

“True Rest” | Rev Tim Frickenschmidt | June 28, 2020

OT Reading Est 5:1-2, 7:1-10, 9:20-22

5¹ On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. 2 And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. 7¹ So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” 3 Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. 4 For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.” 5 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?” 6 And Esther said “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. ... 7 And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king. 8 And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, “Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?” As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, “Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.” And the king said, “Hang him on that.” 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated. ... 20 And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

Epistle Reading Eph 2:13-18

2¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Gospel Reading Matt 5:38-45

5³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Introduction

The final verse of the OT Reading speaks of the Jews getting relief (or rest) from their enemies. Getting rest from enemies is the goal of the book of Esther and is a major theme of the entire Bible (i.e., rest from conflict or oppression). How is true rest from our enemies found? Three points: (1) Real Hero, (2) Sudden Turn and (3) Final Rest.

Background

1. The Real Hero

- Esther, in chs 1-4, isn't heroic: In ch2 she's "pleasing" and compliant. In fact, there are no morally faultless heroes in the Bible: e.g., Moses, David and Solomon.
- Why are there no heroes in the Bible? Because the message of the Bible is that God rescues damaged people out of all their attempts at Godlessness. When rescued, their hearts and lives are changed so He can use them to rescue others.
- God is the real hero of the Bible. In Esther's story, God is unseen but heroic. [Est 4:14](#): Who knows but that you were brought (ISV) to risk your position for others. E.g., this little, Jewish-slave girl of a conquered people, conquers the pagan king.
- God is always bringing us along, even when don't see it and can't know it.

2. The Sudden Turn

- Esther takes advantage of King Ahasuerus' insatiability for drink, and Haman's insatiability for honor, to develop a plan to stop Haman from killing all the Jews.
- For Haman, insatiability turns into inevitability. Haman runs into Mordecai and, again, Mordecai refuses to honor to Haman, incensing Haman (because Haman's identity is his honor – without all honor from everyone, he is nothing ([Est 5:13](#))).
- The Haman in us is a warning: if anything is so precious to us that we can't get enough, if gaining it is everything to us, it'll never be enough. If anyone dares take it from us, we will murder them (eye-for-an-eye); murder with words or in our hearts.
- The Turn ([peripeteia](#)): After being "outed" by Esther and falling on Esther's couch, Haman is condemned by Ahasuerus. The Hope: If the King/God is on your side, our ultimate enemies can't get close enough to even touch us; and, if they try, they die.

3. The Final Rest

- The major gap between Esther and Jesus: Esther's enemies die and she lives; and the Jews are allowed to kill their enemies (75,000 in a day), getting rest from them. This puts Esther in a long line of OT saviors, who gave Israel temporary rest from earthly enemies by killing them: [Moses](#); [Joshua](#); [Samson](#); [King David](#); [Elijah](#).
- Jesus is not like the OT saviors although His disciples expect Him to be like them, to direct and lead them, as in [Luke 9:51-56](#) (asking: is it time to kill our enemies?). Rather than hating our enemies, Jesus says to love and pray for them [Matt 5:44](#).
- Why the difference between OT saviors and Jesus? Jesus didn't come just to give temporary rest from earthly enemies; He came to bring eternal rest from the world, the flesh (the indwelling power of sin) and the evil one; to make earthly enemies into friends ([Eph 2:14-16](#): killing hostility between people and between people and God).

Discuss

- God rescues damaged people out of Godlessness ... and changes their hearts.
- Esther conquers/rescues by being brought; all of us have been and are being brought.
- The Haman in us is a warning. Only if we see ourselves in Haman, and we see Jesus for us in Haman, can we follow Jesus in loving our enemies.
- What are the similarities and differences between Esther (OT saviors) and Jesus?
- Who points us to Jesus, Esther or Haman?

Conclusion/Application

•Who in the book of Esther points us to Jesus? Esther is used by God to rescue God's people, but the rescue is temporary. Haman ends up hanging dead upon a pole, quenching the king's just, righteous anger, which is the story of Jesus with God, the King.
 •Jesus took our inevitable end upon Himself. Only that depth of love, that sacrifice, that depth of grace has the power to change our hearts; to allow us to love those who hate us and to pray for those who persecute us – and to look beyond temporary relief.
 •Re: [Les Miserables](#) ... the hardest, most formidable attack [Jean Valjean](#) endured was the attack of grace upon his soul – it is God's attack upon the sin, hatred, evil and brokenness which dwells within us. It's only the attack of Grace which can heal our souls.
 •All the Godless world can offer us is hatred and murder along societal dividing lines; it's the Gospel that removes these divisions, turning enemies into friends. That is the depth of Grace, love and forgiveness in Christ. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; love our enemies. Bear their burden, extend to them the Grace we have already received in Christ.

