

The Story
ESTHER – GOD’S PLACE AT GOD’S TIME
Esther 4:1-16
March 9, 2014

INTRODUCTION

- a. This morning in the Story we come to the close of the Old Testament
 - 1. The goal of the Story has been to show how from the very start the Upper Story of God’s Word is about what He is doing to draw us back to Himself.
 - 2. Each week we have considered a person or event that teaches us about life in the lower story (our daily lives) and informs us about God’s Upper Story plan for us.
 - 3. Last week Richard dealt with Nehemiah (Chapter 21 in the Story) the last for the OT – Today I am coming back to Chapter 20 to complete our walk through the OT.
- b. Through the years and even recently some have tried to downgrade the role of women in the Bible – Some would make them second-class in God’s Kingdom and some would not allow women any place of leadership in the church.
 - 1. Some would limit the role of women when Christ and the writers of the NT greatly expand the role, importance, and view of women in the church
- c. Today our lesson comes from a woman. It is a fascinating story and one that certainly fits this time in our lives
- d. The woman is Esther – Let’s see what we can learn

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- a. Esther, was her Persian name. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah. She was an orphan from the tribe of Benjamin. She lived among the Jewish exiles in Persia. She was raised by her cousin Mordecai, who served as a minor government official.
- b. A king by the name of Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes, was the leader of the Persian Empire. This most likely places the story approximately 500 years before the birth of Christ.
- c. The story begins simply enough with a king holding a banquet. King Xerxes of Persia has just spent six months parading his wealth before the entire kingdom (it took that long), and now he is throwing a feast for all the men in the capital city for seven days. His queen, Vashti, was giving a banquet for the women at the same time. After seven days of drinking, the king orders the queen to come and parade herself before his drunken guests.
- d. Queen Vashti refused to come. This made the king furious. Seeing his anger, the king’s personal attendants came up with an idea: They suggested that the king issue a royal decree, declaring that Vashti was never again to come into his presence. They also encouraged him to make someone else queen.
 - 1. They said, “Let’s find as many beautiful young virgins as we can for the king. Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This advice appealed to the King Xerxes, and the search began.
- e. In the city there was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem. Mordecai had a beautiful cousin named Esther, whom he had raised because she had neither father nor mother.
- f. When the king’s edict was announced, many girls, including Esther, were brought to the king’s palace. An early version of “The Bachelor”. Esther didn’t tell anyone she was a Jew, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day, Mordecai walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.
- g. The king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and he eventually made her queen.
- h. While Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, he overheard two of the king’s officers plotting to kill King Xerxes. He told Queen Esther about the plot, who in turn reported it to the king, giving the

credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were put to death.

i. During this time, King Xerxes honored a man named Haman, elevating him to a place of high honor in the kingdom. The king commanded all royal officials to kneel down and pay honor to Haman because of his position. But Mordecai refused to kneel down.

j. Haman was so angry that he looked for a way to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes. Because of Haman's influence, King Xerxes listened to him, and the order went out to kill all the Jews.

k. Listen to the rest of the story – It is in Esther 4:1-16

II. PRINCIPLES FOR US

a. The Lord does not shield us from difficult situations

1. Esther may have felt somewhat trapped – Her uncle demanding one action and to do so might mean her death. It was a difficult situation and the only solution involved taking a risk.

2. Some would have you believe that Christians never face difficult times or when they do it is a result of a "lack of faith" – So many people lose heart because they have bought into this lie. Tough, difficult times come to all of us. It is part of living in a fallen world.

3. In Esther's story she risked losing her privileged position, her possessions, her status and even her life, but she accomplished what God wanted.

b. For people of faith our lives have a divine purpose

1. God had placed Esther in Persia, in Mordecai's care, in the King's house, "for such a time as this" (4:14)

2. This is not a fatalistic view that "what will be will be" but rather it is the Lord placing His people in places where they can have the greatest impact for Him

3. Esther had the King's favor and access to the king – no other Jew could do what Esther could do.

c. It is important to enlist the support and prayers of others when we are trying to do God's will

1. Esther asked her uncle and all the Jews in the town to pray and fast for three days on her behalf – she would do the same and then approach the King –

2. The strength that comes from the others is seen in her resolve, "If I perish, I perish"

III. MAKING APPLICATION

a. At times we all feel trapped in a difficult situation

1. Single parent – with Bills to pay and no income or support

2. A Job that keeps you away from family way too much

3. Being out of work or under-employed – stress and pressure

4. Practices that make you cringe – questioning your ethics

4. Personal situations that need to be addressed but you are fearful

b. It is good to know that **The Lord does not shield us from adversity or difficult and hard times or decisions.** Your situation is not necessarily a result of a lack of faith – or a disciplinary action from the Lord

1. There are consequences for sinful behavior to both Christian and those who do not know Christ

2. The Lord may have you in a particular situation to prepare you for the future and to build your character and witness

a. For a sculptor to turn a piece of rock into a statue there are many blows with hammers and chisel and many rough edges that are sanded off – Being shaped by the Lord is a similar process

3. When pressure comes and you feel trapped – Look to see what the Lord might be doing in your life

c. **It is important for you to remember that the Lord has you where you are for a purpose – Your life has a divine purpose** – You are here not by accident but by design

1. How then do you invest yourself – Knowing that the Lord has placed you where you are makes a difference and what difference are you to make where you are?

2. Rather than always looking for greener pastures or different places – (Erma Bombeck tells us that the grass is always greener over the septic tank) – seek ways to be used by God where you are – It might just be **“for such a time as this”**

3. In **“Remember the Titans”** Coach Boone was in a strategic place. It was scary. People were throwing rocks through his windows. He was insulted, threatened, and harassed. But lives were changed among black and white high school students, their families and an entire community.

d. Feel alone and abandoned or weak and not able to do what you know you should - **enlist the support and prayers of others when you are trying to do God’s will**

1. The support of friends is important – Jesus sent the disciples out in twos – He knew that alone they would “wimp out” but together they were strong.

2. When others pray they bring the power of God to bear on your life and situation

e. Christians let me leave you with these **Truths from Esther’s life:**

1. **The Lord does not shield us from difficult situations**

2. **For people of faith our lives have a divine purpose**

3. **Enlist the support and prayers of others when we are trying to do God’s will**

f. Will you make a difference where you are?

BOW WITH ME IN PRAYER

8:30 #355 “TRUSTING JESUS”

11:00 “THE POWER OF YOUR LOVE”