

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.

His name is Haman.

He's a wicked man.

He's self-serving and self-seeking.

And so he hates the Jews.

And he wants to wipe them out.

You know, nothing has happened in all of these years.

There's still the animosity we see so often expressed toward the Jews.

And Haman hates the Jews.

And he hates Mordecai.

Mordecai is Esther's cousin.

And Mordecai is a godly man.

And Haman, because of his high position in the government, every time he comes in and out of the gates, what they called the king's gates, he expects people to bow down to him.

And Mordecai wouldn't do it.

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.

You're the queen.

You can intervene.

You can make a difference.

And she's a bit nervous about that.

Who wouldn't be?

Because unless you're summoned by the king, actually you could be put to death just for walking into the presence of the king without an invitation.

And that included the queen.

And so from there, we get this story, and it is a story of purpose.

It is a story that reminds us that we are here to make a difference.

If you're physically able to do so, why don't you stand with me this morning as we break into our story in verse 12 here, Esther chapter 4.

And they told Mordecai what Esther had said.

And here's what she had said, by the way.

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.

She's in Persia.

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 may be as a parent, a father or a mother.

Did you know that's a great high calling of God?

It may be at school if you're a student.

It may be just in your neighborhood.

But wherever you are right now is not a coincidence.

And so wherever you are right now, be there for God.

And from our story, I want you to notice three things.

I think three things that we can learn.

The first is this, that your place, wherever you are right now, your place is a place to speak for God.

Keep your Bibles open.

Look at verse 14.

For if you keep silent at this time, Mordecai, as I said, was a godly man.

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.

He said, I've discovered there's no problem so big that I can't run from it.

Sometimes, though, I think we've adopted that philosophy.

Let's just run from it.

Let's just get away from it.

There's been too much fear of speaking the truth in this culture.

And there's been too much acceptance of cultural lies in order to pacify and satisfy the world.

But we just go along with whatever is said.

We won't say anything.

We won't say, you know what, that's a lie.

That's just a lie.

It's just not true.

Well, Mordecai makes known to Esther that the place that she was in was a trust from God.

And because it was a trust from God, it included a task for God.

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.

He'll just do it another way.

He is not dependent.

We need to understand that God isn't dependent.

I don't know of any of us sitting in here this morning who would probably say, well, God needs me in the kingdom.

God is dependent on me to get it done.

Because of an incident that I told a story about that happened to Allison and I and our daughter in New York some years ago, I have a little plaque that was given to me

And it sits in my study in there.

Uh, and it says, I'm kind of a big deal.

You know, I want to tell you something.

That's a joke.

That's a tongue in cheek thing.

And they tell me it comes out of some movie scene where a guy had to tell him, and by the way, if you have to tell somebody you're kind of a big deal, you're not a big deal.

Margaret, Margaret Thatcher.

You remember Margaret Thatcher?

She used to say this.

If you have to tell them you're a lady, you're not.

But the fact is, none of us are really kind of big deals.

We're not big deals at all, which makes the opportunities and the tasks that God gives us so much more of a joy that he would let us in on what he's doing.

Mordecai says, God's going to do this.

He's given you, Esther, an opportunity to be an instrument of his work.

That's true of all of us.

God has put you here to use you and to make a difference with you, but he's not dependent on you.

If you don't do what he created you to do, heaven doesn't shut down like the government.

Heaven doesn't wring its hands and say, what am I going to do?

Chuck didn't step up.

Mike didn't step up.

What am I going to do?

Phyllis didn't step up.

Brent didn't step up.

What am I going to do?

Heaven's not wringing its hands.

Heaven says, I created you for a moment.

Have you ever thought this?

There may just be one big moment that God created you for.

Now, usually all along, prepare you, equip you and everything.

But it might just be one moment in time that God said, this moment more than all the others is what I've been moving your life toward.

One moment in time.

But I've created you, and I want you to get in on that.

Isn't that cool?

Isn't that neat to think about the fact that God put you here to accomplish and be a part of his great purpose and plan in all of eternity, but he doesn't have to have you.

He offers you the opportunity.

And where God gives opportunity, God gives supernatural power and discernment.

You know, the day's coming.

Jesus said the day's coming when they'll hand you over to authorities and they'll turn you in.

Children will rise up against their parents and families will turn on each other and friends and all of that.

That day's coming.

You know, I think we're living in the shadows of the end of the age.

I don't know what that means.

I don't know when that'll happen.

I wouldn't dare set any kind of date like was recently set.

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.

It is the opportunity of a lifetime to live for God and speak for God, to stand up, to show up, to speak up for him with your life.

But he doesn't have to have you.

He offers this opportunity to you, just like Mordecai did with Esther.

It's a supreme privilege to speak up for God.

And every place in your life, every place in your life will eventually be a place of opportunity to speak up for God some way.

The second thing I want you to understand from our story today is this, that your place is not only a place where you can speak for God, your place is a place of service for God.

Again, verse 14, I refer you back there.

It says, and who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Do you know the Bible says that you were created for the pleasure of God?

Now, our world says we're created for the pleasure of ourself.

It's not what the Bible says.

In fact, in Revelations 4.11, it says, You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created.

Everything was created for the pleasure of God, and that means you, and that means me.

Now, God didn't create you.

Listen, God didn't create you to be his toy.

You're not a plaything for God.

God didn't say, I'm bored.

I think I'll create people.

Or I need a toy.

I think I'll create people.

You're not a toy.

You weren't created to pacify him.

You were created to glorify him.

You were created to serve him.

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.

He had favored her with the king.

He had given her favor.

It wasn't accidental.

It was purposeful.

The place where she was was not an accident, and neither is the place where you are.

You may not like the place where you are.

I've been in some places through the years in my life that I didn't like that place.

And I can be honest.

I can say that I didn't want to be in that place.

And I'm not talking about physical places, though sometimes it's physical places.

It's physical circumstances, challenges that you're facing.

But I've been there, and I thought, God, I don't like this place.

It wasn't about like.

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.

I'm not a disconnected God.

I'm a God right there where you are.

There's no place that you are that I'm not.

I'm everywhere you are.

All places are God's places.

And so that means when you're in some place that you don't understand or you don't necessarily like or you wonder, why does God have me here?

Remember that all places are God's places because God is in all places.

And sometimes those places are places of discipline.

Whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

Sometimes you're in the place of discipline.

Have you ever been there?

I've been there.

I remember one this past year and it was a place of discipline.

God disciplined me.

Some places are places of duty.

They're places of duty.

Esther's was a place of duty.

I put you here.

You have a responsibility.

You have a duty.

I want you to carry that duty out.

Some places are disciplined, but some places are places of duty and responsibility.

I've created you for this place.

I put you in this place.

You have a duty and a responsibility.

And sometimes the places are places of delight.

Sometimes they're just, God just says, this is just a place of delight.

This is a place of joy.

This is a place where you and I just, this is just a place of fellowship.

We need all of those places.

But I can tell you this, God is in all of those places.

He's in the places of discipline.

He's in the places of duty.

He's in the places of delight.

God is there.

Because that's true, then wherever you are, be there.

Because God is there.

And so where you are is no accident.

If you are in a place that you are whining about, stop whining and start working.

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.

And so is your place.

You are not where you are to serve the king of this world.

You are where you are to serve the king of all kings.

So your place is a place to speak for God.

Did you get it?

Your place is a place of service for God.

Got it?

So I got it, pastor.

**And then last, I want you to see your place is a place of
surrender to God.**

Verse 16, go gather all the Jews in Susa and hold a fast on my behalf.

I'm going to do the same thing.

And then I will go to the king.

Though it's against the law, I will go to the king.

And if I perish, I perish.

This was a place of surrender.

And it's important to understand that we do not surrender, listen, we do not surrender to the place of God for our lives itself.

We surrender to the God of the place.

Does that make sense?

It's not like, okay, I'm surrendering to this place.

What I'm doing is I'm surrendering to the God of that place.

I'm surrendering to God in that place.

We surrender to God himself.

Esther had to surrender her will to God's plan.

And you and I have to do the very same thing.

Our surrender is to the person of God.

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.

I'll do it.

I'll go in before the king, and I will do that.

And if I perish, I perish.

If it costs me my life, I will do it.

Listen, this is what we learn, that living out of the purpose of God may be costly.

It may not cost you your life, but it may cost you something.

This is about dedication to the work of God.

David Livingston, and I don't know if you know who David Livingston was, but David Livingston was the missionary who opened up the continent of Africa to the gospel.

And it was a hard process.

You ought to read a biography about David Livingston.

It'll inspire you of his surrender and his dedication.

And David Livingston, after he had got there and was doing his work for the gospel, he writes back to the Missionary Society and he asks this question, have you found a good road?

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.

And Jesus said, great.

He said, come on, right now.

And a lot of them said, well, I can't right now, but I will later on.

Have you ever told that to God?

God, I'm going to get my act together.

I need to be more committed to your way.

I need to be more dedicated.

I need to be more surrendered.

And in time, I'm going to do that.

Have you ever done that?

You probably say, well, I think I probably have.

But the fact is, when Jesus calls for discipleship, he calls for it immediately.

You remember along the seashore when he called,

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.

Esther could have said, look, this is a bridge too far.

I think, let's work another plan.

Let me stay within the boundaries.

Sometimes God's going to call you outside of the boundaries to follow him.

But when he does, you can trust that he will be with you.

The pattern that Jesus established was there may be a cost involved.

But I want to tell you something else.

Jesus also, he didn't stop there.

Thank God he didn't stop there.

Jesus also said it's worth it.

Listen to what Jesus said.

It's recorded in Mark's gospel, chapter 10.

Truly, I say to you, there's no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold both now in this life and in eternity.

So you see, get this.

Jesus didn't say surrender and just live with the results.

Jesus says surrender.

and reap the reward.

He said, I want to give you a promise.

I've given you a challenge, but I want to give you a promise.

And that is, he said, no one that sacrificed for me will not be repaid for their sacrifice.

And I don't know about you, but I suspect it's probably true that we all agree if anybody could repay the sacrifice, Jesus could do it.

Actually, he did it on the cross.

That would be enough, wouldn't it?

But that's not what he's talking about.

Look, don't you worry.

What you sacrifice for me, I get it and I see.

Sometimes there may be a sacrifice.

But the second thing that Esther did was Esther willingly surrendered herself.

to the higher purpose of God for our life.

Yeah, I told you just a couple of weeks ago, it was a couple of weeks ago, a couple of three weeks ago, in this series, I told you there's a difference between commitment and surrender.

Do y'all remember that?

We talked about the difference and how the word commitment really, back in about the...

the 60s and the 70s was kind of replace the word surrender.

We used to always use the word surrender to Christ, surrender to God, surrender, surrender.

And then it became more of commit yourself, make a commitment.

And we need commitment.

Don't get me wrong.

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.

You know, I love history.

And so some years ago, Alice and I were there.

We were up in Williamsburg and

actually, you guys sent us there.

It's the second time I had been there, but you had sent us there on the occasion of our 10th anniversary.

That's been almost, well, that's 15-ish, none of your business.

You know, that's been a long time.

And y'all sent us there for our 10th year anniversary here at Ridgecrest.

And so my poor wife, she's such a champion.

She's, by the way, home sick in the bed today.

And, uh, but I drug her through every historical site.

Now she likes that, but she doesn't like it quite.

I'm a plaque reader.

Y'all plaque reader.

If I go to the Smithsonian's, I look, I got to read all the plaques.

I go to Arlington.

I got to read all the markers there.

I, you know, this is so-and-so, you know, this is so-and-so.

Uh, ask coach offered about that sometime.

I drug him through Arlington cemetery with me one time reading the plaques.

And, um, but, uh, we were in, we were in, I wanted to go to Yorktown.

Now I had never been, I'd been to Williamsburg, but I'd never been to Yorktown before.

And Yorktown is a very decisive place because essentially that's where the revolution kind of wrapped up.

And in Yorktown, um,

General Cornwallis of the British troops, he was headquartered there in Yorktown.

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.

If it all went away, all that stuff went away, it would be worth it.

It would be a small price to pay for the future.

And so he said, bomb it.

If you wipe it out, it's okay.

Because there's something more important than that.

And by the way, on October 19th, the British troops surrendered.

Now, I just closed with that this morning to tell you that surrender is one of the most powerful steps a person can take in their relationship with God.

surrendering to say, God, whatever it costs me to surrender, I'll surrender.

And Governor Nelson, he said, I surrender my house and my property and all of that, but it's a small price for what it means down the road.

Do you know surrendering your life to God today is a small price for the prize of true freedom that it will bring in your life?

It's why Jesus said,

that the truth will set you free.

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.