

The Book of Esther

Lesson 5: Esther's Banquets and Haman's Pride -- Esther 5:1-6:14

Three days of fasting are over, and the morning has come. Esther puts on her royal robes, and the writer wants you to notice that she does not stride into the throne room like a queen who owns the place. She stands in the inner court, on the far side of a closed door, knowing that the law says the king may extend his golden scepter or he may order her death, and there is no third option. She has no guarantee. She has only a fasting people behind her, a settled heart, and the words she spoke before she came: if I perish, I perish. Then she steps into view. Picture the silence of that hall. Picture the long, agonizing second before the king moves. And then the gold scepter reaches out across the room, and a door that could have ended her life swings open instead toward deliverance.

Now watch what Esther does with the open door, because it is a master class in patience. The king, delighted, offers her up to half the kingdom. Most of us, after three days of dread, would blurt out the whole crisis on the spot. Esther asks only that the king and Haman come to a banquet. At the banquet the king asks again, and again she does not unload her request. She invites them to a second banquet tomorrow. We do not know everything that guided her, but we can see the wisdom of it: she is reading the room, building the moment, and trusting a timing larger than her own nerves. There is a kind of courage that explodes, and there is a kind of courage that waits with its hand steady. Esther shows us the second kind.

Meanwhile, across the city, pride is busy digging its own grave. Haman walks out of the queen's banquet glowing with self-importance, and then he passes the gate and sees Mordecai, who will not bow, who will not flinch, who will not give Haman the worship his ego craves. In one verse Haman is full of joy, and in the next he is full of wrath, and that swing tells you everything about a heart that lives for applause. He goes home and counts his riches, his sons, his promotions, his exclusive invitation to dine with the queen, and then he says the truest sad sentence in the book: all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. So his wife and friends suggest a gallows fifty cubits high, and Haman, pleased, has it built. He goes to bed planning a funeral that will turn out to be his own.

And here is where the unseen hand turns the page. God is never named in this book, not once, yet that night the king cannot sleep. Of all the things that might fill a sleepless king's hours, he calls for the dusty book of royal records, and of all the pages that might be read, the reader lands on the night Mordecai once saved the king's life and was never rewarded. By morning the man who came to ask for Mordecai's death is instead leading Mordecai through the streets in royal robes, crying that this is what the king delights to do for the man he honors. No angel appears. No miracle splits the sky. Just a king's insomnia, a clerk's reading, a perfectly timed question, and a proud man marched into his own undoing. That is how God works when His name is hidden: quietly, patiently, sovereignly, until the proud are brought low and His people

are kept. Lean in close to these two chapters, because they will reset what you think God is doing in the silent stretches of your own life.

Group Discussion: Esther delays her request through two banquets while Haman rushes ahead to build his gallows. As a group, walk through the contrast: where do you see wise, patient timing in Esther, and where do you see impatient, self-driven action in Haman, and what does each one produce by the end of chapter 6?

Personal Reflection: Haman had wealth, family, and promotion, yet said it all availed him nothing as long as one man would not honor him. Name one specific approval you are still chasing (from a boss, a parent, a circle of friends, a screen) that, if you got it, still would not fill you, and what would it look like to lay that craving down before God this week?

Read Esther 5:1–6:14

Study Questions

1. When Esther stood in the inner court risking death and the king extended the golden scepter, what does this turning point teach about how God can open doors and dispose a ruler's heart toward His purposes even when His name is never mentioned (Proverbs 21:1)?
2. Esther had prepared with three days of fasting before she acted. Where in your own life do you tend to act first and pray later, and what would change if you prepared your heart before stepping into a hard conversation?
3. Esther chose to delay her request through two banquets rather than blurting it out. What does her patience and wise timing teach us about trusting God's timing instead of forcing our own moment?
4. When have you damaged something good by rushing it, and what is one situation right now where God may be calling you to wait, watch, and pray rather than push?

5. Haman, surrounded by riches and honors, declared that all of it availed him nothing as long as Mordecai would not bow. What does this expose about the emptiness of pride and the craving for recognition (Ecclesiastes 2:11)?
6. Be honest about your own heart: what is the one withheld bit of recognition or respect that can sour an otherwise good day for you, and what does that reveal about where you are seeking your worth?
7. The king's sleepless night, the reading of the chronicles, and the discovery of Mordecai's unrewarded loyalty all converged at exactly the right moment. How does this string of ordinary details display the quiet sovereignty and providence of God (Romans 8:28)?
8. Mordecai's good deed went unnoticed and unrewarded for years. Where are you currently doing right with no recognition, and how does this chapter encourage you to keep doing right and leave the timing of any reward to God?
9. Haman built a gallows for Mordecai and was instead made to honor him publicly, the first turn of the great reversal in this book. What do the Scriptures teach about how pride sets up its own downfall and how God lifts the humble (Proverbs 16:18; James 4:6), and how is this principle ultimately fulfilled in Christ who humbled Himself and was exalted (Philippians 2:8-9)?

10. Considering Esther's steady courage and Haman's self-destroying pride, name one specific way you sense the Lord forming humility, patience, or trust in His timing in you, and what is the first concrete step you will take this week to cooperate with that work?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Proverbs 16:18, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall; Luke 14:11, whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted; James 4:6, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble; Proverbs 21:1, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it where He will; Philippians 2:8-9, Christ humbled Himself and God highly exalted Him

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