

Learning from Esther's Life #4 "Life's Big Turnaround—Realizing God's Plan for You"
Message Notes, July 24, 2022

Esther 7

- Was this scenario planned by Esther?
 - ✧ This was all done by God. What was the scenario? Flow of the story: 1) The downfall of the previous queen, Vashti, and the election of Esther; 2) Mordecai prevented the plan to kill the king, but he received no reward; 3) The rise of Haman and his plan to kill the Jews; 4) Esther's three-day fast and her appeal to the king for her life; 5) Two banquets: the second invitation in today's passage; 6) The great reversal (Haman executed on the pike he erected; 7) Reversal of the order to exterminate the Jews.
 - ✧ The scenario was portrayed by God using Esther as part of His far-reaching "Kingdom of God" (Grand Narrative).
- Is this something that only happened in Esther's life?

✧ The Bible teaches that God can do such marvelous works in our lives. How?

Psalm 139:13-18 ¹³ You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. ¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. ¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

¹⁷ How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! ¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

- 1) *Wonderful*: God created me intricately and precisely physically and spiritually. *Inner parts* refers to body and soul; 2) *Utter seclusion/dark of the womb* indicates personal and special, not mass-produced; 3) *Before a single day had passed*, God saw (recognized, remembered) me long before I was born. I am not a whim, but a significant being; 4) God's *thoughts* (will/plan) for me is far beyond my ability to grasp or imagine.
- Because it is beyond us, should we then live as if we were unaware of God's plan? The Bible demands that we recognize God's call (mission) and vision and live a life that responds to that call (a life of collaboration with God). Philippians 1:6 God who has begun a good work in me; Ephesians 2:10 He also prepares the stage for the use of gifts

How to Receive (Recognize) God's Mission (Vision)

1. I Have a Calling (Mission)

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

- *Everything working together* does not mean that everything is good, because pain is included, but uses everything in marvelous and mysterious ways (presupposition).
- Paul testifies three times about how he was saved and appointed as an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9, 22, 26), when he explained,

Acts 26:19 "And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven.

- ✧ This *vision* (Greek *optasia*) appears in Esther 4:1 in the Septuagint, in verb form, meaning *to realize*, in the context of Mordecai *realizing* the full extent of Haman's plot to exterminate the Jewish people and being horrified. His realization included mixed feeling, because he felt a sense of responsibility for precipitating Haman's actions by his attitude towards him.
- ✧ However deep this recognition was in human terms, it had an even deeper meaning in the Grand Narrative that is God's plan. Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekites who unprovoked had attacked Moses and his people when they fled Egypt. God therefore commanded King Saul to strike the Amalekites, but he did not dedicate them to God in sacrifice, but rather grazed the flocks, kept the plunder and spared the king's life. Now God is completely destroying his last descendant, Haman, who was plotting to exterminate the Jewish people, using Mordecai to carry out His plan.
- You are a part of God's great plan (privilege) that gives meaning to our lives.

2. Three Aspects of the Mission (Vision) (Sense of Destiny: Mission Announcement, Mission Awareness, Mission Fulfillment)

① Destiny Preparation

- The circumstances of Joseph's birth and his life. His mother Rachel struggled for many years before she was finally able to have a child, but ultimately God blessed her with a child. She named him Joseph, meaning God has taken away my shame and given me a son. Joseph also suffered from the stigma of slavery and false accusations, but his suffering caused him to grow. In the end, he was able to save his family from destruction (Genesis 30:22)
- Moses was hidden for three months after his birth because of the faith of his parents (Hebrews 11:23), and then he was drawn from the Nile River by Pharaoh's daughter and saved. His name means "the child rescued from the water" and in his later years, he rescued the Israelites through the Red Sea (Exodus 2).
- Hannah prayed to God because she could not have a child, and when God blessed her with Samuel, she dedicated him to God, just as she had vowed to do (1 Samuel 1).

② Destiny Revelation and Confirmation

- Avenues of work open up--sometimes God asks us to work publicly and sometimes we are called to work in ways that no one is aware of.
- God provides the training opportunities necessary to prepare us for his work, whether we like it or not.
- Upon reflection, we realize that God had made the necessary provisions—for Moses, the forty years in the wilderness of Midian, for Paul, his years of thorough study of the Law and Old Testament under Gamaliel, which prepared him to spread the gospel to the non-Jewish world.

Galatians 1:13,15-17 ¹³ You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it... ¹⁵ But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being. ¹⁷ Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

- ✧ Paul uses the expression from Psalm 139, "God who has chosen and separated me from my mother's womb and called me by grace," and he reflects back on his life and feels deeply the leading hand of God as an apostle to the Gentiles.
- ✧ It was necessary to receive God's training and gifts in order to understand God's calling (vision) and live it out.

Ephesians 3:2,7 ² assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles... ⁷ By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

- ✧ To what extent do we understand this incredible but eternal truth of the "I" that was included in God's plan before the foundation of this world was set?

③ Destiny Realization

2 Timothy 4:6-8 ⁶ As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. ⁸ And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

Conclusion

- Do you believe that God has a plan for your life, too? What do you believe your mission is?
- What provision has God made in your life? Your birth, family, or social circumstances?