

"What A Humbling Looks Like" - Esther 6:1-14
Wednesday 10/24/18 – Jeff Lyle

I. God Ordains An Awakening (1-3)

A. God remembers what others forget (1) - "On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king."

In many places within Scripture, God is seen to sovereignly work during hours where people are normally asleep. He is said to offer sleep and rest to His beloved (Prov. 3:24, Psalm 127:2). It would also appear from Psalm 63:6-7 that God will often use sleeplessness to communicate to His children. In the case of King Xerxes, a sleepless night afforded the opportunity for God to work precisely to bring about the next step in dealing with Haman. The king found himself awake at night and, almost as an afterthought, called for the record book of memorable deeds to be brought and read before him. If we remember, in Esther 2:22-23, Mordecai's reporting of an assassination plot against the king was recorded. For the first time, the king was about to learn of it. God was working his intricate plan.

B. God stirs up what others let settle (2) - "And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus."

Now the king has the information of which he had been long ignorant. Two of his staff had tried to kill him and a little-known Jew named Mordecai had reported it. The king was hearing how his life had been spared by the heroic reporting of a man he did not know.

C. God honors whom others ignore (3) - "And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Every now and again, a noble streak will appear in Xerxes. He clearly saw that Mordecai's deed was worthy of reward. Assuming something had been previously done for the hero, the king asks for the details of how Mordecai was honored. The sad answer comes that nothing had been done at all. The king was about to remedy the problem. Let this account remind all of us that God does not always bring about immediate reward for the good things which we do. Many times, we will experience the discouragement of being forgotten by those whom we blessed and served. Others will take

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us for granted. Worse yet, people who may actually be unworthy will occasionally be advanced above us while our efforts seem to mean nothing to those around us. A deferred reward does not necessarily equal a denied reward. Hebrews 6:10 reveals a promise that our righteous God can never fail to reward us. It will come. The timing of those rewards, however, sometimes require us to wait in faith.

II. God Employs A Sinner (4-9)

A. Sovereign timing on display (4-5) - "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. 5 And the king's young men told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

Here is yet another example of God's sovereign directing of affairs. Just as the king was asking about how to honor Mordecai, the enemy of Mordecai, Haman, is walking in the court of the king. Interestingly, the king calls Haman in so that he might get some input from his favorite man in the king's court.

B. Flagrant pride filling the room (6) - "So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"

True to character, Haman views the king's question about how to honor a man as being an opportunity to bless himself. He seems to regularly assume that the world orbits around him, so he interprets the king's question as being a reference to himself. You can almost hear his mouth watering as he sees an opportunity to exalt himself by manipulating the king through his reply. Haman is about to lavish honor on himself...or so he thinks.

C. Presumptuous words spoken in glee (7-9) - "And Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, 8 let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. 9 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

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city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'"

Haman does not hold back in communicating how the king should honor the person in whom the king delights. Assuming he himself is that person, Haman encourages the king to place the king's own robes on the man. Then, he suggests that the king's own horse be given to the man, along with a royal crown. While all of that could be done in private, Haman makes sure to include some counsel to make a display of the king's honor by parading the man through the city while crying out statements of honor over him publicly. We may not sense the enormity of what Haman is suggesting - the king's own horse, his royal robes and a majestic crown? Haman spares no expense in his fantasy of how he would like to be honored. He is about to find out that he will not be the man in whom the king delights.

III. God Crushes An Ego (10-11)

A. Haman's piercing humiliation (10) - "Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned."

Ka-pow! This is a severe gut-punch for the incredibly proud Haman. In less than one minute, he learns that all of the honor he just detailed to the king is now going to land squarely upon the heroic shoulders of his arch-nemesis, Mordecai the Jew. Not only does Haman have to bear the weight of Mordecai's refusal to honor Haman, now Haman is forced to give even greater honor to Mordecai. This is a beautiful revelation of what things can look like when we welcome God to fight our battles for us, defend our reputations and honor our commitments. Mordecai had been doing the right things for a very long time. Now came his season of honor.

B. Haman's ironic assignment (11a) - "So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city..."

This is nearly unbelievable. We can only imagine the utter humiliation on Haman's countenance as he leads the horse through the street with Mordecai riding it. The king's robe was on Mordecai's shoulders. The royal crown was on Mordecai's head. And perched

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atop the king's own steed was the Jew whom Haman hated. It does not get much better than this.

C. Haman's painful testimony (11b) - "...proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor."

The visuals were humiliating enough for Haman. Yet God so orchestrated the events that Haman's own voice was forced to give honor to Mordecai. Remember, the king is still ignorant of the respect-war going on between Mordecai and Haman. The king has no idea how deep a cut this is to Haman's pride. The very people in the king's gate who knew how furious Haman had been with Mordecai for refusing to rise and honor him were now witnessing that same Haman proclaiming honor upon Mordecai. Ironic indeed! And deeply satisfying.

IV. God Moves In Authority (12-14)

A. In promotion and demotion (12) - "Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered."

Haman heads home with his tail between his legs. His proud dreams are destroyed. His name is mud. He has lost everything he had ever wanted. This was the single worst day of Haman's life. Well, that is, until the next day would find him.

B. Over friends and foes (13) - "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."

His wife and friends loved him the day before when he was boasting of all his honor and privilege. Now that they learn of the newly arisen details, Haman's wife and friends bluntly tell him that his run of privilege has come to an end and that he is in deep trouble as he moves ahead. Remember that it is easy to be surrounded by applauding people when you are at the top of your game. When rock-bottom begins to find you, however, those fair-weather friends tend to scatter and take their applause somewhere else.

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C. In twists and turns (14) - "While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared."

For Haman, this would be the last supper. Very soon, he would do a face-plant on his own personal rock-bottom.