

Sermon Discussion

5 September 2021

Read Esther 9:1-10:3

Dig Deeper

Even though the practise was widespread at this time, the Jews did not plunder their enemies (v. 15-16). The deliberate decision not to enrich themselves at the expense of their enemies would not go unnoticed in a culture where **victors were expected to take the spoil**. Anti-Semitism has a very ancient history. The very novelty of such self-denial would be remarked upon, remembered, and taken as proof of the upright motives of the Jewish communities.

Mordecai's proclamation united the two days on which the Jews had defended themselves (Adar 13 and 14) into one holiday. During the inter-testamental period, the Jews called Adar 14 "**Mordecai Day**" (*2 Maccabees 15:36, RSV*). Modern Jews celebrate Purim on the evening of Adar 14 (in March). It is their most festive and popular holiday.

Esther is the only Old Testament book not found among the texts used by the Essene community at Qumran, probably because this community did not observe Purim.

"Purim" is the plural form of the Persian word "**pur,**" meaning the "**lot**" (3:7). The name became a reminder to the Jews of how God used circumstances, specifically casting the lot to deliver them.

1. What reversals, if any, have you seen the Lord bring about in your journey? How have you seen him turn to good what others intended for your harm?
2. Though the striking down of God's enemies seems harsh, why is it ultimately about holiness? How do we reconcile a text like Esther with Christ's call to love our enemies and pray for them?
3. In what ways have your family's way of celebrating the holidays brought you to a place of remembrance of the holiday's original intention or veered away from the holiday's original intention?
4. In what ways are you intentional about reminding yourself of what God has done for us in Jesus? Why do we have to be intentional about this?
5. In what ways has our journey through the book of Esther and seeing how God uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect plans encouraged you? How has it been helpful?

6. What is something you have learned through your study of Esther? How will it impact how you live?

Application & Prayer

- This study has been about trusting God even when He seems distant or invisible. Confess to God the ways in which you lean towards trusting other things rather than fully trusting Him in His perfection.
- Remember a time in your life when you knew God was steadfast, faithful, and good to you, even when you couldn't see Him working. Thank Him for that and think about ways you can remember this time for future seasons of hardship.
- What will it look like this week for you to turn to God first?