

Holy Currencies: Truth

We are located at 2590 First Street in Napa, CA. This land was first inhabited by indigenous people who lived here for 10,000 years. They represented the Wappo, Patwin, and Coastal Miwok tribes. They were gradually and systemically pushed out of the area as Catholicism, Mexico, and the United States took over the region. The Suscol Intertribal Council represents approximately 1,000 indigenous people still living in Napa County, seeking to preserve their cultural and seek the equity and inclusion that once was theirs.

A lot of folks I have met over the years talk about how Napa has changed. For many, it has become a challenge to live here due to the high cost of living. Some feel forced out, commuting into Napa from other, less expensive areas, which impacts the quality of life for the whole family. I wonder what it was like to be an indigenous person living here in the 1800's as their community changed forever with the introduction of a religion they didn't seek and the forced relocation that came with Mexico and the U.S.'s forced takeover of this area. The conquerors, the victors, usually get to write the history. Those who were defeated often don't, their stories and experiences dying with them.

The truth of how we got here is uncomfortable and often unwelcome. Yet the only way we can somehow heal the pain of the past and prevent repeating such horrors in the future is to be honest about our history. Truth matters. Speaking truth matters. Owning the truth matters. It is a currency of the Spirit of God, as God is fully aware of the truth that has brought us to now.

Eric Law, author of Holy Currencies (which is informing the series we are currently in) offers insight regarding the meaning of the word "truth" in the Hebrew and Chinese languages:

The Hebrew word that is translated as "truth," emet, is composed of the three letters, aleph, mem, and tav—the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The composition of the word may signify that in order to discern the truth, one must know the beginning, the middle, and the end of the event. There is no halftruth in the Hebrew emet. We cannot take one moment, one feeling, or one perspective and call that the truth. For this reason, we do not select one verse from the Bible and use it in a polarizing way to make judgments, calling that verse the "truth." To discern the truth we need to read the whole Bible from beginning to end.

The Chinese word for truthful or genuine, (zhén), includes two ideograms, (shí) and (mù). is the number ten while represents the eye. The bottom part is the symbol for a table. The number ten symbolizes completeness or wholeness. Discerning the truth requires that we look at an issue or event in a wholistic way, perhaps through ten different eyes, or ten different perspectives on the table ([Holy Currencies: Six Blessings for Sustainable Missional Ministries](#)).

Most people I know are aware that the full truth is not always readily available in this age. It's quite a paradox – we live in a more connected and information-accessible age than ever before, yet the way information is marketed and delivered severely limits what most people hear and believe. We settle on our trusted sources and assume we've heard the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In the Hebrew and Chinese understanding, perhaps we need to demand more of ourselves and all others. **Jesus** once told his challengers that **the truth would set us free**. In that context he was talking about some deep theological and cosmological truth that challenged unbridled arrogance. That's what truth does. Truth gives us a fuller picture so that we can see clearly and live with the freedom that understanding affords.

Because the Jewish festival of Purim lands next weekend, perhaps remembering the story of Queen Esther is appropriate, inviting the voices of all the characters in the story. Read the full story from the Bible's [Book of Esther](#). Or at least refresh your memory with the abbreviated story below.

The Book of Esther: A Story of Courage in a Foreign Land

Long ago, when the Jewish people were living in exile far from their homeland, the Persian Empire stretched across the known world. Its ruler was King Ahasuerus—also known as Xerxes—powerful, wealthy, and given to grand displays of glory.

In the capital city of Susa, the king threw a feast that lasted 180 days. Officials and nobles from across the empire gathered to admire his splendor. When the celebration reached its height, the king called for Queen Vashti to appear before the guests, wearing her royal crown, so that everyone might see her beauty.

But Vashti refused.

The king, humiliated before his nobles, grew furious. At the urging of his advisors—who feared that Vashti’s defiance might inspire women throughout the empire—he removed her from her position as queen. A decree was sent throughout the land: Vashti would never again come before the king. With the throne vacant, the king’s servants proposed a plan. Let beautiful young women from all provinces be brought to Susa. After a year of beauty treatments and preparation, each would come before the king. The one who pleased him most would become queen.

Among those taken to the palace was a young Jewish woman named Esther. She was an orphan, raised by her cousin Mordecai, who had become like a father to her. Mordecai was a faithful Jew living in Susa and served in a minor role at the king’s gate.

Before Esther entered the palace, Mordecai gave her careful instruction: Do not reveal your Jewish identity.

Esther listened.

She found favor with Hegai, the king’s eunuch in charge of the women. When her turn came to enter the king’s presence, she asked for nothing beyond what Hegai recommended. The king loved Esther more than all the others. He set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen in place of Vashti.

And so Esther, a Jewish woman in exile, became queen of the Persian Empire—though few knew who she truly was.

Meanwhile, Mordecai uncovered a plot. Two palace guards conspired to assassinate the king. Mordecai learned of it and told Esther, who reported it in Mordecai’s name. The conspirators were arrested, and the incident was recorded in the royal chronicles. But Mordecai received no reward—at least not yet.

In time, a man named Haman rose to prominence. The king promoted him above all other officials. By royal command, all were required to bow before Haman.

All—except Mordecai.

Day after day, Mordecai refused to kneel. When questioned, he declared that he was a Jew. Haman was enraged—not merely at Mordecai but at the entire Jewish people.

Rather than punish one man, Haman conceived something far darker.

He cast lots—“purim”—to determine the most auspicious day to destroy the Jews. Then he approached the king.

“There is a certain people,” Haman said carefully, “scattered and separate. Their laws differ from every other people’s. It is not in the king’s interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written to destroy them.”

Without much investigation, the king gave Haman his signet ring—symbol of royal authority. A decree went out to every province: On the appointed day, all Jews—young and old, women and children—were to be killed, and their goods plundered.

The city of Susa was thrown into confusion. Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, mourning publicly. Throughout the empire, Jews fasted and wept.

Esther, safe inside the palace walls, heard of Mordecai’s grief. Through messengers, she learned of Haman’s decree. Mordecai sent back a message urging her to go before the king and plead for her people.

Esther hesitated. Anyone who approached the king without being summoned could be put to death—unless the king extended his golden scepter. And Esther had not been called in thirty days. Mordecai’s reply came with piercing clarity:

“Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone will escape. If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place—but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have come to royal dignity for such a time as this?”

For a moment, everything hung in the balance.

Esther sent her answer:

“Go, gather all the Jews in Susa. Fast for me for three days. I and my attendants will fast as well. After that, I will go to the king—even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court. The king saw her.

Silence.

Then—he extended the golden scepter.

Esther approached and touched its tip.

“What is it, Queen Esther?” the king asked. “Even up to half my kingdom, it shall be given to you.”

Esther did not reveal her request immediately. Instead, she invited the king and Haman to a banquet she had prepared.

At the banquet, the king again asked her petition. Esther requested only that they attend another banquet the following day.

Haman left that evening in high spirits—until he saw Mordecai at the gate, refusing once more to bow. Fury consumed him.

At home, Haman boasted of his wealth, his promotions, and his invitation to dine with the king and queen. Yet he concluded bitterly, “All this gives me no satisfaction so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

His wife and friends offered a solution: Build a gallows fifty cubits high. In the morning, ask the king to hang Mordecai on it. Then go joyfully to the banquet.

Haman loved the idea. The gallows was constructed that night.

But that same night, the king could not sleep.

He ordered the royal chronicles to be read to him. By seeming chance, the record of Mordecai’s earlier act—exposing the assassination plot—was read aloud.

“What honor or recognition has Mordecai received?” the king asked.

“Nothing has been done for him.”

At that moment, Haman entered the court, intending to request Mordecai’s execution.

Before he could speak, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?”

Haman, assuming the king meant him, answered grandly: “Let the man be clothed in royal robes the king has worn, placed on a horse the king has ridden, and led through the city square, proclaiming: ‘Thus shall it be done for the man the king delights to honor!’”

“Excellent,” said the king. “Quickly—do so for Mordecai the Jew.”

Haman was stunned. But he had no choice. He clothed Mordecai, led him through the city, and proclaimed his honor.

Humiliated, Haman returned home. His wife and advisors now offered a chilling warning: “If Mordecai is of Jewish origin, you will surely fall before him.”

That evening, at the second banquet, the king again asked Esther her petition.

This time, she spoke plainly.

“If I have found favor in your sight, O king, let my life be granted me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed.”

The king was outraged. “Who has presumed to do this?”

Esther turned and said, “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.”

The king rose in anger and went into the garden. Haman, terrified, fell at Esther’s couch, begging for mercy. When the king returned and saw him there, it appeared as though Haman were assaulting the queen.

“Will he even assault the queen in my presence?” the king thundered.

Haman’s fate was sealed.

One of the attendants spoke up: “The gallows Haman prepared for Mordecai stands at his house.”

“Hang him on it,” the king ordered.

And so Haman was executed on the very gallows he had built for another.

Yet the decree against the Jews still stood. Persian law could not be revoked.

Esther again approached the king, weeping and pleading. The king allowed her and Mordecai to write a new decree in his name. The new edict granted the Jews the right to assemble and defend themselves on the appointed day.

When that day arrived, the Jews prevailed against those who sought their harm. In Susa and throughout the provinces, their enemies were defeated.

What was intended for destruction became deliverance.

What was plotted in secret turned back upon the plotter.

Mordecai was elevated to high rank in the kingdom. The Jewish people established a festival—Purim—to remember how sorrow was turned into joy and mourning into celebration.

And though the story never once mentions the name of God, the thread of hidden providence runs through every page: in sleepless nights, in delayed revelations, in courageous decisions, and in reversals no one could have predicted.

A queen who risked her life.

A faithful man who would not bow.

An empire redirected by a single brave act.

“For such a time as this.”

And so the story of Esther endures—a story of courage in exile, faith in uncertainty, and hope that even when the divine seems hidden, redemption may be quietly unfolding.

Take a minute to breath. The story of Esther was written by and for the Jewish people. It’s a unique biblical text because the name of God is never mentioned, yet the wooing and nudging of God is clearly evident. In light of our pursuit of truth as a holy currency today, take a few moments to breathe and wonder what the experience must have been like for Esther. Take some more breaths and wonder about the experiences of Mordecai, King Xerxes, and even Haman.

If you have time, read the following perspectives from Haman, King Xerxes, Mordecai, and Esther:

Haman’s Perspective.

*They call me a villain. History is written by the survivors. My name is **Haman**, son of Hammedatha, an Agagite. That title matters more than most understand. Agagite. Descendant of kings who once ruled before the Israelites crushed us. Old wounds do not disappear simply because generations pass. They settle into the bones of a people.*

When I rose in the court of Ahasuerus, it was not by accident. The empire was vast—restless, complicated, fragile. Power requires loyalty. Order requires visible hierarchy. A kingdom does not hold together on good intentions alone.

The king promoted me above the other officials. It was an honor earned through strategy, counsel, and long service. With authority comes expectation. If the king’s representative commands respect, the empire stands firm. If his representative is publicly slighted, authority erodes. And that is where Mordecai enters the story.

Mordecai sat at the king’s gate. A minor official. Not powerful. Not influential. But stubborn. When the decree went out that all should bow before me, he refused. Not quietly. Not discreetly. Openly. Every day I passed him. Every day he remained upright.

Was it pride? Defiance? Religious scruple? He claimed it was because he was a Jew. Very well. But what is a government to do when personal conviction becomes public rebellion? It was not merely about

one man kneeling. It was about precedent. If one official can ignore royal command without consequence, what message travels through 127 provinces? If one people claim exemption from imperial custom, how long before others follow?

They say I overreacted. But empires fall through small fractures. Yes, I was angry. I will not deny it. No one enjoys public humiliation. Yet my anger grew larger than personal offense. Mordecai's refusal seemed to symbolize something deeper—a people scattered throughout the provinces who held themselves apart, who followed their own laws, who would not fully assimilate. Different laws. Different customs. Different loyalties. Difference alone is not treason. But difference combined with defiance? That is instability. So I framed the matter in terms the king would understand.

"There is a certain people," I told him. I did not name them. Names make things personal. I spoke of governance, not grudges. I spoke of unity, not vengeance. "It is not in the king's interest to tolerate them."

Perhaps I believed my own rhetoric. Perhaps I convinced myself this was about national security. Perhaps it was both fear and pride, woven together so tightly I could no longer separate them.

The king gave me his signet ring.

That was the moment history sealed.

The decree was not subtle. It was decisive. Eliminate the threat. Remove the instability. End the question.

Yes, it was severe.

But ancient politics were not gentle.

When the date was set by lot—pur—it felt like destiny had endorsed my decision. Even the dice aligned.

Then everything began to unravel.

The queen—Esther—invited me to a banquet with the king. Me alone. I felt vindicated. Elevated. Seen.

At last, the recognition I deserved.

And yet, even at the height of that honor, I passed by Mordecai, still standing, still refusing to bow. All my wealth, all my promotion, all my access to power—and one man's refusal undid my peace.

That should have been my warning.

Instead, I built the gallows.

Was it excessive? Yes. But humiliation demands resolution. I told myself it would restore order. Remove the agitator. Silence the symbol.

That night, while the structure rose in my courtyard, the king could not sleep.

Of all the absurd twists in this tale, that is the one that mocks me most. An empire trembles because of insomnia.

The chronicles were read.

Mordecai's forgotten loyalty was discovered.

And I—arriving to request his execution—was asked how to honor a man the king delighted in.

For one fleeting moment, I thought the king meant me.

My imagination betrayed me. I described glory. Robes. A royal horse. Public acclaim.

"Do so for Mordecai the Jew," the king said.

In that instant, something inside me cracked.

I led him through the streets myself.

I proclaimed his honor.

And the city watched.

Humiliation, when public, multiplies.

Still, I clung to hope. There was yet the second banquet. I would regain footing. Reassert influence. Recover standing.

But at that banquet, the queen revealed her identity.

Jew.

The very people I had condemned.

Suddenly the narrative shifted. I was no longer guardian of imperial stability. I was enemy of the queen.

When the king demanded, “Who is he?” she named me.

The garden doors closed behind him. Panic swallowed me whole.

I fell—not in attack, as it was later interpreted—but in desperation. I begged for my life. The same life I had so easily signed away for thousands.

It is a terrible clarity, realizing too late that you have become the villain in someone else’s salvation story.

They hanged me on the gallows I built.

Poetic justice, they call it.

Perhaps.

But from where I stood, the story felt different. I saw threats where others saw identity. I saw defiance where others saw faithfulness. I saw disunity where others saw conviction.

Was I driven by pride? Certainly. By wounded ancestry? Likely. By fear of losing control? Without question.

History remembers me as wicked.

Yet I was also human—ambitious, insecure, shaped by inherited conflict, intoxicated by power, unable to distinguish between personal insult and public danger.

That is the quiet warning buried beneath my downfall: When leaders confuse their ego with the good of the empire, destruction follows. When fear of difference becomes justification for eradication, cruelty disguises itself as policy. And when honor becomes more important than justice, we build gallows that we ourselves will climb.

They celebrate deliverance. They remember reversal. They feast at Purim.

And my name survives only as a caution.

Not because I lacked power.

But because I lacked humility.

King Xerxes’ Perspective:

They tell this story as though I were a fool. Or a tyrant. Or a man asleep while others pulled the strings. But I was king of the largest empire the world had yet seen.

*My name is **Xerxes I**—though in the Hebrew telling they call me **Ahasuerus**. I ruled from India to Cush. One hundred and twenty-seven provinces. Different languages. Different gods. Different customs. An empire held together not merely by armies, but by spectacle and authority.*

Authority must be seen.

That is why I held the great banquet in Susa. One hundred and eighty days of display. Gold couches. Porphyry pillars. Wine without limit. It was not vanity alone—it was politics. When governors witness power, they are less inclined to test it.

Then came the moment with Vashti.

In my world, a public refusal was no small matter. When the queen declined to appear, the issue was not marital tension. It was precedent. If the royal household fractures in public view, the provinces take note. Advisors warned me: if this defiance spreads, order weakens.

So I made a decree.

Remove the threat to stability.

Replace the queen.

You may judge it harshly. But empires are not maintained by appearing unsure.

*The search that followed brought many young women into the palace. Among them was **Esther**. She did not grasp at attention. She did not maneuver loudly. She listened. She carried herself with a quiet steadiness that was rare in a court built on ambition.*

When she stood before me, I chose her.

Was it love? Affection? Political instinct? Perhaps all three. A king does not often have the luxury of separating them.

For a time, the empire moved forward. Campaigns abroad. Administration at home. Endless petitions, disputes, promotions.

One of those promotions was Haman. Haman was capable. Sharp. Strategic. He understood hierarchy. I elevated him because I needed strength at my side. When you govern vast territories, you rely on trusted officials. Delegation is not weakness—it is necessity.

Then he came to me with concern about “a certain people.” He spoke carefully. He did not frame it as personal grievance. He spoke of laws that differed, customs that resisted integration, potential unrest.

Could I have investigated further? Yes. But kings rule on counsel. And in that moment, nothing in his presentation suggested private vendetta. Empires have been undone by internal factions before. I chose decisiveness over hesitation.

I gave him my signet ring. That is the moment history holds against me. From my perspective, I was preserving cohesion. From theirs, I had signed a death warrant.

When Queen Esther later approached me unsummoned, I was surprised. The law was clear: entry without invitation could mean death. The rule existed for protection—of the throne, of the ruler, of order itself. But when I saw her standing there, something in me resisted rigid enforcement. I extended the scepter. Kings are not always stone.

At the banquet she invited Haman and me to, I sensed tension but not its source. Court life often swirls with intrigue; one learns to wait before reacting. That night, I could not sleep. Strange, how something so small shifts destiny.

*The chronicles were read aloud. I discovered that a man named **Mordecai** had once exposed a plot against my life. He had received no reward.*

That unsettled me. Loyalty unrecognized breeds cynicism. I asked Haman how to honor a man the king delights in. His answer was lavish. I approved it—then directed it toward Mordecai. I did not know the rivalry. I saw only justice overdue.

When Esther finally revealed her petition, the truth emerged in a way I could not ignore.

“My life... and my people.”

My queen was among those condemned.

And suddenly, what had seemed like policy became personal.

Anger rose in me—not merely at Haman, but at the realization that I had been maneuvered without full understanding. I stepped into the garden not only to cool my temper but to calculate.

A king must never appear trapped.

When I returned and saw Haman fallen at Esther’s couch, whether in desperation or folly, the optics were catastrophic. In royal courts, perception is reality. An official condemned by the queen and seemingly compromising her in my absence—his position was irrecoverable.

I ordered his execution.

Swiftly.

Decisively.

Some call it impulsive. But delay invites instability.

Yet even then, another complication emerged: Persian law cannot be revoked. A king’s decree, once sealed, stands. Authority depends on consistency.

So I permitted a counter-decree.

Let the Jews defend themselves.

Was it an elegant solution? No.

Was it pragmatic? Yes.

The day came. Violence followed. The Jews prevailed. Mordecai rose in influence. Esther’s people celebrated what they would call deliverance.

From their vantage point, it is a story of hidden providence and courageous intervention. From mine, it is a study in ruling complexity.

You must understand: governing an empire means acting with incomplete knowledge. Trusting advisors. Balancing strength with responsiveness. Appearing immovable while constantly recalibrating behind the curtain.

Did I make mistakes? Certainly.

I trusted too easily.

I delegated without scrutiny.

I allowed spectacle and hierarchy to substitute for deeper discernment.

But I was not indifferent.

When confronted with injustice, I reversed course as far as law allowed. I elevated the faithful. I removed the corrupt.

History paints me as passive—buffeted by stronger personalities.

Yet from the throne, every decision feels like standing on a fault line. Move too slowly, and chaos spreads. Move too quickly, and unintended consequences ripple outward.

The story of Esther is remembered as a tale of courage and reversal.

But from my side, it is a reminder:

Power magnifies both wisdom and error.

A king's signature can save—or end—thousands.

And sometimes the most decisive moment in an empire's history begins with something as fragile as a sleepless night.

Mordecai's Perspective:

They tell the story as if I were fearless. As if I always knew what would happen. As if courage were simple.

My name is Mordecai. I am a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, living not in Jerusalem but in Susa. Exile is not just geography—it is a condition of the soul. You wake each morning in someone else's empire. You speak the language of your rulers. You serve in their courts. And you remember.

I worked at the king's gate—a minor post, nothing glorious. But from the gate you see everything: who rises, who falls, who whispers, who plots. You learn that power is a river—never still.

I also raised a child.

When my cousin's parents died, I took her into my home. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah. In the palace she would be known as Esther. I taught her our stories—of Abraham, of Moses, of exile and promise. I taught her to listen more than she spoke. I taught her that faithfulness often hides rather than announces itself.

When the king removed Queen Vashti and began gathering young women, Esther was taken. I could not stop it. I could only advise her: Do not reveal your identity.

Some call that compromise.

I call it survival.

We were a minority people scattered through 127 provinces under Xerxes I—known in our scroll as Ahasuerus. Empires do not always look kindly on distinct loyalties.

When Esther became queen, I did not celebrate publicly. I watched. I waited. And when I overheard a plot against the king's life, I reported it through her.

Not because I worshiped the empire.

But because chaos would not help my people.

The act was recorded. I received no reward. That did not trouble me. Faithfulness is not a transaction.

Then came Haman.

Promoted above all officials. Commanded that everyone bow.

And here is the question I have been asked across generations:

Why didn't you bow?

Was it pride? Political protest? Personal rivalry?

No.

It was worship.

I will not pretend the line was easy. We lived under foreign rule. We worked in foreign systems. We navigated foreign expectations daily. But there are lines you do not cross. In that moment, bowing was not mere etiquette—it was submission of allegiance in a way my conscience would not allow.

Every day he passed.

Every day I remained standing.

Did I know what it would cost? No.

When word spread that I was a Jew and that Haman's rage had expanded from one man to an entire people, I felt the weight of it.

Perhaps I could have bowed once and prevented it.

Perhaps.

But survival purchased by surrender of identity erodes slowly until nothing remains.

When the decree went out—destroy, kill, annihilate—I tore my clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. Not because grief is theatrical, but because public mourning is protest when you have no voice in the chamber.

Esther sent word asking what was wrong. I sent back the decree itself.

And then I asked of her something I had no right to demand.

Go to the king.

Risk your life.

Intercede.

She hesitated. Of course she did. Anyone who entered unsummoned could be executed.

And I sent the words that history remembers: Do not think you will escape because you are in the palace. If you remain silent, deliverance will arise from another place—but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have come to royal dignity for such a time as this?

Let me confess something: I did not know how deliverance would come. I only knew that silence would be complicity.

Faith is not certainty about outcomes. It is confidence that faithfulness matters even when outcomes are hidden.

When Esther agreed to go, asking us to fast for three days, we did. No public miracle occurred. No prophet appeared. Just hunger, waiting, and fear.

Then the story began to turn.

A sleepless king.

An old record read aloud.

An overlooked loyalty remembered.

The morning Haman arrived to request my execution, he instead led me through the city in royal robes.

It was surreal.

Humiliation reversed in a single breath.

But even then, the decree against our people remained.

When Esther revealed her identity and accused Haman, I felt both relief and trembling. Relief that truth surfaced. Trembling because royal anger is unpredictable.

Haman was executed on the gallows he had built for me. Justice? Perhaps. Irony? Certainly.

But the greater challenge remained: Persian law cannot be revoked.

So we wrote a new decree—granting Jews the right to defend themselves.

Some have struggled with that part of the story. So have I.

Deliverance in exile is rarely clean.

On the appointed day, our enemies fell. We survived. We mourned. We defended. And afterward, we rested.

We established Purim—not as a celebration of violence, but of reversal. Of sorrow turned to joy. Of hidden survival.

Here is my take on the story:

We lived in a world where God’s name was never spoken aloud in the halls of power. No thunder from heaven. No parted seas. Only quiet decisions made under pressure.

Esther’s courage.

A king’s insomnia.

A record preserved.

A refusal to bow.

Small threads.

But woven together, they became deliverance.

I am not fearless. I felt doubt. I wondered if my defiance endangered others. I wrestled with whether assimilation might have been easier.

But if exile teaches anything, it is this:

You can live faithfully inside an empire without surrendering who you are.

You can serve a foreign king and still belong to a deeper story.

And sometimes the most powerful act is simply to remain standing when everyone else kneels.

Esther’s Perspective.

They remember me as brave.

But bravery is rarely loud.

Most of the time, it feels like fear that refuses to win.

*My Hebrew name was Hadassah. In the palace, they called me **Esther**. I was an orphan, raised by my cousin **Mordecai**, in a city that was not truly home.*

Exile does something to you. You learn to blend. You learn when to speak and when to stay silent. You carry your story quietly, like a folded letter inside your garment.

When the king removed Queen Vashti and began gathering young women, I did not volunteer. I was taken.

For a year we were prepared—oils, perfumes, instruction in court etiquette. Everything about the process felt like surrender. We were polished into presentation pieces.

Mordecai’s last instruction echoed in me:

Do not reveal that you are Jewish.

So I didn’t.

*When I stood before **Xerxes I**—whom our scroll calls **Ahasuerus**—I did not try to dazzle him. I asked for nothing beyond what was suggested. I had learned that restraint can be a kind of strength.*

He chose me.

And just like that, I was queen.

But queens in Persia were not sovereign. We were favored—until we were not. I had seen what happened to Vashti. Royal position is a thin shield.

I lived between two names.

Esther in the court.

Hadassah in my heart.

Then Mordecai sent word of a decree.

Annihilation.

A man named Haman had persuaded the king to authorize the destruction of my people. I had heard of Haman. I had seen his pride in the corridors. I had not known his anger carried such reach.

When Mordecai urged me to go to the king, I felt something close to panic.

There is a law: anyone who approaches the king unsummoned may be executed unless he extends the golden scepter. And I had not been called in thirty days.

Thirty days is a long silence in a palace.

I could have stayed quiet.

I was safe—at least for a time.

But Mordecai's message unsettled me:

Do not think you will escape because you are in the palace. And who knows whether you have come to royal dignity for such a time as this?

That question would not leave me.

For such a time as this.

It is one thing to survive in exile.

It is another to risk survival for others.

So I asked for three days of fasting.

People often skip over that part. They move quickly to the courage. But before courage came emptiness. Hunger. Waiting. No voice from heaven. No guarantee.

On the third day, I put on my royal robes.

My hands were steady. My heart was not.

When I stepped into the inner court, every eye saw me. The law stood between us like a blade.

The king looked up.

Time slowed.

Then he extended the scepter.

Relief washed through me—but I knew the greater risk was still ahead. I did not accuse Haman immediately. Strategy matters in a court built on ego and impulse. I invited the king and Haman to a banquet.

And then another.

Why delay? Because timing is power. Because confrontation without preparation can collapse into chaos. Because I needed the king's attention fully turned.

At the second banquet, when he asked again what I desired, I no longer spoke in riddles.

If I have found favor in your sight, let my life be granted me—and the lives of my people.

You could feel the shift in the room.

When he demanded to know who would dare such a thing, I pointed to Haman.

The moment felt both terrifying and clarifying. Once spoken, truth cannot be recalled.

The king's anger flared. Haman's confidence shattered. And suddenly the man who had orchestrated death was begging for his own life at my couch.

There is no triumph in watching someone unravel. Only gravity.

When Haman was executed on the gallows he had built for Mordecai, I did not celebrate. Justice in exile always carries sorrow.

But the decree still stood.

I went to the king again—this time weeping openly. I asked not for vengeance, but for survival. Persian law could not be revoked, but it could be countered.

So a new decree was written. My people were granted the right to defend themselves.

And they did.

History calls it reversal. Mourning turned to joy. Ashes turned to feasting.

But from my side, the story feels quieter than that.

It is about living in tension.

About carrying hidden identity in a visible role.

About choosing the moment to speak.

About discovering that influence is not the same as security.

People say God's name is never mentioned in our story.

Perhaps.

But I felt something steady beneath the chaos. Not control—there was too much unpredictability for that. But a weaving. Threads crossing in unseen ways: a sleepless night, an old record read aloud, a question asked at the right moment.

I did not know the outcome when I walked into that court.

I only knew that silence would cost more than risk.

If I am remembered for anything, let it be this:

Courage is not the absence of fear.

It is deciding that someone else's survival matters more than your comfort.

I was Hadassah long before I was Esther.

And in the moment that mattered most, I chose to let both names stand together.

Take a minute to breath. How does hearing from their experience shed light on the fuller truth of the story? How does that motivate us to wonder about including all the voices around the table who are living through our shared stories? Doesn't it at least make us curious? Could it be that a great gift we could give would be to invest the holy currency of truth wherever we go, inviting more perspectives to be shared? Could it be that there may be moments when we need to take a stand because we can see that truth is not being communicated, may not even be sought, and in some cases now and historically are being rewritten or deleted? Eric Law noted that "we do not have the whole truth unless we also listen and understand the experiences of the historically powerless" ([*Holy Currencies: Six Blessings for Sustainable Missional Ministries*](#)). Could it be that you are being invited by God to use the holy currency of truth for such a time as this?

We aren't supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ, who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part. – Eph. 4:14-16 CEB