

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Living out the gospel with
one another in our homes

Date: 02/18/24

Sermon: Ted Rastatter/God's in Control

Text: Esther 3:1-15

Questions: Jerry Shiver

Sometime after Esther has been made Queen and Mordecai has foiled an assassination plot against King Ahasuerus/Xerxes, we see Haman being promoted above all other nobles. All but Mordecai bow to Haman. When Haman is made aware of Mordecai's refusal to bow and that he is a Jew, he is enraged and plots to destroy Mordecai along with every Jew in the kingdom. Haman casts the Pur (or lot) to choose the date for the destruction of Mordecai and the Jews. He then convinces the king that the Jews are disobedient, disloyal and a threat that needs to be destroyed. The execution edict is written and sent throughout the kingdom, in every language, on the 13th day of the month of Nisan which is the first day of the Jewish Passover. The chapter closes with the king and Haman celebrating with drink while the city of Susa was confused with the edict.

Main points:

- Clarity on what is happening around us
- Courage to honor Jesus above everything
- Confidence in God's sovereignty

Questions/Discussion:

1. Ted points out spiritual warfare is a reality in the lives of believers. In the society we live in, in our families and in our personal lives. It is a reality that the Bible speaks about. Read Gen 3:15, Est 3:6 and discuss the ongoing hostility between the offspring of Eve and the offspring of the serpent throughout the Old Testament (Amalekites and Benjamites). Read Eph 6:16, in what ways do you still see this hostility today?
2. Ted points out that as believers we represent a threat to the world and its ruler. Satan's goal is to make us ineffective in God's service by appealing to our own senses and desires so we lose focus on Jesus. Read Eph 6:13-18 and discuss how to practically implement these instructions.
3. Read Jn 15:18-20, Lev 20:26, Heb 10:10. If we are successful to live and act in a way where it is obvious that our full allegiance belongs to Christ and to his kingdom, we'll paint a

target on us drawing the ire of the enemy. How should our distinctiveness as believers look? Read Acts 7:54-60. Are you ready to be hated? Read Ps 121.

4. With all that is going on around us today, just as what we see in the Book of Ester, it can be difficult to have faith that God is truly in control. Ted pointed out only a few examples where God was at work behind the scenes to bring about his will: Ester, Moses, Abraham and Issac, culminating with Jesus, his last meal at Passover, Roman soldiers casting lots for the clothes of Jesus, stripping him to clothe his people in his righteousness that came through his sacrifice. Share any stories where you have experienced God working behind the scene but in control.

5. Just as God isn't mentioned in the Book of Esther, neither is Satan yet often God's work seems hidden and less evident while Satan's work does not seem so hidden. Read 1 Pet 4:12 and Matt 24:4-14 and contrast with Phil 1:6, Jn 14:2, and Rev 21:3-4, 22:1-5. Remember Ted's prayer for this week: Remain strong, steadfast to the end, faithful through difficult times coming. Let us not be carried away by the winds of confusion or threats of the enemy but follow Jesus and be filled with the Spirit of God to walk with the same clarity, courage and confidence that Jesus had.