

Sermon Discussion

1 August 2021

Read Esther 4:1-17

Dig Deeper

The absence of any reference to prayer in v. 3 may be significant. Prayer normally accompanied the other practices mentioned (*see 2 Kings 19:1-4; Joel 1:14*). Perhaps many of these exiled Jews had gotten so far away from God that they did not even pray in this crisis hour. However, the basis of this argument is silence, and arguments based on silence are never strong.

Mordecai encourages Esther that now, in the time of the Jews' need, "*who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" By His own **merciful initiative**, God delights to raise up deliverers for His people when they need him most. Consider the judges and the kings through Israel's history, who frequently deliver God's people, yet just as frequently are themselves corrupt (*see 1 Corinthians 1:27-29*).

"If I perish, I perish" can be seen as the words of Esther's Gethsemane. Unlike our Savior, however, Esther had to be threatened with destruction before she would act. Again, we see here how the Bible is honest about the flaws of its heroes. No one is without the need of God's grace in their lives.

1. Describe a time the Lord called you to do something but you were full of fear rather than faith and did not obey. Why is Esther 4 a good chapter for many of us who have been in this position?
2. Why do we tend to conceal our grief or struggles rather than sharing them openly?
3. Who is someone God has used to encourage you to be obedient to something God was calling you to do? Why do we need others who will help spur our obedience? How can we encourage one another to be obedient?
4. What does Esther do before going to speak to King Ahasuerus? What other spiritual practice is usually associated with fasting? How do you respond when you feel you are being prompted to serve God?
5. As queen, Esther was in the best possible position to appeal to the king; however, she was still keenly aware that she could perish (to perish = to suffer death). What things in your life do you need to "die to" in order to be in a better position to be ready and able to be involved in God's plans?

Application & Prayer

- This week, think specifically of how you might stir others up to love and good works. What does this look like? Where is God calling you to follow him right now and what is he calling you to do?
- Before we can be like Esther, we must be saved by a greater Esther. Because of Jesus's obedience on our behalf, we are empowered to move forward in grace. Where is Jesus calling you to identify with and sacrifice for Him? Think concretely! In family, at work, in church...
- God didn't need Esther to save the Jews and He doesn't need any of us to accomplish His plans. However, isn't it great to be a part of it all? Thank God for allowing you to have a role in His plans. Ask Him to remove any barriers that are keeping you from serving and to reveal opportunities to be a part of His plans.