Date: November 1, 2026
Series: Esther (Week 3 of 8)
Title: When Evil Finds an Ear
Main Passage: Esther 3
Support Texts: Genesis 12:1–3; Proverbs 16:18; Proverbs 16:33; Proverbs 29:12; James 1:19–20; Romans 12:17–21; Philippians 2:8; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 1 John 2:1; Revelation 12:10
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Introduction

Good morning, church. If you've got a Bible, turn with me to Esther chapter 3.

Picture this. Somebody pulls you aside at work and says, "Just so you know, that new guy is trouble. Keep your distance." That's all they say. No details. No examples. But from that moment on, you watch him differently. You read his emails differently. You hear his jokes differently. Months go by, and you realize you never once asked him a single question. You never checked a single fact. You just took what you were handed, and you let one person's word decide who he was.

That's Esther 3. A king is about to sign away an entire people because one man in his ear told him what to believe, and he never asked a single question.

So here's where we're going today: **Evil does its worst work when pride goes unchecked and lies go unquestioned, but it can never overrule the God who governs even the lot.**

Now, most of us hear a sermon like this and think, "I hope so-and-so is listening." Nobody walks in here thinking, "I'm the one who believes lies about people." We all think we're pretty good judges of character. But guarding what you listen to isn't a restriction on your life. It's one of the ways God sets you free. So here's the question for today: **Who has your ear?**

Quick reminder of where we are. This is week three in Esther. Last week we left two loose threads. Esther is queen, but her Jewish identity is still hidden. And Mordecai saved the king's life, but all he got for it was a line in the royal records.

Movement 1: Pride Gets Promoted

Read Esther 3:1–6 (NIV).

Look at verse 1. "After these events." What events? Mordecai just saved the king's life.

So what does the king do? He promotes somebody else. Haman gets a seat above every noble in the empire, and the man who actually saved the king is still standing at the gate.

Then notice how Haman is introduced: "the Agagite." Agag was king of the Amalekites, the people who attacked Israel's weakest as they came out of Egypt. Back in chapter 2, Mordecai is from the family of Kish, the father of King Saul. And in 1 Samuel 15, Saul spared Agag when God told him not to. The text doesn't use the word "Amalekite," but most interpreters, going back to ancient Jewish tradition, read it this way. A son of Kish is facing a son of Agag at the king's gate. Think West Side Story, except nobody's snapping their fingers and the feud is four hundred years old.

Verse 2. Everybody bows. Mordecai won't. Why not? Now let's stop right there, because people have theories. Some Greek additions to Esther, written later, say he refused because he would only give that kind of honor to God. That isn't part of Scripture, so I hold it loosely. Bowing to someone in authority wasn't forbidden for God's people. Abraham bowed to the Hittites. David bowed to Saul. What the text does tell us is in verse 4: "He had told them he was a Jew." Whatever his exact reason, it was tied to who he was and whose he was.

Verse 5 says Haman was "enraged." And verse 6 says he "scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai." Literally, it was contemptible in his eyes. That's the same word used in Genesis 25 when Esau despised his birthright, and Esau is the ancestor of Amalek. Same contempt, generations later.

One man won't bow, and Haman's answer is to wipe out an entire people. **Pride does not stay in proportion.**

Somebody finish this one for me. Pride goes before... destruction. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Keep that verse in your back pocket. Haman is going to meet it later in this book.

How many of you have ever had one person live rent-free in your head for a week? The coworker who won't give you credit. The family member who won't apologize. The person who disagreed with you in front of everybody. Haman had the second-highest seat in the empire, and one man at the gate ruined the whole thing for him. James 1:20 says, "human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." Haman grabbed for the highest seat he could get. There's another King coming in this story who did the opposite. Philippians 2:8 says Jesus "humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

Movement 2: The God Who Governs the Lot

Read Esther 3:7 (NIV).

Haman has a plan. Now he needs a date. So they cast the pur, the lot. To Haman, this was a way of finding the right day for his plan. That word pur is where the Jewish festival of Purim gets its name.

Here's the thing. The dice are rolled in Nisan, the month of Passover, the month God's people remembered their rescue from Egypt. And they land on Adar, the twelfth month. Haman reached for his own way of finding the right day, and the lot gave God's people almost a year.

Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."

In Scripture, a lot was never about luck. It was a way of placing a decision in God's hands, and God holds the outcome. Haman can cast the lot, but God decides where it falls. This is called the doctrine of providence. Providence means God is actively sustaining his creation and guiding history toward his purposes, even when nobody can see his hand. God isn't mentioned once in this chapter, and he is governing every line of it.

Now, some of you are thinking, "Okay, Pastor, if God's in control, why didn't he just stop Haman? Why let the decree go out at all?"

Here's what Scripture teaches. God made us in his image with a real ability to choose between right and wrong, and he holds us responsible for our choices. God didn't put that hatred in Haman's heart. Haman chose it. God is not the author of evil. But he's also not trapped by it. He allows real choices, and then he works through them and around them until evil ends up serving his purposes instead of its own.

So write this down: **God can let you choose the outcomes in your life, good or bad, and still use them for his glory and his purpose.**

Haman made choices God never approved of, and God was never powerless to work within them for his own glory. The same is true in your life. Someone can choose something you'd never approve of, something you have no power to stop, and that still doesn't mean God has lost his grip on how the story ends.

Movement 3: When Evil Finds an Ear

Read Esther 3:8–11 (NIV).

Do you see what's happening here? Haman isn't just reporting a problem. He's choosing every word to steer the king toward exactly the outcome he wants, and the king has no idea what he's actually approving. Watch how he does it.

Point number one: evil rarely says the name. Verse 8 starts, "There is a certain people." He never names them. It's a lot easier to destroy a category than a person you actually know.

Point number two: the most convincing lies are mostly true. Haman says, "Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws." Scattered? True. Different customs? True. Don't obey the king's laws? False. He took one man at one gate and pinned it on all of them.

Point number three: it always makes it about you. "It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them." Then he offers ten thousand talents of silver, about 375 tons. The Greek historian Herodotus estimated the Persian Empire's entire yearly revenue at around 14,560 talents, which means Haman's offer could have been close to two-thirds of a year's income for the whole empire—and the text doesn't even say how he planned to raise it.

Point number four: it only works if nobody asks. In verse 10 the king hands over his signet ring, and in verse 11 he says, "Keep the money, and do with the people as you please." For a guy running an empire that stretched from India to Ethiopia, Xerxes sure didn't ask a lot of questions that morning. Count the questions he never asks. Who are they? He never asks for a name, and his own queen is one of them. Is it true? He never checks the charge. What did they do? One of "them" saved his life, and it's written down in his own records.

Proverbs 29:12 says, "If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked." Evil didn't need an army in Esther 3. It needed one man with power who wouldn't ask questions.

Most of us will never sit on a throne, but every one of us has someone whose word we take without checking. Now we're talking about us for a second, not just Xerxes.

Most of us don't wear a signet ring, but all of us have some authority. Your home. Your kids. Your team at work. Your friends. Your voice in this church. And every one of us has done what Xerxes did. We've believed one child's version before hearing the other one.

We've shared the post before checking it.

So why do we believe the lie so easily? Can I be honest with you? I think it's usually because the lie lets us stay right. If that person really is the problem, then I don't have to look at myself. Haman's pitch worked on Xerxes because it flattered him. You're the king, and they're the problem. **The lies we believe about other people usually protect the lies we believe about ourselves.**

Here's one question for your notes: **Whose version of someone am I believing without ever asking?**

And here's one practical step for this week. Before you repeat something about someone, ask the three questions the king never asked. Who is this really about? Is it true? What do I actually know?

Movement 4: The Decree

Read Esther 3:12–15 (NIV).

The decree goes out on the thirteenth day of the first month. Passover started on the fourteenth. Picture a Jewish family getting ready to remember God's rescue, and a courier rides into town with their death sentence. The order was to "destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day." Remember those three words: destroy, kill, annihilate. You'll hear them again in this book.

Then verse 15: "The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered." The palace is celebrating, and the city has no idea what just happened.

Here's the thing. Haman didn't just go after a minority. He went after the family God had made a promise to. In Genesis 12:3 God told Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." That promise was carrying the family that would one day bring Jesus into the world. No decree from Susa could cancel it. And the words Haman spoke in verse 8 have been spoken against the Jewish people again and again throughout history. As followers of Jesus, we must never be the voice in the king's ear—the one who hands someone in authority a version of a person or a people that isn't fully true.

Movement 5: The Voice That Speaks for You

Now look at Haman one more time. He walks into the king's presence and speaks

against God's people. He's an accuser—someone who brings a charge against another person to whoever has the power to act on it. Scripture tells us we have an accuser too, and his target is you. Revelation 12:10 calls Satan "the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night."

Can I be honest with you? What makes the accuser so convincing is that he's mostly right. You have sinned. So have I. The lie isn't that you've sinned. The lie is that your sin gets the last word.

1 John 2:1 says, "If anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." An advocate speaks in your defense before the one who has power to judge you. Jesus doesn't just forgive the charge—he stands and answers it for you.

Put the two kings side by side. Xerxes signed away people he never bothered to know. Jesus knows every one of his people by name. Xerxes never asked who they were. Jesus came looking for you. Haman offered ten thousand talents of silver to buy a people's death. Jesus paid for your life with something silver could never buy. 1 Peter 1:18–19 says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

Haman wanted God's people dead. Jesus died so God's people could live. And three days later he walked out of the grave, which means the accuser's decree doesn't get the final word over your life either.

And the good news goes further than forgiveness. Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." You can't do that on your own. Nobody holds a grudge for ten years and then just decides to stop. But the same grace that forgives you can heal the heart that's holding it. Jesus doesn't only forgive your Haman moments. By his Spirit, he makes you new.

So, who has your ear?

There are a lot of voices in this chapter. Pride. Gossip at the gate. Chance. A king who never asked a question. An accuser. Only one voice tells the whole truth about you, every sin you've ever committed, and still speaks for you. He isn't named in Esther 3, but he's named in the gospel. His name is Jesus. **Jesus has to have your ear.** Not one more voice in the crowd, but the one voice you let settle every question the others raise.

And that isn't something you just agree with in your head. It's a decision. Some of you

have listened to every voice in your life except his. Today you can stop and listen to him. And some of you belong to Jesus, but you've handed your ear back to pride, to a grudge, or to the accuser's voice about who you are. Today you can give it back to him.

Let's Pray

Would you bow your heads with me?

If you're here today and you've never surrendered your life to Christ, his grace has been going ahead of you long before you ever noticed. That grace is offered freely to every one of us, and it makes it possible for you to turn to him. You can turn right now. Pray this with me: Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner and I need you. I believe you died for my sins and rose again. Forgive me. I've listened to every other voice, and today I choose to listen to you. I surrender my life to you, and I choose to follow you as my Savior and Lord. Give me new life. If you prayed that, don't leave without telling me or someone you trust. That's the best decision you'll ever make.

And if you already follow Jesus, think of the name that came to mind today. The person who won't bow. The person you've had a version of that you never checked. Pray this: Lord, I hand you this offense. Speak louder than pride, and louder than the accuser. Heal what's underneath it and make my heart new.

Father, thank you that even when you seem silent, you are not absent. For the one who has been lied about, remind them that you see and that you are just. For the one who has believed the accuser's voice about who they are, let them hear their Advocate today. Thank you, Jesus, that you are the King who knows our names and gave yourself for us. Help us live what we've decided today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Before the next song: Chapter 3 ends with the palace drinking and the city bewildered. Chapter 4 opens with Mordecai in sackcloth at the king's gate. Next week, we'll see what God's people do when the decree has already been signed.