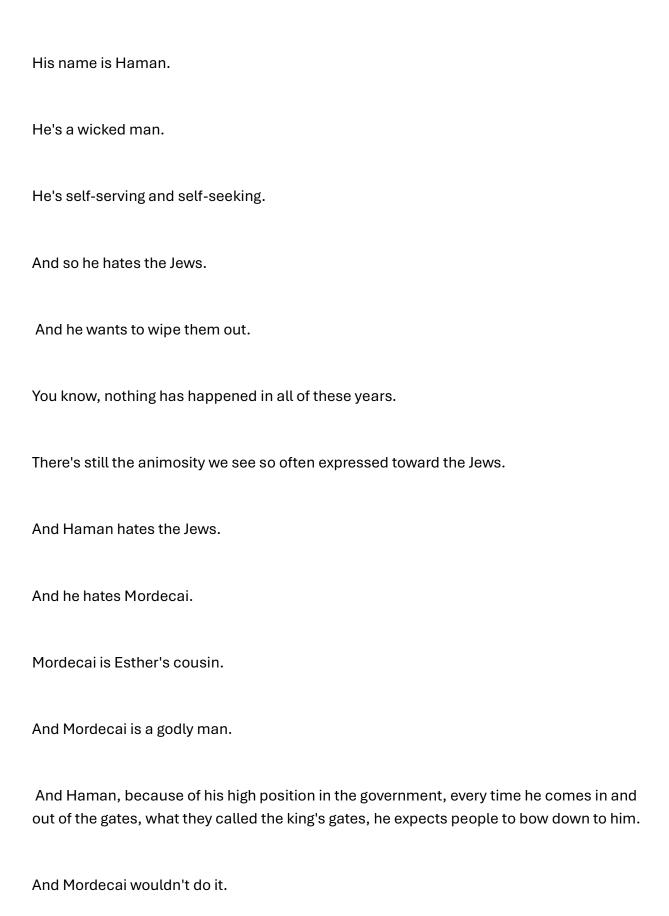
Esther: Wherever You Are, Be There!

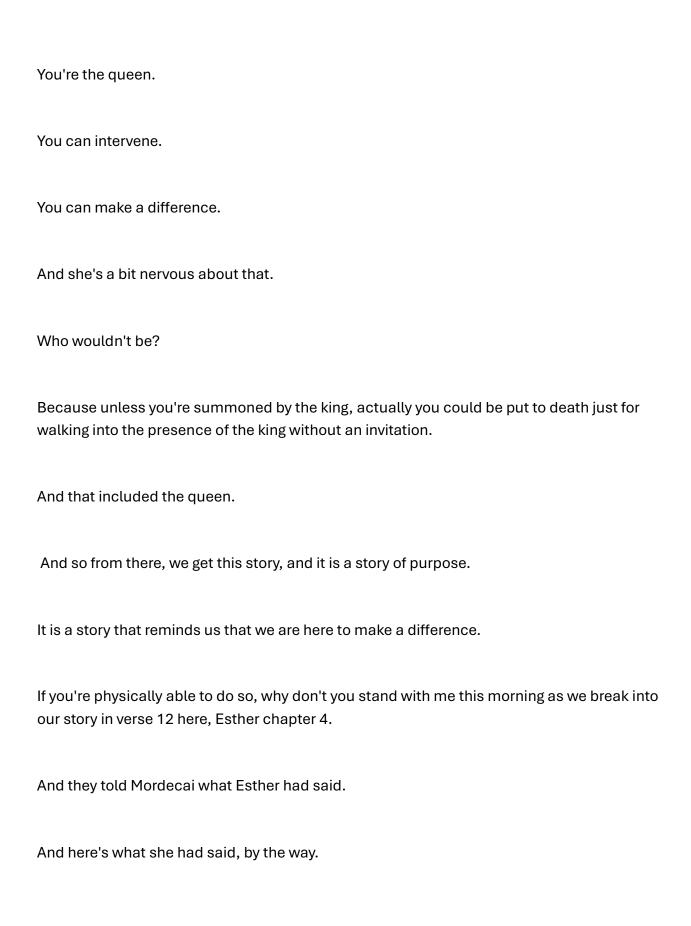
Have y'all looked at the title of my message this morning?
Wherever you are, be there.
I know that's a little bit of an oxymoron.
I mean, how can a person not be where they are?
But I hope you get the gist of my title, and that is that we are to understand that wherever God has put us,
at least for that moment, we must learn to see that moment and time as a place and a time of God for our lives.
It is his appointment for our lives.
And so wherever we are, we need to be there, meaning we need to be fully
invested in the place that God has put us.
George Bernard Shaw, the great playwright, said this, this is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap,

and being a force of nature instead of a fervish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.
And then Thomas Carlyle wrote and said, a man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder.
It's a waif, a nothing, a no man.
Have a purpose in life and having it, throw such strength of mind and muscle into your work as God has given you.
God created you with purpose.
You're not here as we've talked many times through the years.
You're not here by accident.
You have a purpose for being here and you are still breathing because God is not finished with you and he's not finished with the purpose he's designed you for.
Every one of us have been designed by God.
We've been designed with meaning and significant, and your life can and should make a difference.
And today, what I want us to do is I want us to look at three things from this week's hero of the faith, and that is Esther.

I don't think there's a better hero for the idea of expressing a life of purpose and meaning than Esther.
Now, let me just kind of set up the story, and then we're going to stand and read just a few verses.
I know your passage says verses 4 through 16, but we're going to break in at about verse 12.
I want to just set it up for you, okay?
What's going on?
So Esther is a queen because she was picked by the king, King Xerxes, because of her incredible beauty.
He had no idea she was a Jew.
But she was a beautiful woman, and he picked her to be his queen.
And consequently, so she went to serve in the palace and to serve as the queen.
But the queen had to be careful in terms of her access to the king.
And there's a plot that is hatched.
The king has an advisor.



He wouldn't bow down.
The only person he'd bow down to was God.
And this made Haman mad, made him hate the Jews all the more, but it made Haman hate Mordecai in particular.
And he would hatch a plot not only to kill the Jews, but to specifically have Mordecai hanged.
And so the word gets back to Esther.
that there's something going on out there.
And so she sends one of her servants out to Mordecai, her cousin, and says, hey, what is happening here?
And Mordecai sends a message.
There's these couriers going back and forth, if you will.
Mordecai sends a message back to Esther saying, you need to know
that Haman has plotted to have the Jews destroyed.
And then he says to her, I need you to go in.



She had said, you know I can't go in unless I'm invited, right?

And so they told Mordecai what Esther had said, and then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, 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 from the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish.

And who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

When Esther told them to reply to 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.

And then I will go to the king, though it is against the law.

And if I perish, I perish.

Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Father, help us to understand, learn the lessons for life

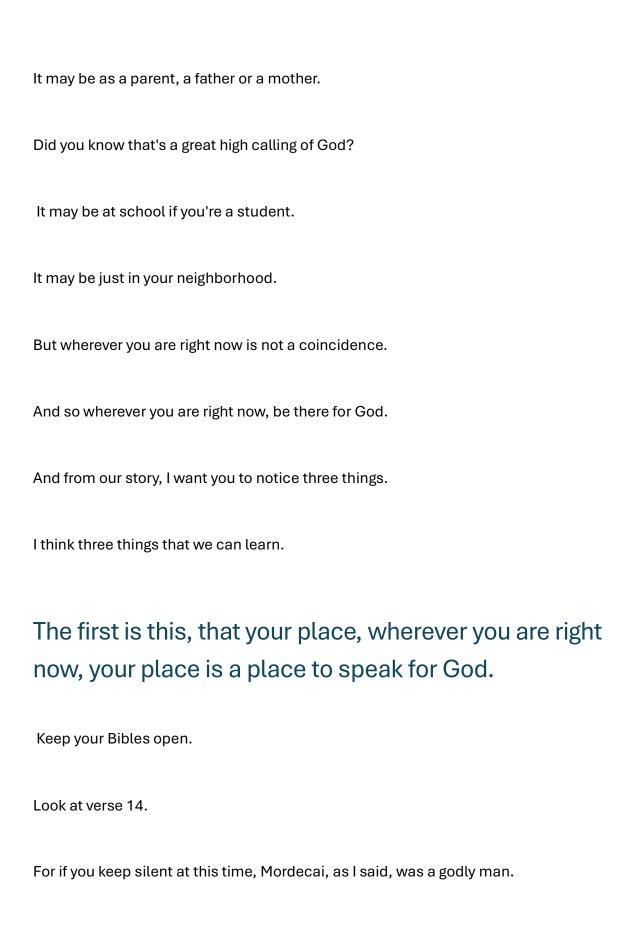
Father, of purpose and meaning and using our lives to count for something than just right here in the moment, but something that counts forever.
So teach us, Father, from your word.
Cause our hearts to be receptive, our minds clear, and our ears capable of hearing.
So speak now, Lord, because we want to know what you have to say for us and for our life in this moment and this time in all of history.
Speak to us, we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.
Thank you.
You can be seated.
So again, Esther is a Jewish woman.
She's beautiful.
Shela tangad ta hasana ana aftha ayyana ta King Yawaa yaka da ay at kunay as la sid
She's tapped to become one of the queens to King Xerxes, who does not know, as I said, about her Jewish heritage.

And did not know until Esther came in to see him about the plot that had been hatched by Haman.
Haman had a great deal of authority.
You probably have already picked that up.
And at the risk of her own life, she goes in before the king to intervene.
She's counseled by her cousin.
You've got to do something. You're in a place.
You're in a position.
And so she calls together.
She says, you get all the people together, all the Jews together, and have them fast and pray and seek the Lord.
And I'll get my maidservants together, and we'll do the very same thing.
And then after we've done that, after we've sought the Lord, then we will go in, or I will go in before the king.

And if I die, I die.
And so she, of course, does that, and she exposes, she lets the king know that she too is a Jew, and then she exposes Haman's demonic plan.
And when the king heard what Haman was planning, he actually changes direction.
He orders that Haman is to be hung on the very gallows he had built to hang Mordecai on.
And the Jews still to this day celebrate this occasion.
It's called the Feast of Purim.
And when you hear that name, you just remember that's when Esther intervened and God used her to spare the Jews.
Now, much of the story of Esther rests on the right people being in the right places at the right time.
We often say, what a coincidence in our world.
But this wasn't a coincidence at all.
It never is, you see.
With God, there are no coincidences in your life, even though at times it may feel like it.

Esther was in the right place.
She was there at the right time, and she was with the right people.
All of this was God.
It wasn't a coincidence.
And you may be here this morning, and you may say, you know, this particular place I am right now, what does it mean?
Why have you put me here?
What is this place all about?
I can tell you this.
It's no coincidence.
What you were facing is no coincidence.
What they were facing was horrifying, but God was there, and because God was there, it wasn't coincidental.
The fact is God had put Mordecai in the right place.

God had put Esther in the right place at the right time so that she could fulfill the purpose of God with her life.
Now, you may initially say, well, pastor, that's a great story, and I've read it or heard it before, and I've preached it over the years from time to time.
And you may say, well, I'm just, but pastor, I'm not an Esther.
Or you may say, pastor, I'm not a Joseph.
You know, we've talked about Joseph and some of these other, I'm not a Moses.
I'm not a Noah.
I'm not one of these great heroes of the faith that we've been talking about.
Listen to me this morning, brothers and sisters, your life designed by God is
has as much significance to him and to his purpose as Esther's did.
And that's why you have to take seriously where you are in life.
This is the place and this is the time and this is the opportunity to count for God.
It may be for you in your business world.
It may be in the work that you do

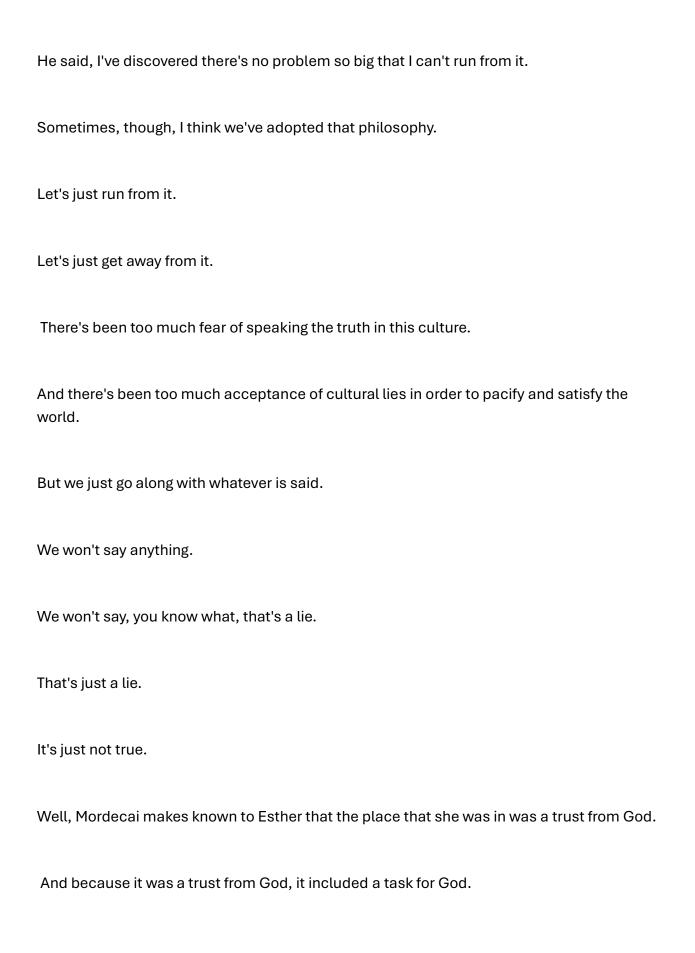


It's the reason, again, that Haman hated him.
He was a godly man, and he wouldn't defy God, and he wouldn't deny God, and he wouldn't bow down to Haman.
Haman hated him.
Mordecai was a godly man.
But Mordecai understood that silence amidst the circumstances they were facing was unacceptable.
Let me make three observations.
First, I would tell you that there's a time when silence is not an option.
There's a time when silence is not an option.
Ecclesiastes chapter three, perhaps you know that chapter, you know, there's a time for everything under the sun.
There's a time, you know, one of the things that Solomon writes there is there a time for every matter under heaven, a time to keep silent and a time to speak.
Acts, in the book of Acts in chapter 4, Peter and John were arrested, and they were brought before the council.

Interestingly enough, it was a religious council.
It was religious leaders that told Peter and John to stop talking about Jesus.
Isn't that ironic?
Just stop talking about Jesus.
Don't speak in his name any further.
And they beat them.
And then before they sent them out, though, Peter and John responded.
This is what they said.
But Peter and John answered them.
Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.
But as for us, we cannot help but speak of what we have seen and heard.
Basically, we're saying this is one thing we're not going to shut up about.

You can judge whether you think it's right or not, but that's not going to affect us because we are going to continue to speak out and speak up for God.
There's a time when silence is not an option.
As Solomon said, as Peter and John said, there's a time for everything.
That's true.
But sooner or later, there is this moment of truth where you must and you need and you're required to speak up for God.
That was the case for Esther.
And there are times when we have to decide, I will not be silent.
I will speak even if there is a potential price to pay.
But there's another observation I would make right here, and that is there are also platforms and places that we are given by God that have responsibilities attached to them.
There are places and platforms that God has given you
And each of us have them, and we are responsible for those places and those platforms that God has given us.

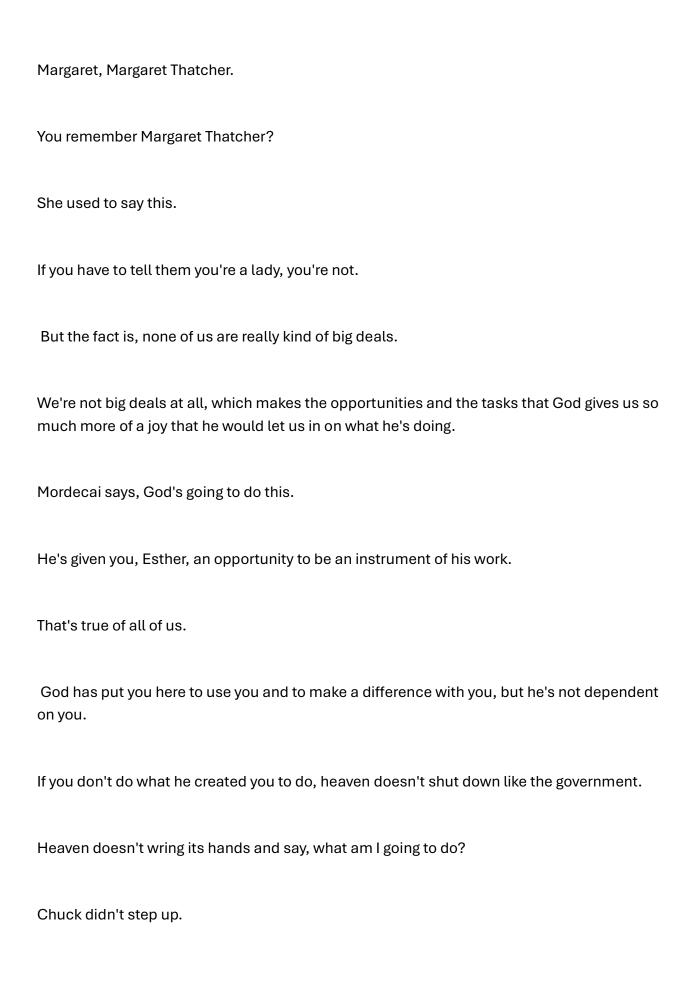
I think one of the most tragic things today has been the silence of the church in the midst of this culture.
The silence of Christians everywhere.
And even, tragically, many of the pulpits regarding the spirit of the age, the zeitgeist, what's going on out there.
I'll just not ruffle any feathers.
I won't say anything that could potentially offend anyone.
Our pulpits have been silent.
Our churches have been silent in many cases, not all of them.
I like the little Charlie Brown comic strips.
Y'all have read those off and on through the years.
Charlie Brown and one of his friends were discussing the
problems of life as they walk down a road.
And after a great deal of discussion, Charlie Brown declared that he had a problem-solving philosophy, and this is what his philosophy was.

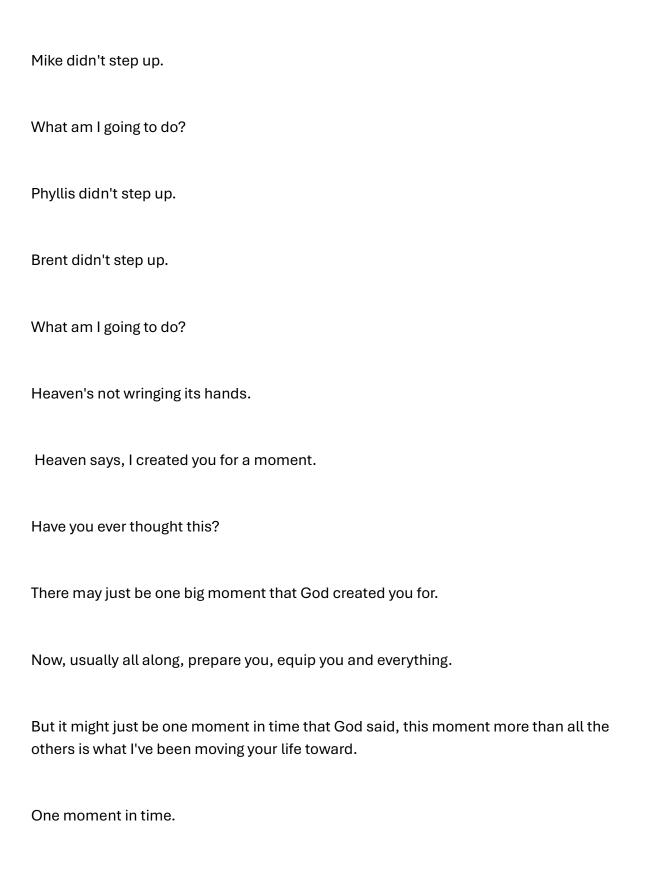


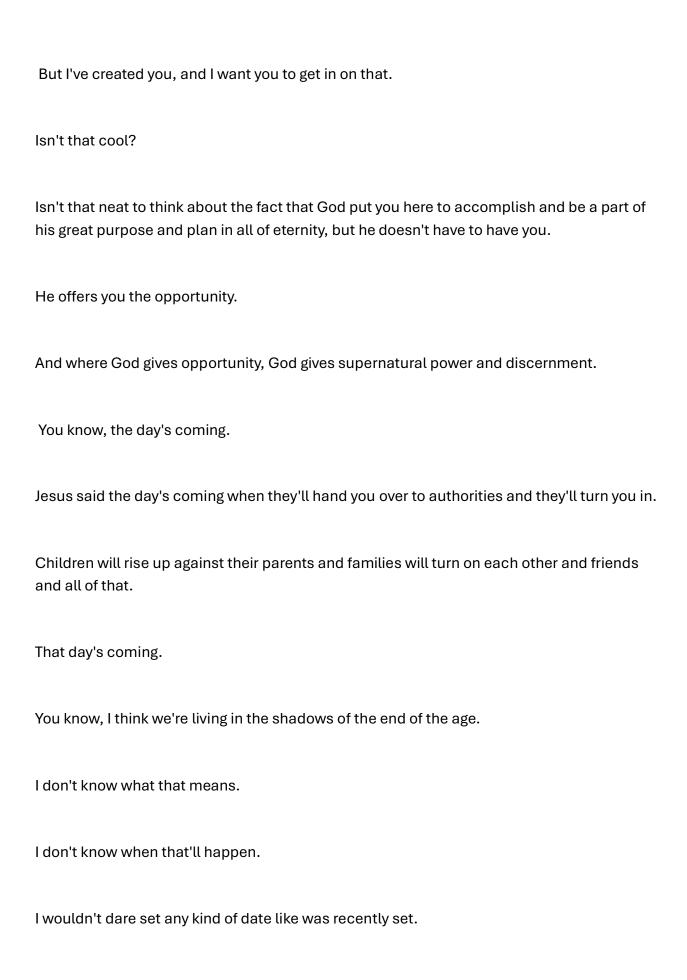
All of us have those responsibilities.
I don't know what everybody's responsibility is in that regard, but I guarantee you this, God wants you to know what your responsibility is.
He wants you to know when to speak up and when to shut up.
By the way, we need to shut up sometimes too, don't we?
There's a time for that.
Proverbs 31 says,
Verses 8 and 9 say this, open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.
Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.
There's a time to speak up for those in particular that can't speak for themselves, like the little ones.
like those who were infirmed, those who were being taken advantage.
There's a time for justice.
We hear a lot about social justice today.

I wanna tell you, I'm not so into social justice as much as I'm into biblical justice.
There's a time to speak up.
There's a time to speak out about these things.
Then a third observation I would give you is that God isn't dependent on us to speak
but he gives us the opportunity to speak for him.
Look back at verse 14.
An interesting statement Mordecai makes where he says, if you keep silent this time, notice this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place.
Now, if you think about that for a minute, here's what Mordecai is saying.
God isn't dependent on you to pull this off.
but God is giving you an opportunity to be who he created you to be.
That's what Mordecai was saying to her.
He said, listen, Esther, if you don't do this, God is going to deliver his people.

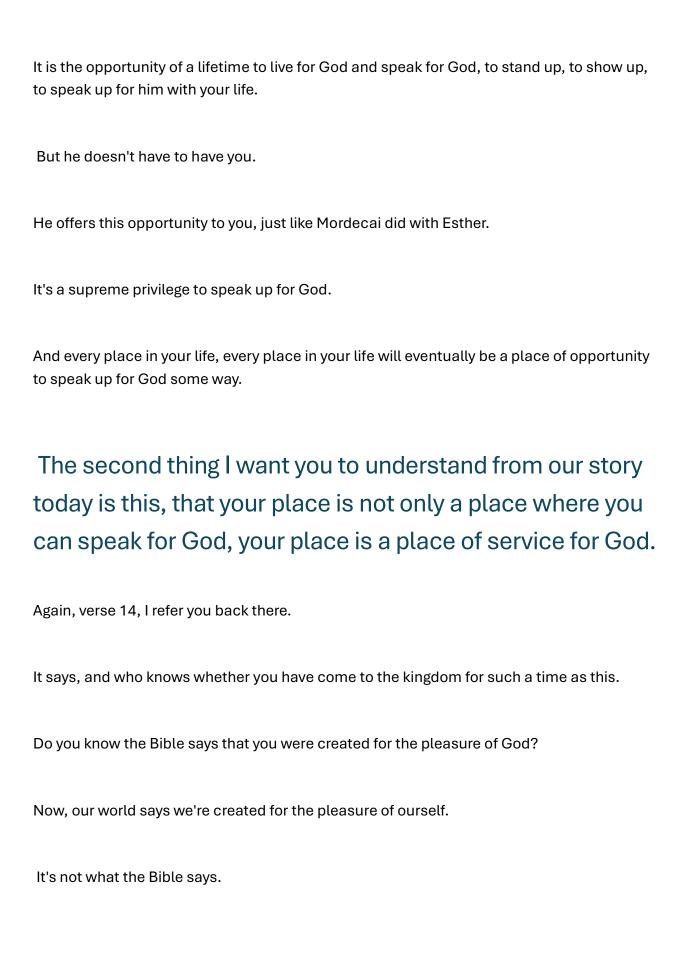


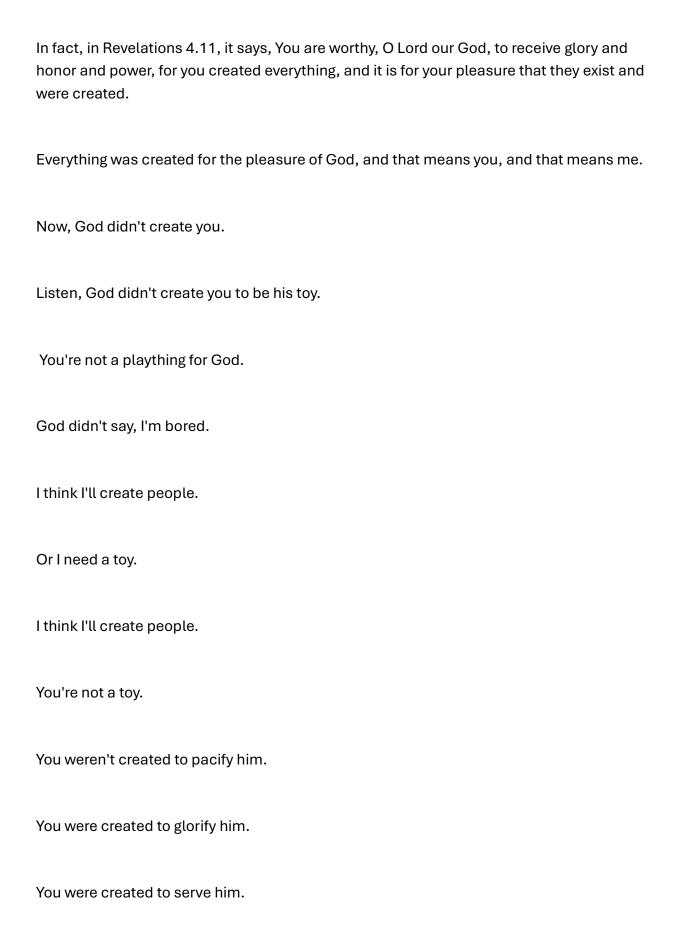




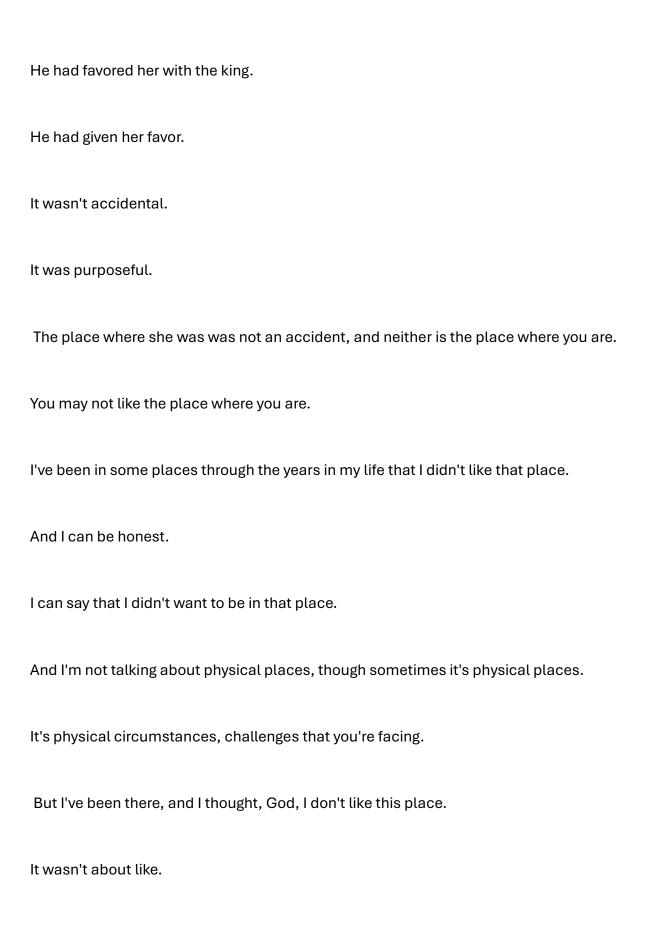


I wouldn't dare set any kind of date.
But I think we can look around us and we can say we're living in the shadow of the end of the age.
That may be another 50 years, maybe 100 years.
I don't know.
But I know this, that Jesus said that day will come when they deliver you over.
And he says, when they do, do not be anxious.
Listen to this, how you are to speak.
or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.
For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.
Don't worry about it.
He says, look, where I give opportunity, I send my power.
But don't miss this.

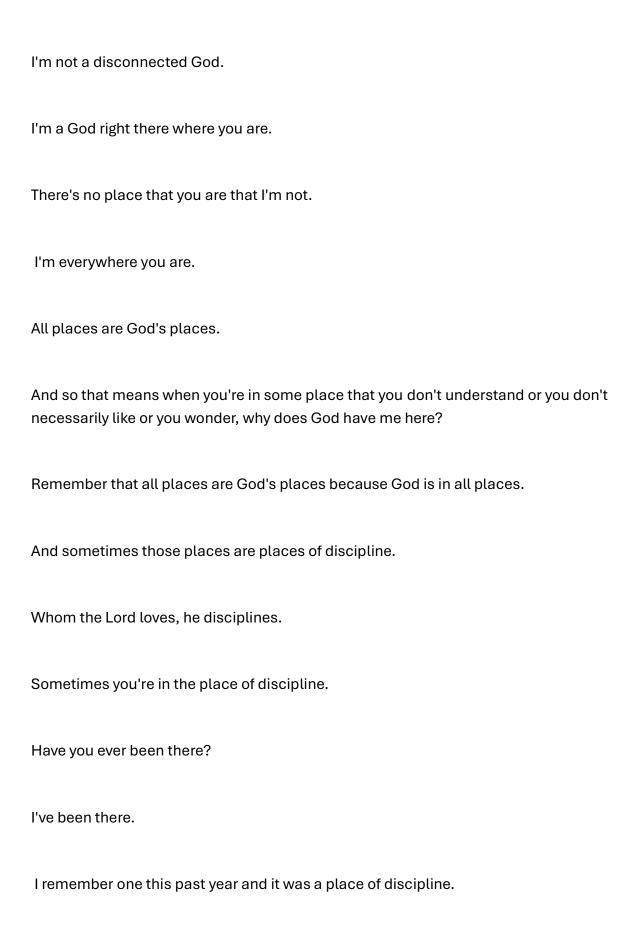


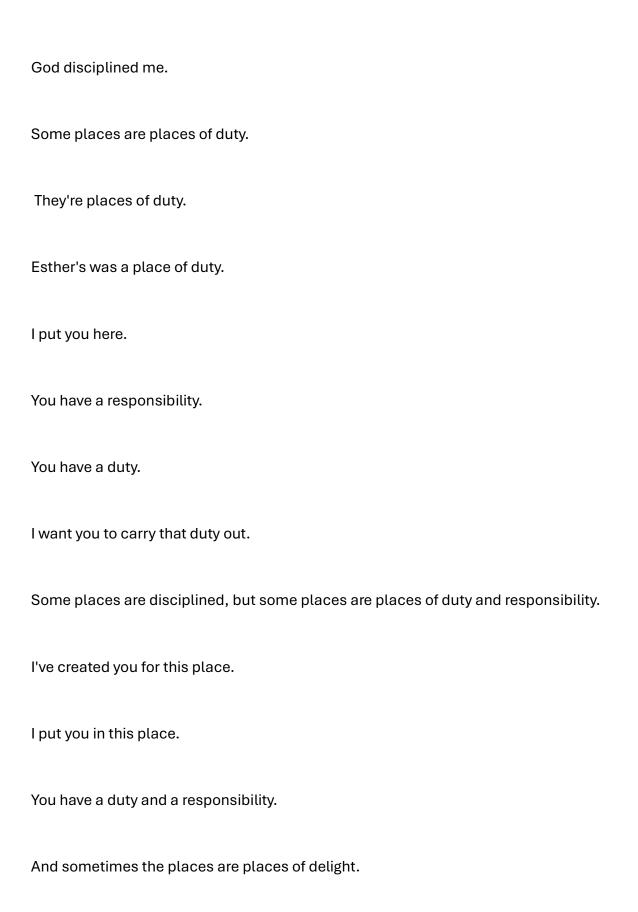


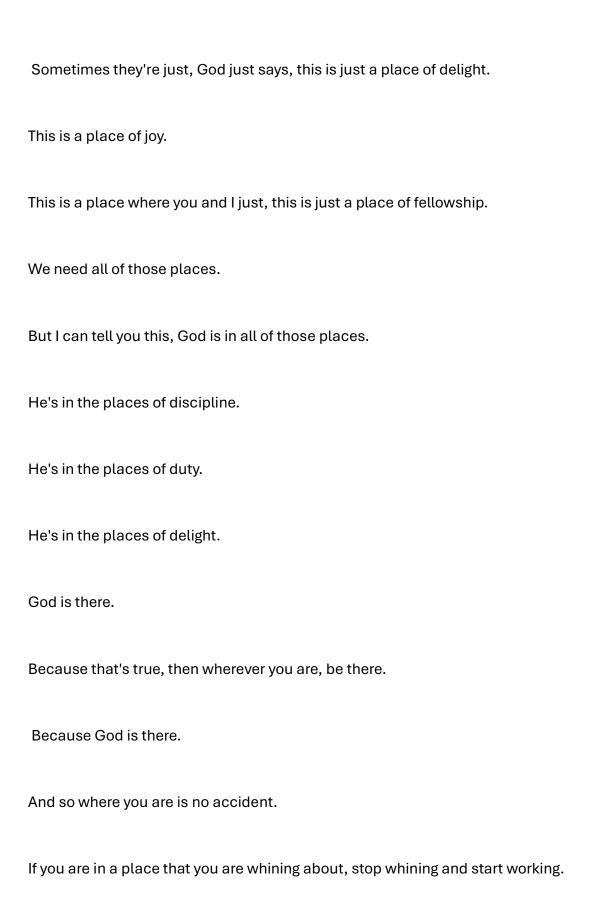
He loves you and he wants you to find your value in serving and knowing him because that's the ultimate place of fulfillment.
You know, think about it, a husband and a wife, they don't have a child because they want a play thing or a toy.
I mean, if they're not dysfunctional, they don't say, hey, let's have a toy.
They say, you go to the store and buy a toy.
They don't create a child because they say, we want a toy, unless they're dysfunctional.
They have a child or they have children to love and to cherish, and guess what?
To reflect the image of themselves going forward, to make a difference.
And so it is with God.
He created you to reflect his character and nature, the Bible says, and to experience the joy of a relationship of purpose for your life, living in fellowship with him and doing his will.
So let me give you a couple observations here under this point.
Esther's place was not an accident.
God had put her in this place.



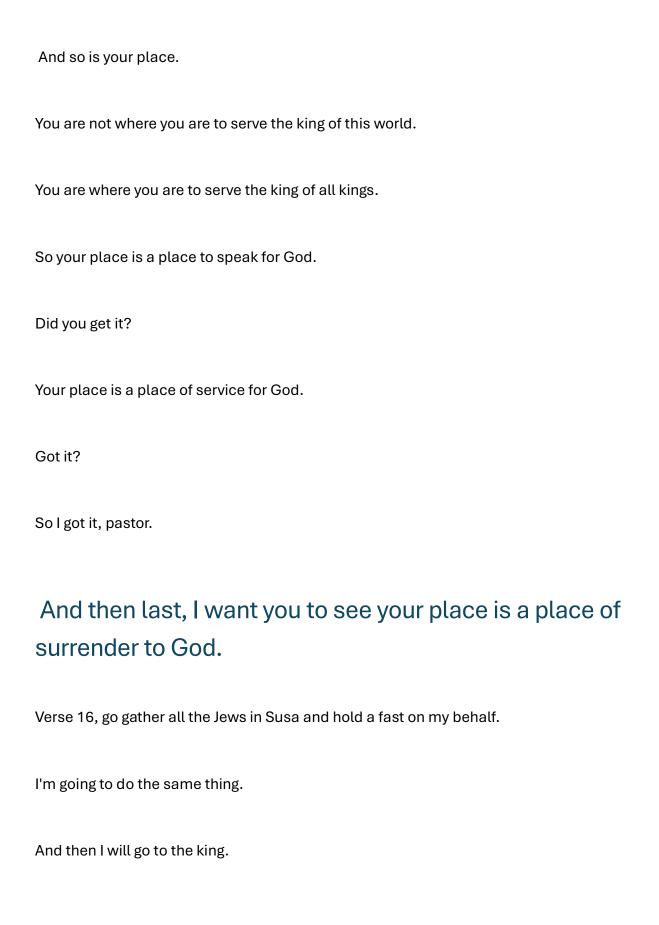
It was about, are you going to learn what I put you in this place to learn?
Are you going to do what I put you in this place to do?
Because all places are God's places for us.
All places are God's places for us.
The prophet Jeremiah writes this, am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away?
Do you get that?
I'm a God at hand is what he's saying.
I'm not a God that's far away.
Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him, declares the Lord?
Do I not feel heaven and earth, declares the Lord.
Do you get what God was saying through the prophet?
He said, look, I'm not a distant God.

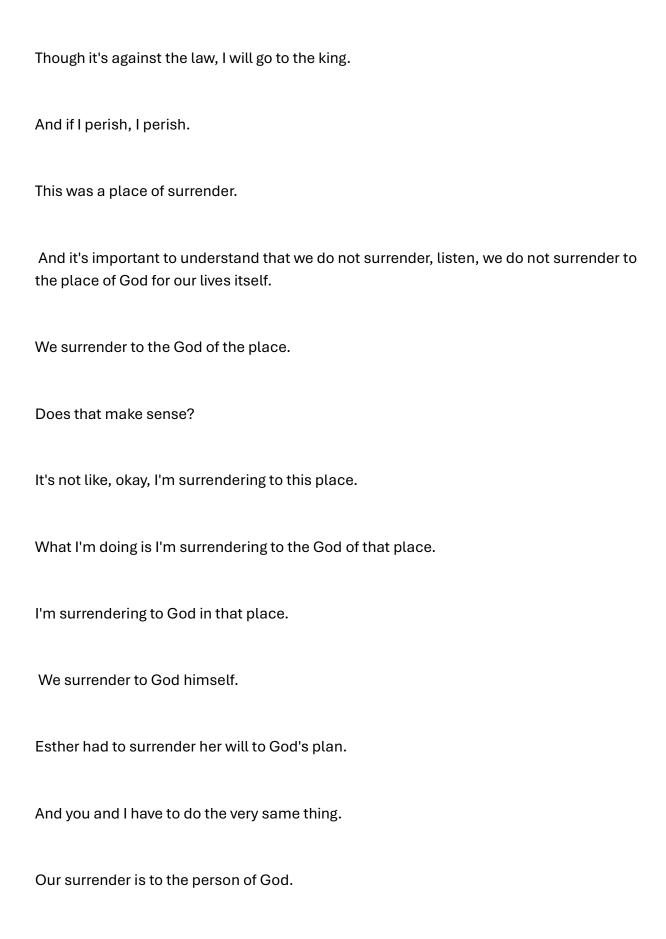




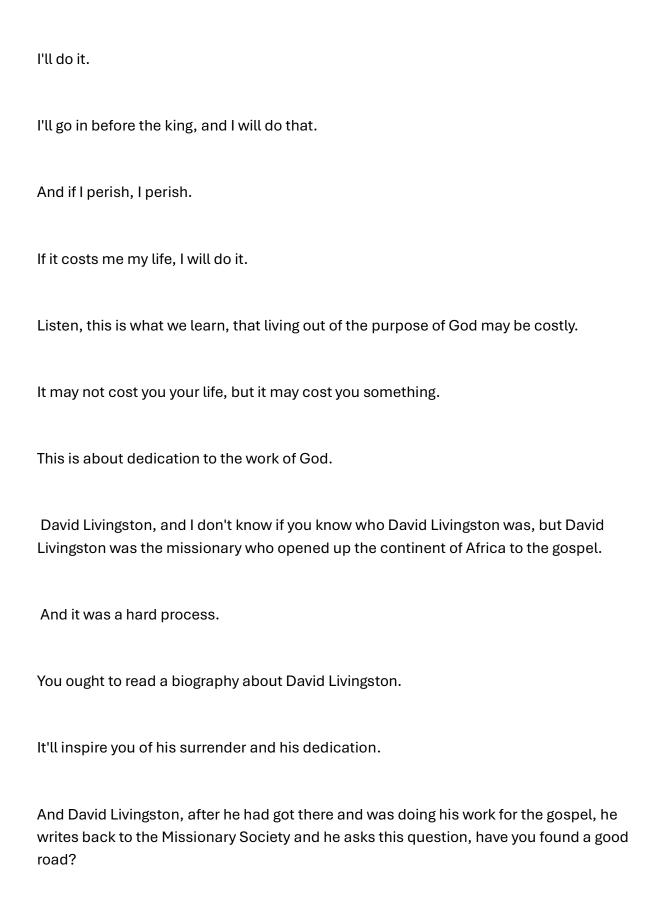


Start serving.
Your place is not an accident.
Your place is an assignment from God.
A second observation I'd make here is also that Esther's place was not only not an accident.
Esther's place was more than just a position.
We think of her.
We call her.
She was Queen Esther.
That's position.
But don't miss this.
Esther's position, listen, wasn't to serve the king of Persia.
Her position was to serve the king of kings.

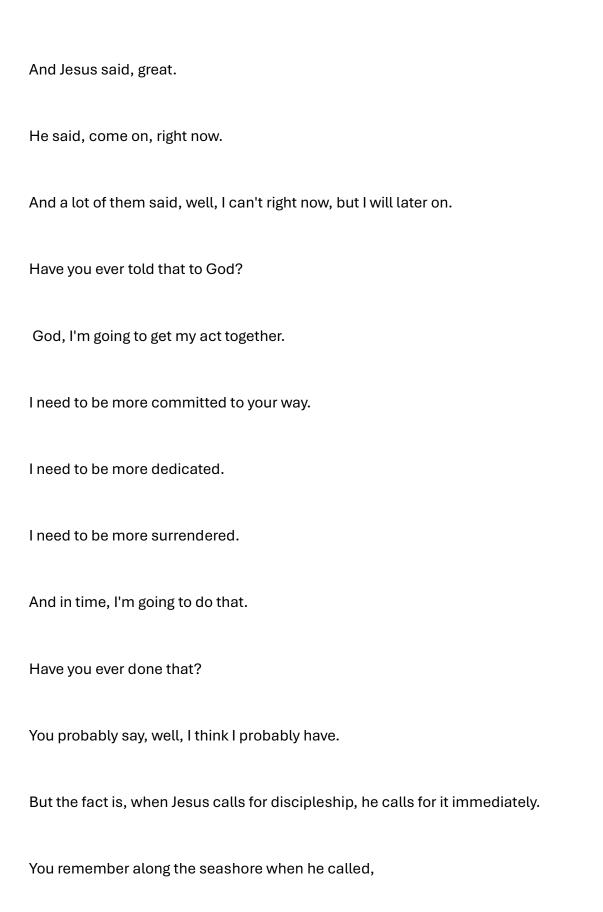




So we surrender to the person of God in the place that he's put us.
Andrew Murray, he wrote these words.
He said, God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to him.
That's what surrender is, right?
It's wholly yielded to him.
And so we surrender to him in the place where we are.
We surrender to him and God assumes full responsibility for us as we surrender wholly to him.
And there were two things that Esther did in this place.
Number one, Esther acknowledged that living out the purpose of God might be costly.
Did you pick up on that?
It might cost me my life.
She said, okay, I'll go do it.

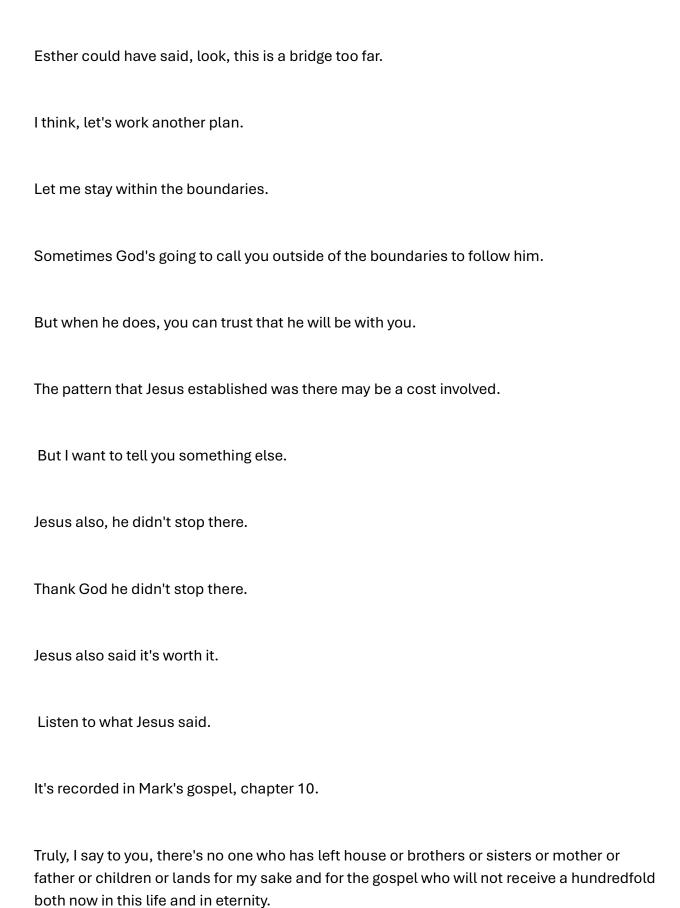


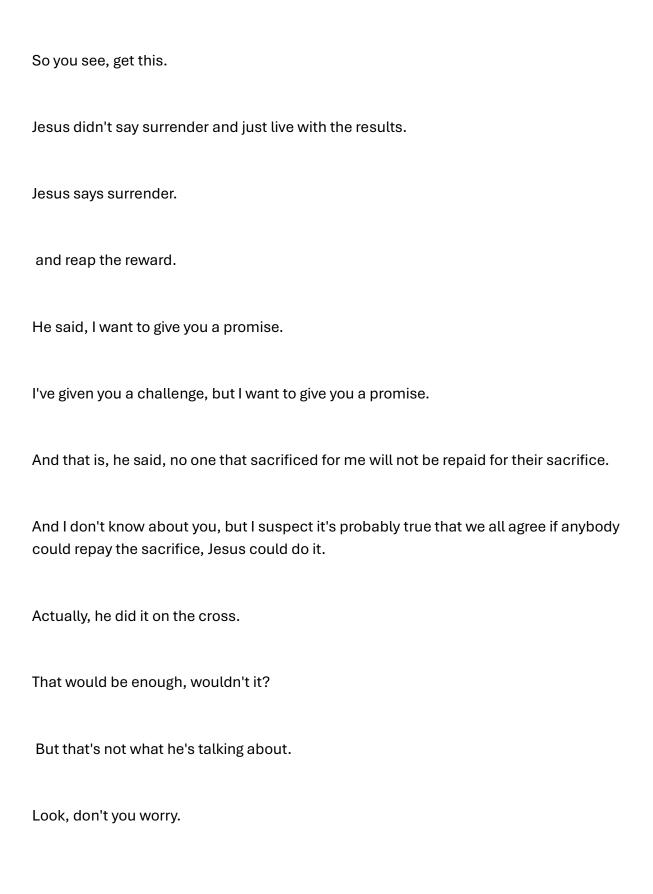
Or he receives a letter, I should say, from the Missionary Society that asks him, have you found a good road to where you are?
Because if so, we know of some men that would like to come and join you in your work.
And Livingston wrote back to them, if you have men who will come only if they know that there's a good road, I don't want them.
I want men who will come if there's no road at all.
Surrender, dedication.
Look, following God may require sacrifice.
Jesus said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
Look, this is the pattern that Jesus established.
You remember, there were many people that came to Jesus and said, I want to be your follower.
I want to be your disciple.
You remember that?
And I will follow you.

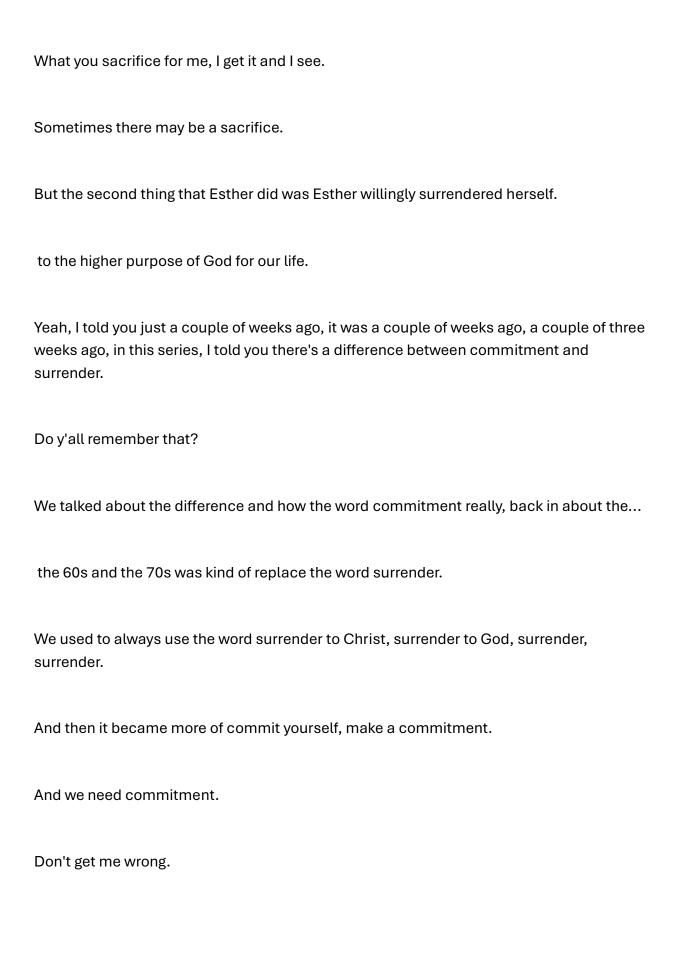


John and James, you remember?
He says, come and follow.
He says, immediately they left their nets and followed him.
They knew what the call meant.
And it was to leave some things behind.
I'm not telling you.
Look, I'm not standing up here this morning telling you that God's going to say, if you say, I want to be wholly surrendered to you, that he's going to wipe you out.
But what if he did?
What if he did?
Could you still say, that's all right.
I've left it all to follow Jesus.
I understand that these things are temporary things.

Am I scaring you just a little bit?
Because I'm scaring me.
What if he did?
See, if anyone would come after me and he said it to these who came and said, I want to be a disciple, then leave this or leave this or come on right now.
And many of them
Did you know at one point in time, Jesus issued a call that was so strong, the Bible says, and many of them turned and walked with him no more.
And you know the term it used for those people?
Disciple.
We always think of the 12, but it said, and many of his disciples turned and walked with him no more.
That's a bridge too far, Jesus.
I hope I wouldn't have been in that crowd, but I might have been.
And so might have you.





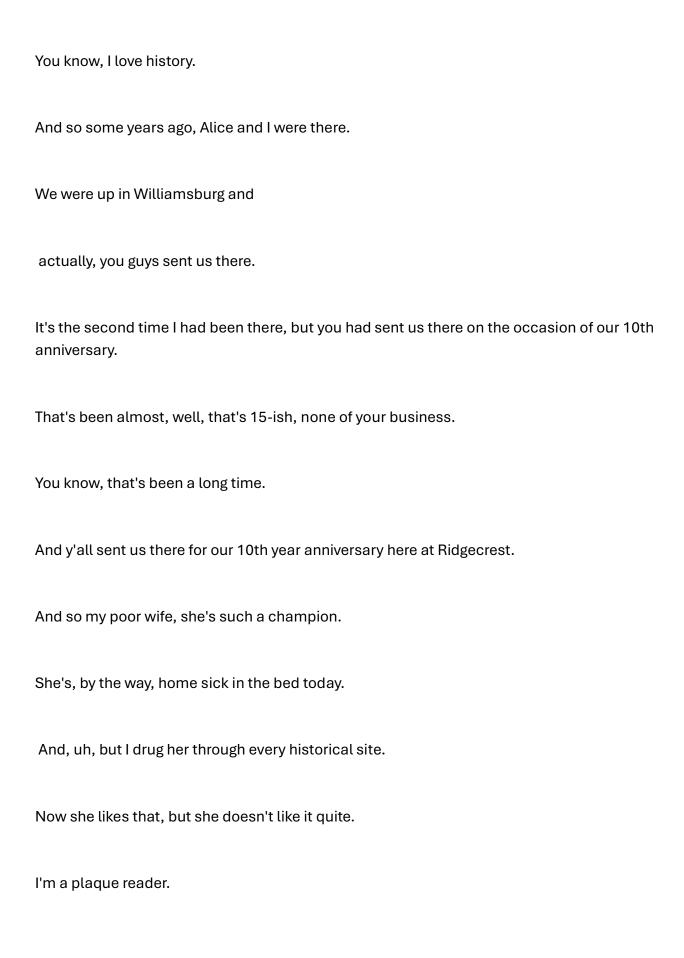


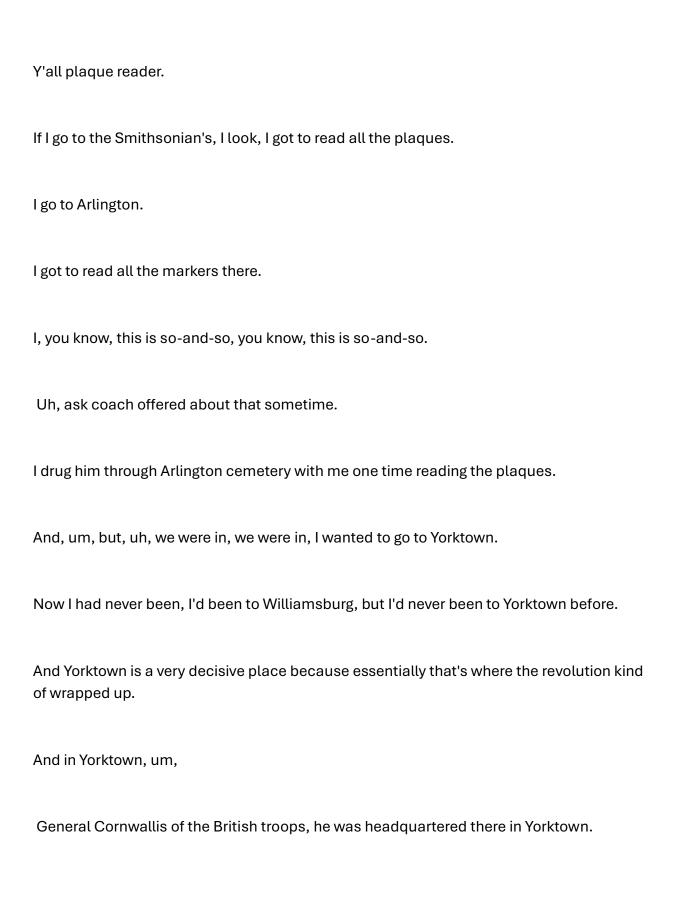
I'm not fussing about that.
As I said a couple of weeks, but do you remember, I gave you a definition, the difference between surrender and commitment.
The difference is this, commitment is all about me.
I make the decision.
I'm in control.
I decide what I'm committed to and what I'm not committed to.
There's a place for that.
But surrender is what?
I give myself completely.
I'm not in control.
I surrender to the control of another.
In our case, it's God Almighty.
I surrender to Him.

Commitment says, God, I'll be committed to this, and I'll be committed to this, and God will be committed to this.
All for you, God.
That's just because that's how I am.
But surrender says all to you, Jesus.
All to you, I surrender.
They ought to make a hymn out of that, Aaron.
All to you, I surrender.
I surrender all.
You see the difference?
This is a story about surrender.
It's not a story about commitment.
It's a story about consecration.

This is about consecration, consecration to the kingdom of God.
It's like what John the Baptist said in John 3.
He said, I must decrease and he must increase.
We have to learn to elevate the purpose of God in the place that God has put us because your place is about your purpose.
I taught you something else about a year ago.
You knew it, but I mean, we just put it in words when I say I taught you.
You remember that I said the greatest thing in the universe?
Do y'all remember?
Somebody get it right so I won't be embarrassed that y'all have already forgotten what I said.
The will of God, the will of God, the most important thing in the universe, not in America, not in Alabama, not in Dothan,
not internationally, the most important thing in the universe is the will of God, and it's going to be accomplished.
It's the most important thing in the universe.

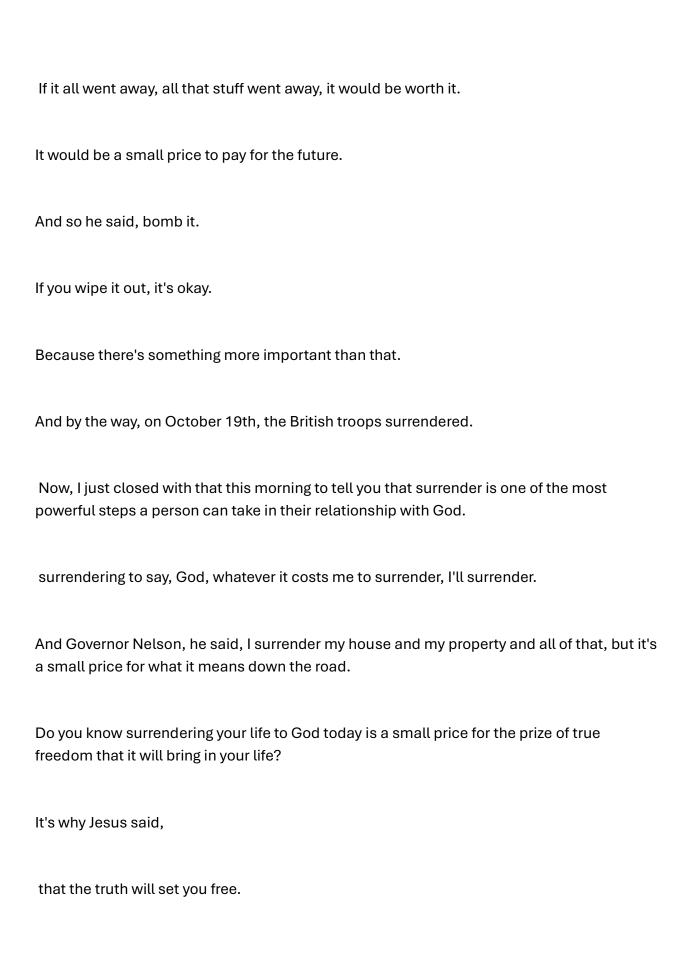
And then the second thing I said to you, let's see, did you get both of them?
And if the will of God is the most important thing in the universe, then the second thing most important is what?
Doing, thank you, Phyllis, doing the will of God.
It just makes sense, right?
If that's the most important thing, then doing the will of God is the most important thing in my life.
Doing the will of God, aligning myself with the will of God.
Those two things are what it means to elevate and consecrate and surrender to the purpose of God.
Esther got it.
And if we'll learn these lessons from her, we will be
richer in our fate.
About 200, almost 255 years ago this month, there was a battle fought in the American Revolution in Yorktown, Virginia.





But by this time, the war was almost over.
And Cornwallis had set up camp there and headquarters there.
He was hoping to rendezvous his British troops with the British armada who was coming into Chesapeake Bay, and they were hoping to escape that route.
But the French cut off the bay, and so they were trapped in Yorktown and in this area, and they were being bombarded by the Patriots there.
And Governor Thomas Nelson, the governor of Virginia, had aligned himself with the Patriots at the beginning of the Revolution.
And at this stage, he was fighting with the Patriots.
And they had artillery set up in Yorktown.
And they were bombarding anything that was associated with the British troops.
And at one point in time,
Governor Nelson tells the leaders of the artillery, he says, you see that house up there?
He said, it's the nicest house in Yorktown.
He said, I know because it's mine.

And General Cornwallis has set up his headquarters in there.
He said, bomb it to smithereens.
And history tells us, if it's true, that the very first cannonball landed on this beautiful dining table right there, landed right in the middle where Cornwallis and his officers were seated.
I wanted to see that.
By the way, you can see that house today.
It still stands.
You can tour it.
You go in it, and there are the bullet holes still in the brick on the outside, the exterior, that sort of thing.
But he told them, he said, it's just a house.
And Nelson understood this.
Governor Nelson understood that he could hang on to that house, but if he did, he would be forfeiting the life that he really was seeking, a life of true freedom.
And he knew that to experience what he really wanted, he was going to have to give up the stuff of his present life.



I am the truth.
I am the way.
And I am the life.
Esther shows us that there are decisions that we make to be who God has designed us to be.
And Jesus reminds us
that our surrender to him changes everything about our future.
Have you said to God, I'll be who you designed me to be right here, right now, whether it may be a place of delight, maybe a place of discipline, but God, I will be who you want me to be right here, right now in this moment that I might live out your purposes.
And God, I will surrender my will like Esther did
to your higher purposes and plans.
I will surrender my soul, my life to you for what is the promise of a better day.
Father, help us to learn these lessons.
Help us to learn from Esther.

Father, that there are higher purposes that you've put us here for.
And help us to surrender to that.
To consecrate ourselves to the higher purpose and plans that you have for us.
Father, before we're gone this morning, there's some listening to my voice on television or radio or live stream in this live audience.
Who, Father, they've been fighting you about surrender.
Maybe surrendering something.
It may be surrendering their life to you.
but they've been fighting you and trying to hold off.
Lord, let this be a day of surrender that changes their life forever.
Would you speak now in these moments before we're gone?
In Jesus' name, amen.