



## LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

### “Queens & Kings: Queen Esther & the Hidden Hero”

Ps Mike Cantrell – May 18, 2014

#### **WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)**

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What woman had a big influence in your life? What did she do that made the difference?
- Can you point to a pivotal moment that changed the course of your life? What was it?
- What do you do when God is not obvious in your life?

#### **WORD (10-15 minutes)**

Sermons can be heard online at [bethelbrentwood.org/media](http://bethelbrentwood.org/media).

Believers want to be assured they are living and walking in God's will. Consequently, we may ask...

#### **What do we do when God is not obvious?**

Consider the story of Esther. Mordecai was a Jew, who had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians after the fall of Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah. Mordecai served as a lower level official in the Persian kingdom. (The Persians had overthrown the Babylonians.) Mordecai's cousin was a beautiful woman named Esther. Her story is written down in the Scriptures in the short book named after her.

#### **Desperate Past**

Esther had grown up named, Hadassah. She was without father or mother, presumably due to the destruction of Judah. She was being raised in a foreign land with a foreign language, foreign food, foreign gods, and a foreign culture. She had experienced the destruction of her nation, exile, then the overthrow of her oppressors by another foreign power, and was now subject to new overlords, the Persians. The one redeeming aspect of her life was that she was cared for and raised by her older cousin, Mordecai, a godly Jew.

#### **Detailed Positioning**

God was at work in Esther's life even when it was not obvious. Xerxes, the King, had thrown a 180 day festival to celebrate his reign. Imbibing much wine, Xerxes called for his queen to come to him to delight him and his imbibed guests with her beauty. Surprisingly, but courageously, she refused. Consequently, she was banished from his presence forever. Then the King began a search throughout his empire for a new queen. It's believed that hundreds of women were identified and began a year long process of preparation for the chance to be chosen as the new queen. Esther was one of the women chosen, but her chances of becoming queen were obviously remote. Amazingly, Xerxes was eventually drawn to Esther, and she was chosen to be his queen. The whole set of circumstances that led to her becoming queen were seemingly guided by an invisible hand.

#### **Divine Purpose**

Due to the insecurity, pride, and selfish ambition of one of King Xerxes' high ranking officials, Haman, a crisis developed for the Jews. Haman had become deeply and unrighteously offended at Mordecai.

Discovering that he was a Jew, Haman plotted to have genocide committed against the Jews throughout the kingdom. Mordecai appealed to Esther to go to King Xerxes and plead for protection for the Jews. Esther, however, could not enter the Persian king's presence without being summoned by him. To do so would risk his displeasure, which in turn could result in her execution. Nevertheless, Mordecai pleaded with Esther, "(If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14 NIV). Esther recognized the gravity of the moment and courageously responded, "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16 NIV). The result was that her appeal was received by King Xerxes. His decision was to allow the Jews to defend themselves. The end result was that many of their hateful, violent enemies perished, while the Jews were delivered from Haman's intended genocide. Even Haman himself wound up being out to death by King Xerxes.

Interestingly, God is never mentioned once in the book of Esther. This is by design according to the author's intention. The lesson is clear. God is at work even when we are not aware of his presence and guidance. He is sovereignly and providentially ordering our lives to demonstrate his care and fulfill his purposes for his people.

### **Key Points**

- God's silence does not mean God's absence. His hiddenness is not his abandonment.
- God will do extraordinary things through ordinary people, if we will let him.
- God chooses women to play critical roles to advance his purposes, roles other than the critically important one of being a mother.
- God is our hidden hero who is always working in our lives, even when it's not obvious.

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.**

- Are you certain that God is in control of your present circumstances? What would it take for you to have that certainty?
- How can you step up to allow God to use you where he has placed you at this time?
- Can you trace God's handwriting in your life story? If yes, write your testimony down to help you become skilled at telling it to others. If not, do you want to accept Jesus as your Lord & Savior?

### **PRAYER (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- That God would increase our revelation and faith concerning His providential, sovereign oversight of our lives, and so bring greater peace to our hearts.
- That God would help us better understand the situations in which we are currently positioned in our lives and the purposes for which he has placed us there.
- That God would give us opportunities to tell others about God's amazing, invisible hand of care and guidance in our lives.