

Day Three: A Royal Risk

Let's Start with a Few Questions



Q: What problem have we been talking about?

Q: Who was the first hero we learned about?

Q: That hero worked with God to save himself and his family from the punishment for sin (the great flood), but did he solve the problem of sin itself?

Q: Who was the second hero we learned about?

Q: That hero worked with God to save his people from slavery in Egypt and also from the Angel of Death who came to punish Egypt, but did he solve the biggest problem: sin?

A Hero Like You



Today we're going to learn about a hero who was a lot like you. She was a young girl who found herself in a very strange and frightening situation, but she trusted God to help her do the right thing.

After Moses led God's people out of slavery in Egypt, the people did not always obey God. Whenever they got into trouble, they called upon God to rescue them. When they were safe they would turn away from God again. We might call that crazy behavior, but the Bible tells us that we *all* do it—which is why we need a savior.

*All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*
Isaiah 53:6 ESV

Esther lived in a time when God had allowed his people to be conquered in battle and taken from Judea to live in Persia. Esther lived in Susa, the capital city of the Persian kingdom. She lived with her older cousin Mordecai because she had lost both of her parents.

The king of Persia, Ahasuerus, wanted a new queen. He decided to choose his queen in a strange way. He had a very long beauty competition with all the young women his servants could find in the kingdom.

Many, many women came to live at the palace in Susa. After more than a year of beauty treatments and practicing their favorite skills (like writing poetry, playing musical instruments, dance, etc.), they were invited one at a time to visit the king so he could decide if they would be the new queen.

The moment the king met Esther, he fell in love with her and crowned her the new queen! That might seem like a happy ending to Esther's story, but it was only the beginning.

A Dangerous Enemy



There was a terrible, mean-spirited man named Haman in Susa. He was an advisor to the king. Haman was such an important official that the king said that anyone who saw Haman walking around town should bow to Haman to show him respect.

Mordecai was one of God's people. He knew that he should not bow down to anyone but God. Mordecai never bowed when he saw Haman. Haman got very angry about this. He hated Mordecai so much that he wanted to punish Mordecai—but not just him: he decided that he would destroy all of Mordecai's people—the Jews—throughout the entire kingdom.

Haman told the king some terrible lies about the Jews. He convinced the king to make a law saying that all the Jews in the kingdom could be destroyed on a certain date.

Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

Esther 3:13 ESV

This was very bad news for Esther's people! When the king of Persia issued a law, it could *never* be canceled! When they heard about the new law, God's people, the Jews, became very afraid and sad. They mourned, fasted, and prayed for God to save them.

When Esther heard that Mordecai was mourning and fasting, she sent someone to ask him why. Mordecai sent a message back to Esther explaining the bad news and asking her to go to the king and beg him to find a way to save her people.

Esther did not want to do that. Her message back to Mordecai said:

“All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

Esther 4:11 ESV

She was afraid to bother the king, because whenever someone bothered him without an invitation, they could be put to death! Mordecai sent Esther some very good advice that's also good advice for many of us:

“Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther 4:13-14 ESV

Mordecai told Esther some very important truths:

- The king's rule applied to *her* too, even if the king didn't know (yet) that she was a Jew.
- God *would* solve this problem somehow, whether she helped or not—wouldn't she rather be a part of God's plan instead of sitting back and doing nothing?
- Maybe Esther had become queen because *God had put her right where she needed to be to save her people!*

Esther realized that putting herself at risk was a small price to pay to save the lives of so many people. She told Mordecai:

“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

Esther 4:16 ESV

The Royal Risk



After praying and fasting, Esther went (uninvited!) to see the king. He was happy to see her! He stretched out the golden scepter, which meant that she would not be punished for visiting the king. He told her she could have anything she wished for.

Esther said that she would love to prepare a feast for the king. Oh, and by the way, could the king invite his trusted advisor Haman? The king loved the idea and sent for Haman right away.

During the feast, the king asked Esther again what she would like from him, and promised that she could have anything she wanted. Esther didn't tell him her wish yet, though. Esther told the king that if she could prepare another feast for the king and Haman the next day, she would make her request at that feast.

The king agreed, and Haman went home to boast to his wife about how important he was. Haman felt like nothing could stop him now. He decided that the next day Mordecai would be hanged where the whole town could see him punished.

At the feast the next day, Esther shared her wish with the king: she asked that her people, the Jews, could be saved from destruction. The king was angry when he heard that Esther's people were in danger! He demanded to know who would do such a terrible thing. Esther pointed at Haman and said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!"

The king was so angry about Haman's wicked lies that Haman was hanged in the very place he had arranged for Mordecai to be hanged. Then the king gave Mordecai Haman's royal advisor job! The king asked Mordecai to try to undo the terrible law. Mordecai couldn't cancel the first law, but he could make a second law. The new law said that the Jews could gather in groups to fight back against anyone who tried to hurt them—and that they could keep all the wealth and property of anyone who tried to hurt them.

When this new law was released, God's people rejoiced! No one wanted to hurt them anymore! God's people were saved!

Pray, Listen, Say, Memorize



Prayer

God, please help us to be like Esther. Please help us to listen to You and do what You call us to do, even if we don't understand all of the details. Please help us to realize that Your plans *will* happen whether we are a part of them or not—and please help us to be faithful and obedient to You so we can help make Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.



Listen to the song 'God Is For Us' and read the lyrics as you listen. Do you think Mordecai and Esther would like this song? What does the song remind us about God's love for us?



Today's Truth

God is *always* in control.



Memory Verse

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31 ESV