

Esther's Lesson

Week of Jan. 6 - 12, 2020

Introduction

Here are some things to remember about this passage. The Jews were in exile at the time. Esther is a female, an orphan and also a Jew. She was taken in by her cousin Mordecai for a while. She felt safe there, but was then taken by the royal court to be in the king's harem. Esther was hiding the fact that she was a Jew. In this week's lesson we hear the challenge she faces. How often God's promises are realized only when we walk by faith. They may seem out of reach to us, but for God, they are nearby, and within reach.

Lesson Esther 4:1-17

4 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. **2** But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. **3** In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 When Esther's eunuchs and female attendants came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. **5** Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

6 So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. **7** Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the

royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. **8** He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

9 Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. **10** Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, **11** "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, **13** he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. **14** For 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?"

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **16** "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."

17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

Questions

1. Esther did not know she was a leader until she was called upon to save the Jews, which could be at her own life's expense. Have you ever stood up for something you believed in? Even if you were not accepted and afraid of the outcome?
2. Think of all the roles you play, a parent, a co-worker, christian, a child, a sister or brother, American, a coach, etc. Have you had to determine which of these is most important when making decisions or speaking up for something you know to be right? Can you forgo these pulls at times, and ask God to help you do the correct thing?
3. Esther felt insignificant. By her speaking out, she saved the Jews. Have you ever felt your opinion would not matter, or that you were not significant enough to comment? Have you ever had to "save a friend or family member" when your voice or actions could assist?
4. Have you ever had a friend or family member need you to encourage them to speak up for what was needed? Mordecai helped Esther decide the right thing to do. It helps to have someone encouraging you. Do you encourage others in hard times?
5. Esther never thought she would make change happen. To her surprise and happiness it all went well. How can you step up in faith to assist others who may need your position in life to speak up for them? Have you ever had a moment that you did speak up and it turned out OK?
6. Sometimes we do not understand what is happening to us. Esther was in the harem of the king trying to stay hidden. Have you ever had to step out in faith when you were needed to say something or act on something? Trusting God's will gives us this strength.
7. Esther had to explain that her faith was that of a Jew. As a Christian, have you ever had to tell what your faith was and risk being put down upon? Are you willing to proclaim Christianity as your religion?

Prayer

Dear Lord, You sent Esther into an arena of power and affluence. She used this power to assist the Jews. May we understand that we too can assist those in need. In doing so we will help those less fortunate. Esther never thought she would make change happen, but she did. We pray you will use us where needed, to speak up for what's right or encourage those who need us by their side. May we trust and honor you to be in charge of using us as you see fit. Amen