

Perfect Timing

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] Last week we saw Esther take the risk of approaching King Ahasuerus and we know that he's also known as Xerxes.

! Although such an approach could have meant death for her, the king welcomed her into his presence. And Esther's goal was to find a way to stop the extermination of the Persian Jews that was ordered by Haman.

When the king asked Esther what she wanted, she simply invited the king and Haman to another banquet. Following the main course of the banquet, the king asked Esther a second time what she wanted, and her reply was recorded in chapter 5, verses 7 and 8.

It says, We talked last week about how Esther was carefully maneuvering the king into a position where he'd be obligated to do whatever she asked.

He'd now twice publicly said that he would give her anything she wanted up to half his kingdom. Curiosity alone would have made him want to come to the banquet. It would have been hard for him to stay away after this buildup.

[1 : 29] Haman also was thrilled to be invited to dine with the king and queen again. But Mordecai quickly spoiled his move. If you look down at verse 5-9, we see, And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart.

But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. At the end of chapter 5, we met Haman's wife and friends for the first time.

They were much like Haman. They showed no regard for anybody but themselves. And in the last verse of chapter 5, Haman's wife and friends offered a solution to Haman's problems.

Verse 14 said, Tonight we will cover Esther chapter 6.

And so before we get into the verses in detail, let's go ahead and read all of the verses at once. Starting with verse 1, it says, On that night the king could not sleep, and he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

[2 : 48] And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?

The king's young men who attended him said, Nothing has been done for him. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

And the king's young men told him, Haman is there, standing in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in, and the king said to him, What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?

And Haman said to himself, Whom would the king delight to honor more than me? And Haman said to the king, For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set.

And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

[4 : 07] Then the king said to Haman, Hurry, take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned.

So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to

honor.

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared. We know as we look through the Bible that Scripture illustrates Scripture.

[5 : 09] The narrative of this chapter, and indeed the whole book of Esther, points to truth taught elsewhere in the Bible, and especially in the book of Psalms and Proverbs. Listen to a couple of verses from Psalm 37.

Verses 5 through 7 say, In that same psalm, a little bit further down, verses 32 and 33 say, The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.

The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.

Mordecai seems to be in deep trouble as we head into chapter 6.

In the morning, Haman is going to ask the king to have Mordecai killed, and time appears to be running out for Mordecai. Instead, as we go through the chapter in detail, we'll see proof of Psalm 37.

We'll see God's perfect timing throughout the entire chapter. We're going to break the chapter into four sections tonight. The first thing we'll see is the problems.

[6 : 30] And the problems are actually the king's problems. Verses 1 through 3 tell us what those problems are. So let's read those verses again.

They say, On that night the king could not sleep, and he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the Chronicles, and they were read before the king. And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

And the king said, What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this? The king's young men who attended him said, Nothing has been done for him. The verses highlight two problems for the king.

First, he wasn't able to sleep. And second, he found out that he had failed to honor Mordecai for saving his life a long time ago. God's sovereignty didn't end with keeping the king awake.

He also directed his choice of alternative activities for the night. We know that he had no late night television to watch, so in the absence of late night television, an insomniac like Ahasuerus had no lack of potential entertainments.

[7 : 45] He could go with food, any kind of drink, dancing girls. We also know he had an enormous harem. He had all kinds of pleasures just waiting for him at his disposal. But he chose instead to listen to a recording from the government records.

It was the Chronicles of his reign. And the annals of ancient Near Eastern kings tended to be a stock catalog of victories won, lands conquered, and tributes imposed.

So, to us, it would probably be about as compelling as reading income tax regulations. And maybe, actually, that was the point. If anything would send him back to sleep, it would probably be a monotone reading of his own life story.

The night, though, continued to drag on, and he stayed awake. And as morning dawned, the reader of these chronicles came to a section that described a plot against the king's life.

And the plot, as we know, was thwarted by Mordecai. And it made the king wonder what honor or distinction had been bestowed upon Mordecai for that. Persian kings were famous for their diligence in rewarding those who assisted them.

[8 : 55] It was good for public relations for them, and it was also good for their personal safety. The reply he received from his attendant, though, was shocking to him. The attendant said, nothing has been done for Mordecai.

So, who would save the king's life the next time if there were no certainty of a reward? That had to be what was going through the king's mind at this time. So, for Xerxes to fail to honor a person who saved his life was to be guilty of a serious omission that needed to be remedied.

Because of his delay in rewarding Mordecai, something especially noteworthy had to be devised for this reward. As you think about it, the perfect timing of God's intervention may take our breath away. The author of the book of Esther plainly expects us to see God's hand at work both in the king's insomnia and in the seeming accident of the point in the record from which the king's reader had chosen to read.

We know that God is never in a hurry and his timing and intervention are always exactly right even if it may not seem that way to us. In earlier sections of Esther, we've seen the king deal with his problems by asking his advisors for help.

[10:11] For all his impulsiveness, the king is helpless without his advisors and he counts on them constantly to tell him what to do. And this trait of the king surfaces at just the right time to give us another example of God's perfect timing.

As we move into the second section of the chapter, we will see the pride. So we'll see the pride in this next section and of course, this pride comes from Haman.

Look at verses 4-9 again. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

And the king's young men told him, Haman is there standing in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in and the king said to him, What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?

And Haman said to himself, Whom would the king delight to honor more than me? And Haman said to the king, For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set, and let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials.

[11:30] Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

Normally, at this time of the morning, there might well have been nobody in the courtyard, but divine providence had been moving other pieces into place as well. Haman had come for an entirely different purpose.

We know that he was intending to speak to the king about having Mordecai hung on the spike that he had erected in his house or outside of his house, and after that, Mordecai, or the Haman, had planned to enjoy the rest of the day by going to the banquet with the king and queen.

So he probably thought it was a lucky moment when he was called to see the king so early in the morning. He could get started on this plan real early and then have fun the rest of the day.

Unlike Esther, Haman wasn't about to risk his life by appearing unannounced before the king, though. So as we go on, we'll see that the events will prove that this wasn't a lucky moment for Haman after all, but it was a providential moment, and providence had something far different in mind for him than what Haman expected.

[12:46] Haman actually never got the opportunity to request that Mordecai be executed. Instead, the king asked Haman a question first, and of course, that question is what should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

Notice that the king fails to mention one piece of information that Haman might have preferred to know. In making his request for advice, the king left out the crucial piece of information about who was to be honored, just as Haman himself in chapter 3 had left out the crucial piece of information about the identity of the people to be destroyed.

Haman's pride surfaces in his reaction to the question. The possibility that the king may want to honor someone other than Haman never crosses Haman's mind.

In fact, the writer tells us exactly what Haman was thinking. He was thinking, whom would the king delight to honor more than me? Given Haman's past trajectory, this was a reasonable assumption. He'd been elevated above all other princes and nobles and he was second only to the king in the kingdom at this point. So why shouldn't the king ask him to name his own reward?

[13:59] In Haman's mind, the king was just tactfully omitting his name so that he wouldn't have to be embarrassed about asking for what he really wanted. Haman imagined that this was his opportunity to ask for whatever he wished.

He showed none of the subtlety and circumspectness in responding to the king that Esther had done. Far from delaying the moment of the request until he was sure that the king was ready to do exactly what he said, he plunged in right away with his request.

He didn't even pause to frame it with the usual phrases of courtesy that are like, if it seems good to the king or if I have found favor in the king's sight. He just jumped right in and said what was on his mind.

His request was exactly what we would have expected given his idolatry of public recognition that we saw in the last chapter. He wanted neither wealth nor power.

He had those in abundance already. All he wanted was to be treated like the king in public.

Haman's pride had manufactured the trap in which he was about to fall and now he pushed himself headlong into it.

[15:05] He suggested the thing that would be most pleasing to himself, a public show of honor that was unequalled in living memory. He sought an elevation that would give him almost kingly status and he piled honor upon honor.

He suggested the king's clothes, the king's horse, a royal crest on the horse, a prince as an escort and a herald to proclaim the honoree's glory. Haman's parade, at least his parade in his own mind, would progress through the most populous plaza of the city so that everyone there would see the extent of his honor.

So this was his dream day, at least that's what it appeared to him to be at that point. So, so far we have seen the problems and the pride. In the next section of the lesson, we see the pronouncement, the pronouncement, and the king makes a shocking, at least it's shocking to Haman, pronouncement about what will be honored and who will be honored.

Look at verses 10 through 12 again. Then the king said to Haman, Hurry, take the robes and the horses you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate.

Leave out nothing that you have mentioned. So Haman took the robes and the horse and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

[16:32] Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. In a few short seconds, what looked to be Haman's dream day turned out to be just the opposite.

I went with a shorter heading than one of the commentaries. That commentary used a heading for these verses of Haman's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. It's a very descriptive heading, so Haman's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day is more descriptive, but I figured you would need a little more time to fill in the blanks than what we might have.

Considering the prayer time was a little shorter tonight, maybe I should have gone with the longer heading. But let's learn a little bit more about Haman's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

The king's words in verse 10 had to hit Haman like a slap in the face. That's where he said, hurry, take the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate.

Leave out nothing that you have mentioned. There was no other course of action open to Haman other than to swallow this bitter pill. So think about the anguish that he had to go through over those next few hours.

[17:52] You really can't imagine what it must have felt like to him. Everything that he in his arrogance thought should be his, he was now compelled to lavish upon his bitterest enemy. So insult was added to injury because he was the author of his own humiliation.

The whole thing was his idea. The day had started so well, but in a few short minutes and in some agonizing hours of honoring Mordecai, Haman's bubble had burst and he knew only grief.

Haman's own words had come back to haunt him and the phrase he had delighted so much to pronounce when he thought it was going to be about him must have tasted like ashes in his mouth at the end of the long day of shouting in front of Mordecai.

Something else is interesting to notice about verse 10. Notice that even in light of the impending edict, Xerxes referred to Mordecai as the Jew.

One likely explanation is that in keeping with his indifference shown in Esther chapter 3, Xerxes had even now never bothered to inquire about who exactly the certain people are that he had condemned to annihilation.

[19 : 03] Verse 12 summarizes the different reactions of the two men. It says that Mordecai returned to the king's gate and that indicates something about Mordecai's modesty and his refusal to allow the events to go to his head.

He simply returned to his duties as if nothing had happened. And unlike Haman in the previous chapter, Mordecai didn't call all his friends together to enjoy their congratulations and tell them about everything that had happened to him.

For Mordecai, the major benefit was the perfect timing of the reward. He was known to be a Jew and his loyal action publicly rewarded in this way proved that the Jews were no enemies to the king's person contrary to Haman's evil suggestions in chapter 3.

Such unexpected honor must have been a delightful indication to Mordecai that God was working on his people's behalf in a manner that went far beyond anything that Mordecai had asked or thought.

It was a lot different though for Mordecai's nemesis. Haman was completely says Haman hurried to his house mourning and with his head covered.

[20 : 17] Earlier it was the Jews who mourned but now the balance of power was shifting. So to go along with the problem the pride and the pronouncement we have one more section to cover in the chapter and in verse 13 we see the prediction the prediction and verse 14 hints that the prediction soon will be coming true.

So look at verses 13 and 14 together. They say and Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him if Mordecai before whom you have begun to fall is of the Jewish people you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.

While they were yet talking with him the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared. Like we saw in the last chapter Haman had to tell his wife and his friends everything that had happened to him.

In chapter five Haman's wife and his friends were the one who made the suggestion to Haman that he had Mordecai killed. Like the last chapter Zeresh and his friends offer a solution without any apparent compassion.

This time however their lack of compassion is directed toward Haman himself. They tell Haman that if Mordecai is Jewish Haman has a big problem. Zeresh gave her proud husband his first clue that this day's events were more than just a setback to his plans.

[21 : 51] They were an indicator of certain doom. She saw both his destruction and its correct cause. The cause was not just his evil scheming and not even that he had plotted against a good man.

It lay in the fact that Mordecai was a Jew. The text doesn't tell us how this knowledge came to Haman's wife and friends. Presumably they knew something of the history of their people's interactions with the people of Israel and their God in the past.

But it's striking how quick they were to put two and two together and get to the correct answer. Even though the answer was unpalatable to their convictions and preferences, Haman's wife and friends could read the unfolding events with true insight and perhaps that's why this time the writer calls Haman's advisors wise men.

It's interesting that it does refer to him as wise men in the verse this time. Tragically though, there was no change in Haman as a result of this idolatry had been exposed as empty, his hatred of the Lord's people had been shown to be in vain.

Now would have been the time to be wise and bow down submitting to the Lord lest he be destroyed along the way. But Haman was given little time to reflect on his foolish ways.

[23 : 09] While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared. The impression created by the writer there is that Haman is no longer in control of the events.

From the beginning of chapter 6 onward, the enemies of God's people are on the run and God's people are on the upswing, not because of their bold faith or fearless action, but simply because of a sleepless night.

Notice that Esther is completely absent from this decisive! We haven't talked about Esther at all other than to reference what had happened in the past. Mordecai himself is just a passive participant.

Yet the decisive intervention by God's sovereignty doesn't make human actions meaningless. Esther will still get her moment to stand up for God and his people and God will use her courageous stand to bring Haman's scheming to an end.

But Haman's fate recognize before Esther's subtle plans have a chance to play themselves out. So God's sovereign purpose works through his servants but it doesn't depend on their willing obedience.

[24 : 21] And that matches what we're seeing from Pastor Mike's Jonah study on Sunday morning. So let's consider what we can learn from this chapter. Here's the first and most basic point.

It simply is that God exists. There are many evidence of God's existence and the continuing survival of the Jews as a distinct people right up to this point in time in which we live is one such proof.

God's enemies conspire against his people in every age but yet the Jews are still here. The church is similarly attacked by God's enemies as the people of God.

The continuance of the church of Jesus Christ made up of redeemed Jews and Gentiles is likewise a testimony to God's reality and power. A good example is the amazing growth of the church in China.

At the close of the cultural revolution there in 1978 not one single official church was open but at the turn of the 21st century there were over 13,000 as well as 35,000 registered meeting points and countless other unregistered house churches.

[25 : 32] God's providence is working even when we cannot see God himself and so that shows us that God exists and God's providence working even when we cannot see God himself is the second thing that we can learn from the chapter.

We touched on the examples of God's providence as we walked through the verses and here are just a few examples of those as a reminder the king's insomnia came precisely when needed he chose to hear about his own exploits instead of his many other sources of entertainment the person reading to him just happened to pick the section containing the summary of Mordecai's heroics reaching further back into the book of Esther the king uncharacteristically had failed to honor Mordecai at the time Mordecai saved his life add to all these things the fact that Haman was the person in the court at the time the king needed advice and we can tell that God was involved in all of these details we just talked about how even Haman's pagan wife and friends saw God's hand in the details of the day's events we can learn something from Zeresh and Haman's advisors their swiftness to believe in the power and final victory of

Israel's God is in marked contrast to the slowness of God's own people to turn to him in their hour of need think back to Esther chapter four there was plenty of mourning and fasting among God's people when Haman's edict was announced but we saw no calling out to God on the basis of faith in his promises even in Mordecai's speech to Esther in which he implored her to intervene with the king he made the is that we easily get thrown by circumstances that seem to be conspiring to bring our downfall so surprising as it may seem we can learn a more godly response from

Zeresh and Haman's friends than we do from Mordecai and the Jews of that time the next thing we can learn is that God will vindicate his people God promises not to overlook his people's cause rather than trying to champion our own rights we are to recognize that the triumph of justice is God's proper work and we are to look to him for confidence and in confidence that he will accomplish that Mordecai is an example of that vindication though Mordecai's reward had long been delayed it came at the most opportune time similarly it's easy as believers in Christ to wonder about where our reward is going to be especially if we've served God faithfully and we think we've honored him in everything that we've done so as we look back on life it may seem that we've toiled in vain and spent streaks for nothing the Lord Jesus though however encouraged his followers to persevere through afflictions and false accusations listen to

Jesus words in Matthew 5 11 and 12 he said rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for they persecuted the prophets who were before you there's one key to that verse that we need to be careful to notice he doesn't say your reward is going to be great in this life we may get some rewards here but the promise that he has is that your reward is great in heaven and in Revelation 22 12 John recorded these words of Jesus he said behold I am coming soon bringing my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done so the key is that we do not have to look to the world for vindication instead we should look to God whether or not people overlook what we've done is insignificant because God will not overlook us he is able to reverse our fortunes and we know that a glorious time is fast approaching when

[30 : 11] God will right every wrong meanwhile our savior and king knows all that we try to do in his name! The last thing to learn from this chapter is that God's vindication of his people typically follows a period of difficulty we wish we could leave this one out but the evidence is undeniable in scripture seldom if ever has God shown his power on behalf of his people without it having been preceded by some opposition against them without the difficulties there would have been no triumphs so we do well to see all opposition and difficulties as a public platform or stage upon which God may display his power and he will not disappoint us for those of us going through the explore the Bible commentary on Sunday mornings we're looking at the exodus and the exodus is one example of how God displays his power following difficulty New Testament examples abound as well think about what happened when the disciples were in the storm on the lake there was a purpose in our

Lord not going to them until the fourth watch of the night similarly he also had a purpose in waiting to go to Lazarus's grave until after several days following Lazarus's death so we can summarize all these learnings like this we cannot begin to imagine all that God graciously may choose to do on behalf of his people and when it seems that God is not active he actually may be the most at work he may be most present when he seems the most hidden his power is limitless as are his promises in our Lord Jesus Christ and by his son's death for sinners he has achieved a perfect salvation for all who believe as part of that salvation in Christ God freely gives his people all they need so how too can we be slow to trust in God's providence seeing that he has sent his own beloved son to die on the cross in our place seeing that he's done that will he not also along with Christ give us everything we need for our growth and godliness and of course we know he will that's a paraphrase of

Romans 8 32 so maybe tonight we're still in an Esther 5 situation at the moment where we're surrounded by enemies on every side whose plans seem to be succeeding perhaps we're experiencing the pains and difficulties of living in a fallen world a world that seems to have a grasp on everything that exists and so we're in the grips of the evil empire but even if we're misunderstood or mistreated we can take confidence that everything will be righted on the last day though the evil empire does its worst it can't prevail against those who have taken refuge in Christ ultimately its raging will be in vain so we can move past the concerns of Esther 5 and instead remember God's actions in Esther chapter 6 if we're exalting Christ as Lord in our hearts and are trusting firmly in God's providence to do what is good for our souls and to bring glory to himself the obvious question then is why do we let ourselves become so troubled why do you think people can get so filled with doubts and fears about their own futures or the futures of their children or the futures of our churches we should remember that

God will accomplish this purpose even if he does it slowly and imperceptively at first but we know he will do it certainly sometimes he will do it through human agents who willingly submit to him and sometimes he will do it by directing those whose motives are against his children so even their sinful motives accomplish his perfect purposes but in light of the great and precious promises of God we know this for sure God will save his people and in light of the cross we know that his salvation cannot be thwarted so because of these heavenly realities what is left for us to do but to bow our hearts and knees before him and to sing his praises Satan's resources can't prevail against the people of Jesus Christ and so with justified competence Christians may ask if God is for us who can be against us and that's the real message of chapter 6 if God is for us who can be against! Thank you.