broken and in despair. You are the God who sees. Mordecai.

Mordecai who abandoned God as a part of the people of Israel, his own sin. Mordecai who didn't go back when a group went back from this place to Israel to resettle in the promised land.

[24 : 25] Mordecai who was shy about his faith and even told his niece to be shy about his faith. Mordecai, God sees you. I think one of the greatest things when I'm in counseling situations where people are just sharing with me things that are horrific that have happened in their lives, their real cry is this, God, do you see me?

Do you notice me? Have you seen what I've gone through? Are you here? Do you actually care about me? And again, the answer that Mordecai would shout to you is God is present and God sees, God perceives.

And perhaps most importantly, although I think you'll see this, they build on each other. not only does God perceive, not only is he present, but he participates.

Ephesians 1.11 would say it like this, God is at work in every situation to accomplish his purpose. And if you read Ephesians 1, it's to the praise of his glorious grace. God participates.

This is Joseph's testimony in Genesis 45. And if you don't get it in Genesis 45, repeat it in Genesis 50. This is a testimony. He says, listen, you intended this for harm. What? Well, kidnapping.

[25 : 49] Planned murder. Selling your brother into slavery. You intended that for harm. And if you know Joseph's life, it was horror upon horror upon horror, right?

I mean, he starts to build his life up because he's loyal to God, but then it's almost like everything falls apart again. And he gets accused of rape or attempted rape when actually he was just being pure in the presence of God.

He gets thrown in jail. He gets forgotten in jail. And yet he has this faith that says, God sees me and God participates. And the language of the Hebrew is so strong, and it is in Esther 6 insinuated, but in Joseph's life, it is just shouted out.

You intended it for harm. Your motive was harm. You wanted to hurt me. But God intended it for good. The saving of many lives. See, when we say God participates, it's not only that we mean God participates in our lives personally, right?

He sees us. He knows us. He loves us. He's engaged. But he's at work in us to accomplish something far bigger than just us.

[26 : 56] That this idea of God seeing us, of God noticing us, of God being present, is not so that we can narcissistically say, how great am I? It's so we can say, I'm a part of the plan of God. This is the Ephesians 2, 8 to 10 that is so powerful.

For it is by grace we are saved, through faith, not by works, as anyone should boast. It's a gift of God. We are God's workmanship. God's poimeia.

That's the Greek word. Work of art. We are God's work of art created in Christ Jesus, to do good works, which he prepared in advance for us to do.

Here's the amazing thing when we start to grasp this, the greatness of God overwhelming us, even when he feels silent, is that not only can we know and trust him in the midst of the brokenness of our lives because he is present and he perceives, he sees us, God's pain.

But we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God never wastes our pain. God always has a plan for us to accomplish his greater purpose in the midst of our brokenness and even sometimes in the midst of our despair.

[28 : 08] That's the promise that's in Romans chapter 8 as well. That's in James chapter 1. That's why we can consider pure joy, brothers and sisters, whenever we face trials of many kinds because we know, and there's this litany of what happens, we know God is at work changing me so that I can be a part of his plan.

Changing me, protecting me, guiding me, using me so that I can accomplish what he wants for all eternity. Now you say, Pastor, get us back to Esther 6.

Okay, I will. What did God do through a broken, orphan, exile girl? Well, he saved Israel, right?

He saved the people of God. Mordecai, what did he do through Mordecai? Well, Mordecai actually becomes a ruler after this. He becomes the second in command and he protects the Jewish people. Now, why is that significant for us?

Oh, obviously, we're excited that God notices individuals but I want you to see something way more important here. God has a plan and he's working out that plan and even when it feels like he's gone and even when the world feels like it's going crazy, which I tell you it does a little bit right now, we know that not only does he have a plan but he's placed us where he wants us to accomplish that plan.

[29 : 31] This is breathtaking because it means not only do you matter in terms of he loves you but you matter because he has chosen you to be a part of his plan if you're his to change eternity.

See, Esther and Mordecai are yelling this out to us. Look what God did through an orphan girl and a beat up old man by a gate. And of course, if you study church history, you'll know this is true of all sorts of others and you might say to me, but you don't know how old I am.

I had a 52-year-old. She was my age. I'm 52. That means I'm old. Say to me, God can't use me anymore. She's a very broken life.

Horrible. She was sharing to me all the things. She wants to be fully devoted to God. And she said to me, I don't think God can use me. I think my life is over. I think all of my dreams are over. And I just said to her, oh, that you would see God.

God never wastes our pain or the place He's put us. And I don't just mean for us personally. If this world was all there was, then this is what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15.

[30 : 41] We of all people would be most to be pitied, right? I mean, following Jesus is not easy. There is a cost to pay. But this world is not all there is.

And the God of the universe, the majestic God who made the mountains, and the oceans, and even if you're from Winnipeg, the mosquitoes, that God has chosen to use us as a part of His plan.

And this is amazing. In fact, I think if the Canadian church could get this, we would trust Him so much that we'd be unified regardless of COVID or Trudeau or you fill in the blanks.

that we would be so thrilled with the sovereignty of God and His placement on our lives of His call to accomplish great things that we would say regardless of where we are right now in the brokenness or whatever it is we're experiencing, God, here I am.

Send me. God, show me where you want me to serve you. God, you've placed me and made me for such a time as this. There'd be a revival and a renewal. Jerry Bridges once said, if you don't know who Jerry Bridges is, read everything he's written.

[31 : 52] Amazing guy. He once said, revival comes when true Christians, authentic Christians are aware of the presence and I'm going to add to this power of God.

Are you aware? Are you aware when God feels so absent like in Esther 6 that He's actually attentive and at work and that He notices you not just because of you but because you're a part of a much greater plan to accomplish incredible, mind-blowing things for all eternity?

Esther 6 can be life-changing. And my longing as someone who loves the church, local churches especially, but the Canadian church, is that we would be awakened to this and individually see God who sees us, be aware of His presence all of the time and then in His power live for Him.

If we do that individually and then we start to reverberate with brothers and sisters in other churches like Cloverdale and Squamish and other places and all of a sudden we're kind of touching base with one another and so excited about God that we can hardly talk about anything else and so thrilled with the gospel and the richness of this Jesus who would die in our place and rose again and then called us to live for Him, and all of a sudden others would notice the hope we have in us in the midst of hopeless situations and things would change for the glory of our King.

I look around at the Canadian church landscape, have the privilege of serving on some national boards and being a part of training pastors and those sort of things and if God doesn't exist, we're in trouble.

[33 : 38] The church is shrinking. Christians are very similar to the world. in fact, sometimes leading the world in despair and disorientation and division. But guess what?

God does exist and who knows? Maybe we were sent here for such a time as this.

I believe strongly that God has already been applying this to your life if you have the Holy Spirit at work in you, but I want us to help. And I do this by just saying here's three implications I want us to just drive home.

So let me drive these home that I think every Christian for you, I think probably specifically God has spoken to you. That's how he does when his word is read and preached. I want us to just align in three areas as fellow churches, fellow Christians.

The first is, let's be those who truly believe God is real. even in the darkness or perhaps as I've said earlier, especially in the darkness. And when the storms come, I love Mark 4, maybe my favorite passage in the whole Bible.

[34 : 43] The storm is just overwhelming and these fishermen know they're about to die and they go, I always say Jesus was in the basement of the boat sleeping, that's not quite accurate, but Jesus is asleep. He's total peace.

And they wake him up and they say, wake up, we're gonna die! Remember what he says to them first? Oh, you of... Why? Why does he say that to them?

They're fishermen. They know they're in danger because they lost sight of the living God who was in their presence. And that same God said, lo, and I will be with you always.

Till when? Till the very end of the... He's here. You believe in him. I don't just mean some kind of, okay, we're gonna hold up the Bible and yes, we have the right doctrine.

I mean we have the right delight in the living God. We... I love how one of my favorite scholars defines this. He just wrote a book on this. We have this treasuring of him.

[35 : 41] I think that's what true faith is. A new way of seeing things. Do you believe the God of the Bible exists? Because if you do, it changes how you respond to all of life. And all of a sudden, brokenness becomes a beautiful opportunity to display the awesomeness of God.

believe God is real. Secondly, choose to boldly live for his glory. Choose to say, regardless of where I am, regardless of the situation that I have right now, maybe it's of my own doing.

Some of Esther's and some of Mordecai's was. They're not perfect. They're far from it. If I took the time to preach the entire book, you would see that they make all sorts of mistakes.

Boldly choose to live for God if you're in the midst of mistakes you have made. Repent of those and choose to live for God. Or maybe it's someone else's mistakes or sin. Right?

That's Haman attacking Mordecai. You can boldly live for God. Or maybe it's just the brokenness of life. Health issues or whatever. You fill in the blank.

[36 : 52] If God is real, the only obvious response is to say, it's the Isaiah 6 or I suppose Mordecai or I suppose Esther, although they use very guarded language. Here I am, send me.

God, show me who you want me to bless. Show me how I can build your bride. Show me who you want me to love. Show me who you want to reach through me. Believe God is real.

Boldly live for his glory. And then my last. Bask in his love. I think one of the great attacks of our flesh is to think we're more important than we are.

And then when God doesn't come through for us to think we're less important than we are, rather than to find our importance in his love. Ephesians 3, 14 to 21.

And this is where I think Mordecai now realizes he sees that experience of God's noticing him. Or Hagar, you're the God who sees. Or Ephesians 2, verse 10, the God who saves by grace through faith and now has chosen me.

[37 : 59] You can become someone who says, as you experience the love of God in Christ, your value is truly beyond measure. In Ephesians 3, 14 to 21, there's this prayer.

Oh God, show us this love. Show me this love. Help me to experience this love. And then literally it says, if you do, you'll be filled to the fullness of God.

Now why is that important? Because it's the only way that you will selflessly serve. It's the only way that you will love those who are unlovable. And it's the only way in authenticity that you'll survive in Canada right now on fire for the living God and His gospel.

It is a privilege to be with you this morning. I'm so glad that you allowed me to come and to preach. A privilege because I love your church through BK and others. A privilege because as fellow

believers we have a long ways to go but we have the power of God behind us.

And a privilege because God has placed us here for such a time as this. Let me pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for your people here that you have gathered today for a message from you.

[39 : 16] Oh, in the power of your spirit would you drive it home? Would you forgive us for living like you don't exist and fill us with your spirit so that every breath we take would point to you?

Would you give us hope in the midst of what the world would see as hopeless? Would you give us love where there are so many that are difficult to love? And would you give us holiness where sin seems so dominant?

And would you cause us to treasure you above everything else and to point to you with great joy and to notice that you're at work. And when you feel like you're out of the picture you're painting the picture.

And so we can rest in you. In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.