

What a Difference a Day Makes

(Esther 5:1-14 – 6:11)

(preached 1/28/15; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

Introduction

There is the famous saying of “What a Difference a Day Makes.”

And there is much truth to that statement.

Think about how view of the world changed from the morning of Sep 11, 2001...

To the morning of Sep 12, 2001..

The same could be said for the morning of Dec 8 1941...

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941.

Or the morning before you had no children to the morning after you had children.

A day can truly be life changing in the life of a person, nation or even the world.

Well, we have come to chapter 5 in the book of Esther, and a day is going to bring great change in the lives of some of its characters.

In chapter 5, the pace of the story really picks up.

You ever seen those moving walkways that are in airports?

Well, you step on them and you continue to walk but you cover a lot more ground.

Well, we are the moving walkway section of Esther.

I have tried to take it chapter by chapter...

Because every chapter up to this point has set the stage for the events of chapters 5, 6, and 7.

In chapter 1, the king of the Persian empire disposes of his queen.

In chapter 2, Esther, a Jew, is crowned the new queen.

In chapter 3, Haman wants to destroy all the Jews and is given permission to do it by the king.

In chapter 4, Esther learns of the plan to destroy her people, and her cousin Mordecai urges her act.

When we left off last week, Esther has decided to go before the king though it could lead to her death.

So, all the pieces are in place.

And I want us to look at the next few chapters like a game of checkers.

When we arrive at chapter 5, the checkerboard is out and all the pieces have been put into place...

We just need someone to make the first move...

And that first move comes in the first 4 verses of chapter 5....

When we see....

I. Esther Goes Before the King (5:1-4)

5 Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's ^[a]rooms,

and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the ^[b]throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace.

² When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter. ³ Then the king said to her, “What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you.” ⁴ Esther said, “If it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”

Here again, we see the sovereign hand of God at work.

First, it is at work in directing Esther to go before the king.

It is definitely a risky move.

But second, we see God’s hand at work to move the king’s hand to extend his royal scepter.

If you remember from chapter 4, anyone coming before the king would die unless he extended the golden scepter.

So God moves in the king’s heart to do that.

However, Esther is not out the woods yet.

Not only is she at risk that simply appearing before the king, she now has to ask him to reverse one of his laws.

Maybe that is why we see a little hesitancy on her part when he asks her what she wants.

She just can't seem to get the words out.

She simply invites him to a banquet with Haman.

We have all been there when the words just won't come out.

We simply can't say what we need to say.

When I was 15, I got my driving permit without much problem with the written test.

But it took me nearly a year to go back and get my license...

I was scared to death of the driving test.

Simply because I had a fear of failure.

I don't know if that is what is going on with Esther here.

But after a sudden surge of courage, she seems to be hesitant to take the next step and so she simply invites the king and Haman to a banquet that day.

And that leads us to the second move of this drama in verses 5-8...

II. The King and Haman Go Before Esther (5:5-8)

Verse 5...

⁵ Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly that we may do ^[e]as Esther desires.” So the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared. ⁶ ^[d]As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, “What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.” ⁷ So Esther replied, “My petition and my request is: ⁸ if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do ^[e]what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do ^[f]as the king says.”

The king honors Esther's request in verse 4, and he calls for Haman and they go to the banquet...

And interestingly, we see a repeat of the first four verses...

The king again asks Esther what she wants, and she again invites the king and Haman to another banquet the following day.

And I think we see a very important lesson in these verses, even though it appears to be the same thing we read about in verses 1-4...

And the lesson is this...

Things that happen in the world can be viewed from 2 perspectives.

The first perspective is the human perspective.

And in this case, it looks like Esther has passed on two wonderful opportunities to save her people.

The king has asked what she wants...

And he has asked in a fashion that assumes he will grant her request.

“Up to half my kingdom” is surely a sign that he think highly of Esther.

Yet, she still doesn’t ask, and from a human perspective, we wonder why she even went in to the king.

Why risk your life when you refuse to do what you were sent to do?

And when viewed from our perspective, we feel frustration and even anger at her.

Yet, there are always two sides to every coin..

And two sides to every story.

And there is certainly two perspectives to what we are seeing here.

God is at work in the delay.

We are about to see how in a few verses.

He is working out his perfect plan for His people even if it seems that it is a failure at this point in the story.

And that has real application to our lives today.

We need to always remember that we don't always know the whole story about our circumstances.

Sometimes, the human perspective is not the same as God's perspective.

And the delay in Esther's request is the time required for the Lord to work His plan.

That begins with the third move in this game of checkers in verses 9-14, where....

III. Haman Goes on the Attack (5:9-14)

⁹ Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or ^[9]tremble before him, Haman was filled with

anger against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house and ^[h]sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹ Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the ^[i]number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him and how he had ^[j]promoted him above the princes and servants of the king. ¹² Haman also said, “Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am ^[k]invited by her with the king. ¹³ Yet all of this ^[l]does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.” ¹⁴ Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, “Have a ^[m]gallows fifty cubits high made and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go joyfully with the king to the banquet.” And the ^[n]advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.

Like a kid leaving the candy store, Haman is all smiles when leaving the banquet.

As the second ranking person in the kingdom, he feels honored to be invited to the first banquet and then to Esther’s second banquet.

So, his head is in the cloud when he leaves.

Obviously, he still has no idea that Esther is Jewish.

IF he did, it would not be the cause of much celebration.

But he doesn't, so he goes bounding out of the palace felling pretty good about himself.

That quickly changes when he sees Mordecai.

Not only will Mordecai not bow, he won't even rise to his feet.

Even though that is a great insult, Haman controls his emotions and goes to see his wife and friends.

He brags about his day.

He boasts of the invitation from the queen.

Yet in verse 13, he still is not as happy as he would like because of the actions of Mordecai.

Such is the action of a prideful man.

Even on his best day, he cannot find peace unless everybody praises him.

It is not enough to enjoy the praise of friends.

The man who is blinded by pride also wants the praise of enemies.

The saying is true...

Pride goes before the fall, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Warren Wiersbe says this..

“Pride is the only known disease that makes everybody sick except the person who has it. Unless

cured, pride is a sickness unto death. Haman was confident that he was set for life, when in reality he was just a few hours away from death”

Haman is a prideful man.

He is so prideful that he can't enjoy what has been a glorious day for him...

Yet, his pride doesn't stop there.

He then turns to his wife and friends, who suggest that he build a gallows and ask the king if he can hang Mordecai on it.

That idea pleased Haman, so he had the gallows built.

And let me say this...

Pride leads to all kinds of sin.

Pride will make you lie.

Pride will make you cheat.

Pride will make you steal.

Pride will make you do things that you never thought you would do.

Pride led Satan to think that he could run the world better than God.

Pride is a sin of the moment that we commit to hide our own shortcomings as people.

And the Scriptures are clear.

God despises the proud.

And you know why?

Pride robs God of the glory that belongs to Him.

If you are a fantastic singer, who deserves the credit for that?

If you are a tremendous athlete or a brilliant student, who is responsible for that?

God will share His glory with no one.

That's why God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Do you know what keeps people from getting saved?

They refuse to set aside their pride.

Because the first step to salvation is telling the world that you don't have it all together.

The first confession is that you are not perfect.

The first truth is that a sinner must admit is that he is broken and bankrupt and totally dependent upon God.

Yet, the prideful heart cannot make that confession.

Pride will ultimately make a person choose hell over heaven.

And pride led Haman to arrange the hanging of Mordecai.

We need to crucify the sin of pride in our lives.

The truth is that none of us have it all together.

WE are all broken people who cannot survive another minute if not for the grace of God.

We have nothing to boast about except the Lord.

We now need to move into chapter 6...

We have seen a number of moves already in this game of checkers.

We have seen Esther go to the king.

WE have seen the king and Haman go before Esther at Banquet #1.

Then we have seen Haman plan to go on the attack.

Now, let's look at...

IV. God Goes to the King at Night (6:1-4)

Chapter 6, verse 1...

6 During that night ^{1a}the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. ² It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³ The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Though the name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther...

Who do you think prevented the king from sleeping that night?

None other than God Himself.

So, he does what everyone does who wants to fall asleep.

He reads a book.

However, he's the king, so he wakes someone up to read a book to him.

And while reading about the history of his kingdom, he just "happens" to read about the heroic act that Mordecai had performed.

Five years earlier, Mordecai had heard about an assassination plot to kill the king.

He alerted Esther who told the king way back in chapter 2.

Yet, no one had ever rewarded Mordecai for his loyalty to the king.

The king learns about this on the night between the two banquets.

So we then see the next move in this story in verses 4-9, where.....

V. Haman Goes Before the King (6:4-9)

Verse 4...

⁴ So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. ⁵ The king’s servants said to him, “Behold, Haman is standing in the court.” And the king said, “Let him come in.”

Well, we know from the end of chapter 5 that he is there to seek permission to hang Modecai.

So, the king invites him in.

Verse 6...

⁶ So Haman came in and the king said to him, “What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?” And Haman said ^[b]to himself, “Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?”

The king asks the first question...

Obviously, he is asking about the proper way to honor Mordecai after discovering overnight that he had never been honored for saving the king’s life.

However, pride blinds the eyes and mind...

And immediately, Haman thinks to himself...

Well, no one in this kingdom deserves more honor than me.

The king is obviously talking about a proper way to honor me...

So, let me think of the grandest celebration possible...

This is like the man who is out Christmas shopping with his wife...

And she asks him if he likes this watch.

Thinking that it is a present for him, he tells her that he likes the most expensive brand the best.

Then the family gathers for Christmas, and he watches while his wife's brother get the watch.

Well, this is what is happening with Haman here.

He assumes that the celebration is for him...

So he tells the king what he thinks is the best celebration possible in verses 7-9...

⁷ Then Haman said to the king, “For the man whom the king desires to honor, ⁸ let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; ⁹ and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king’s most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.’”

Haman's pride leads him to describe what he thinks would be the greatest honor for him.

He imagines the king giving him a royal robe.

He imagines riding a royal horse that the king had ridden.

And he lays out all these plans before the king thinking that in just a matter of minutes...

It will all be coming true for him.

This is a self-centered world view.

For centuries, scientists thought the sun revolved around the earth...

Yet, it is now known that the earth actually circles the sun.

Haman operated on the idea that the world revolved around him.

That clouded all his thinking.

It removed all his judgment.

And that is a deadly way to live.

And it will eventually prove deadly for Haman.

But right here in these verses, Haman has laid out his plans before the king.

And then we need to look at the last move that we will see tonight in this story...

And that occurs in verses 10 and 11, where....

VI. Mordecai Goes Before the City (6:10-11)

Verse 11...

Haman has designed this grand parade to honor himself...

Yet we read in verse 10....

10 Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so forMordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said."

Can you imagine how quickly the smirk on Haman's face changed to shock when he heard the name Mordecai?

Can you see how quickly the air went out of the room on that day?

In an incredible turn of events, Mordecai is to be honored and not Haman.

What a difference a day has made in the life of Haman.

His plans to hoist Mordecai up on the gallows have now turned into him hoisting him up on a horse and parading him around town.

His plans to hang him are now plans to honor him.

And this has all changed overnight.

And so, what is the explanation?

Simply this, God intervened overnight in the life of the king!

Not only did he prevent the king from sleeping, God caused the right book to be brought to him.

Then God caused the king's servants to read the right page.

Mordecai's act has been done 5 years ago.

There were certainly history in that book prior to that and there would have been history recorded after that...

Yet, the Lord is powerful enough to direct the king's servants to recall an event that happened years ago.

And the God moves the king to honor Mordecai on the next day.

And then God moves to bring Haman to the palace early that morning.

And what brought his there?

The evil intent in his heart to ask permission to hang Mordecai.

And we see Haman, who just yesterday experienced one of the greatest days of his life...

Follow it with a day that would eventually be the worst of his life..

We will close tonight with verse 11..

¹¹ So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on

horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.”

It a strange twist of fate, Haman exalts the same man that he wants to execute.

And Mordecai is finally honored for his act of loyalty to the king.

A few quick principles for us...

1) First, when you rush full speed into sin, you are rushing full speed into disaster.

Haman got to the king first thing in the morning wanting permission to hang Mordecai.

A prideful heart led him to see the king even before their scheduled banquet that night.

And because he got there so early, he got the humiliation of honoring his enemy.

Sin has a way of biting those who play with it.

2) Second, your own faithfulness to the Lord may go unnoticed for years.

Mordecai had probably even lost all hope that he would be honored for saving the king's life.

Yet, that honor did come, even though it came 5 years later.

That teaches us this.

We don't do the right thing to receive attention.

That is what the Pharisees were guilty of.

They followed the law so people would marvel at their holiness.

The proper motivation for obedience and serving the Lord is not to gain glory for ourselves...

But to point to His glory.

You may never get earthly recognition for your faithfulness...

But nothing is ever forgotten by the Lord.

#3, Leave Justice to the Lord.

So, often, we seek justice for ourselves.

For our own pleasure.

Mordecai was not a righteous man.

I think we have seen that, but he had a right view of God's sovereignty.

He even told Esther that if she didn't try to save Israel, God would use other means to save them.

And some of that right view of God must have spilled over into his rivalry with Haman.

Even though Haman wanted to kill Mordecai, the Bible never says that Mordecai had the desire to kill Haman.

While we can't know that for certain, we will see that justice for Haman came from the Lord's hand...

And not from Mordecai's hand.

But that will happen next time.

So, we need to wait on that.

And I think we need to wait on the Lord's justice as well.

Romans 12:14-21..

Flip with me to those verses and that is where we will close tonight...

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute ^[m]you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but ^[n]associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷ Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. ^[o] Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but ^[p]leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Though I don't think Mordecai followed this perfectly, he certainly benefitted from the Lord's justice.

God knows what happens in his world.

And though we may never see it, his justice will prevail in this world and in the world to come.

We need to resist the temptation to take matters into our own hands at times...

And trust that the Lord is at work to care for and provide for his people at the right time.