

## The Bible 20/20 Week 19: “Providence and Purpose” (5-17-20)

**Today: The Book of Esther** (Key Theme’s: God’s Providence, Living with Purpose, God’s Absence)

### Context of Today’s Story: The King, Esther, and Mordecai

- Jews have been in exile for years, and now many have returned to Israel
- Esther is a story of Jews still living in the kingdom of Persia, and specifically the capital city of Susa
- First 2 Chapters setup our story:
  - The King Ahasuerus (pronounced: “Uh-Haser-Us”) replaces His Queen Vashti (3rd year of his reign)
  - Esther wins a year-long beauty pageant and becomes the new queen (7th year of his reign)
  - Esther’s Uncle Mordecai (who raised her) discovers a plot to kill the king. He warns & saves King!

**Today’s story** (Esther chapters 3-9): 5 years after these events . . .

### Chapter 3: Haman’s Plot to kill the Jews

- **Haman** - The King’s 2nd in command rises to power & prominence. The villain enters the scene!
- Mordecai refuses to bow in homage to Haman
- Haman plots revenge - He wants to kill Mordecai and all the Jews
- Haman relies on “chance or fate” to determine his plans . . .

### Esther 3:7 (ESV)

In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

**Note:** Haman chooses the date for his plan by “dice” - casting lots or “Pur”

- There are many moments of “chance” or “coincidence” throughout this Book
- This stands out especially because God is never mentioned in this Book!
- In God’s apparent absence - “Fate” or “Chance” seems to rule the affairs of men

**So Haman lays out his plan to the king** - on the set day (13th day of the last month of the year)

The Jews defy our laws, so let’s offer a reward for anyone who will attack and kill the Jews in our midst!

**This creates chaos in the capital, and Mordecai & the Jews go into mourning . . .**

### Esther 3:15-4:1 (ESV)

(15) The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion. (4:1) When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

- Now Mordecai and Esther being to send messages back and forth.
- Her heritage had been hidden from the King - he has no idea she is a Jew.
- And Mordecai asks Esther for a bold request - to make a plea on behalf of her people to the King

**Esther's Reply** . . . You don't understand what you are asking!

### **Esther 4:11 (ESV)**

“All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

**Mordecai's Response** is the Key Passage in the Book of Esther:

### **Esther 4:13-14 (ESV)**

(13) 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. (14) For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

**Note:** This is where **God's Sovereign Nature** and **Man's Free Will** meet to dance . . .

- We can trust in God's Providence!
- And we should Act with Purpose!

**\*Reflecting on God's Providence & My Action at some key points in life:**

- **Adopting Micah** - 3 kids & a mortgage making \$35-40k and it was gonna take \$22-24k to adopt
- **Moving to Knoxville:**
  - **Providence of God:**
    - Chinese Student/Mother of DS daughter/ Salvation on an International Flight
    - Dawn Jerger - attending church in Franklin the Sunday we announced the move to Knoxville
    - 3 Families - sell & purchase homes in record speed
  - **Acting with Purpose:**
    - Telling Steve I'm leaving - had to let go, before taking hold of what's next
    - Visiting and exploring Knoxville - God designated meetings every time
    - 3 Families saying yes and stepping out with no promises or real plans - just a direction

Back to our Story: **Esther's Bold Move and the Providence of God** . . .

### **Esther 4:16 (ESV)**

“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. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

**Esther's Banquets** . . .

- Esther spared and she request's The King & Haman attend a feast that night (5:1-5)
- After the feast - Esther requests a second banquet the next night (5:6-8)

The Fateful Night - The great in-between . . .

**Why the extra night** - was Esther getting cold feet?

- **Esther completes her fast . . .**

**Esther 4:16 (ESV)**

“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. **Then I will go to the king . . .**”

**Esther 5:1 (ESV)**

**On the third day** Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace . . .

- **Haman's pride** prepares his own downfall - the making of gallows for Mordecai (5:9-14)
- **The King can't sleep**, reads the records - remembers Mordecai's warning of the plot on his life (6:1-3)

**What seems like a fearful reaction - is actually a Divine Delay!**

**The Big Day:**

- Haman's pride leads to Mordecai's protection and honor! (6:4-14)
- Now the **2nd Feast** - Esther reveals her lineage and Haman's real plot!

You see: **Trusting in God's Providence and living with Purpose go hand-in-hand!**

- Esther & her people are saved!
- Haman is hanged on the very gallows that were intended for Mordecai!

This all leads to a new Yearly Holiday - **Feast of Purim**

**Esther 9:22, 26 (ESV)**

(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. . . (26) Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them

**Notes:** The feast of “good luck”? No, it's an ironic title!

It's a reminder of God's Deliverance and his Faithful people acting on behalf of others!

**Psalms 16:5-8 (ESV)**

(5) **The LORD is my chosen portion** and my cup; **you hold my lot**. (6) The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. (7) I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. (8) I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

**Conclusion:** Let's trust in the Providence of God, recognizing that we are called to live in such a time as this, and therefore we can act with Purpose!

**Let's Pray!**

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Do you remember a time in your life when you saw God working through what appeared to be just coincidences? What are some ways we can learn to recognize God working when it's not necessarily obvious?
- 2) How do we balance the Providence of God working his purposes, with our own ability to make choices and decisions? What can we learn from Esther's story about how we can co-operate with God to live with purpose?
- 3) What role does prayer and fasting play in our life when we are at a big moment of decision or we are in need of direction? How can this be a source of receiving wisdom or counsel from God?
- 4) Mordecai tells Esther - you are here for "such a time as this" - How do you think that applies to your life right now? What areas of influence do you have? What do you think God might have placed you here to do in this season of life?
- 5) At times, living with purpose and choosing to act in co-operation with what God is up to is risky? How does God's Providence give us courage to take the risks He may be calling us to? How was Esther able to say - "I will do this, and if I perish, I perish?" How does Jesus enable us to do that in our lives today?