

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

September 21, 2025 Flip it: What you meant for bad God meant for good. (Esther)

I Intro.

Fall begins tomorrow, and we're in full swing. You'll see more opportunities for you to participate in the life of NCC. We have a lot going on. Stay connected to our social media to keep up with everything that's happening. We're glad you've chosen to join us as we move through 2025. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

There is difficult pain in the heartbreaks and crushing events of life. This is more than just when bad things happen. This is when you are a victim of tough circumstances. It's when a person, or some group, brings harm to you. Either directed towards you personally. A friend, a family member, a co-workers, a just person you know. Or you're a victim of a system or structures that intentionally isolate people like you. Of economic, artificial, boundaries (disabilities, age, color, race, etc.) designed to make sure you aren't included in specific areas of life. We're going to identify these events or structures that were meant for bad, to harm, and how they can be 'flipped' towards good. We hit stories of redemption. Redemption is about rescue, transformation, finding wholeness. 'Flipping it', redemption, rescuing, transformation isn't trying to erase, reverse or pretend the bad didn't happen. They are/were bad events intended to harm. This is a pathway God creates to 'flip it' to something good. Bringing good out of brokenness, freedom out of bandage, life out of death.

III Sunday.

Have you ever been put, maybe even forced, into an uncomfortable situation, where you were pushed beyond your abilities, your comfort level, or even limits, but came out of it better?

Everyone was looking at you to do the thing. There was a time I had to remove a snake from my mom and dad's screened in porch. I was the only one who could do it. I had to step into the moment because we knew where the snake was...only for that moment.

Today we dig into a story of allowing yourself to be used, sometimes out of our comfort zone, for the thing intended for harm to be flipped into something good. Pushing through hesitancy, feelings of inadequacy, fear of surrendering. Overcoming these fears, maybe even things we keep secret, because we believe they will invalidate us being used by God. Using whatever tiny amount of courage we have, and doing a good thing with it. In a tough, potentially bad situation, that could get even worse. You seem to be the one who can do the 'flipping' work. 'Flipping' uncertainty into...not certainty, but hopefulness. 'Flipping' hesitancy into stepping out. 'Flipping' fear into courage. And doing it at the time you're being called to step up and out.

A. Story of Esther.

Esther is a big story like Joseph's. But Esther is not the typical hero. Esther was coerced to step out into the work of 'flipping it'. Because there were so many things in her life that made her feel inadequate, unusable. But God was able to use her to do a great work of flipping what was meant to harm into something good.

It was the third year of the reign of King Xerxes of Persia (Iran). Xerxes throws a massive rager for 180 days to show how wealthy he was. And after that, he throws a 7 day banquet for all the people (rich to poor) with an unlimited open bar. At the same time, Queen Vashti is throwing a banquet for all the ladies. At the end of day 7, Xerxes (feeling the effects of 7 days of partying) told his servants to bring his queen Vashti to him so he could show her off...probably without clothes. Vashti said; "*not just no*", wouldn't go to her king, so Xerxes banished her. Xerxes wants to pick a new queen, and then has all of the women in his harem get gussied up (elaborate spa treatments).

Here is where we first meet Mordecai. Who, in a round about way ended up exiled through Babylon into Persia. Mordecai had a cousin, who when her parents died, brought her in and treated her like a daughter. Her name was Hadassah or Esther. They both had hidden from everyone that they were Israelites. Esther was brought into Xerxes' harem as a servant girl, and went through the same lengthy spa treatment as the rest of the harem. Esther is then brought into Xerxes' 'second tier harem', Xerxes falls for her, and makes her the new queen.

After Esther is made queen, Mordecai hears of a plot to assassinate Xerxes, tells Esther, who passes it on to Xerxes (pillow talk). It's found to be true, and the two men are...impaled on giant spikes.

Mordecai is then brought in as a palace official. At the same time, Xerxes brings some scary hateful leaders (Haman) who have this hatred for anyone who isn't Persian, to enforce a purity of people. To make this happen, they passed a law that everyone had to prove their loyalty to Persia by bowing to Xerxes and Haman. Mordecai refuses to bow to either. Haman pays Xerxes off to enact a law to exterminate all the Jews in Persia. Xerxes takes the money, allows the law to go into place. And Haman sets a date for the mass extermination of all the Jews. Mordecai finds out about this, and is...wait for it...mortified. Tells Esther she needs to have the king stop this. Esther is afraid she could be put to death. And it's at this point in the story we get this famous passage.

Esther 4:13-14 Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

We'll come back to this particular point.

Esther's response is equally powerful.

Esther 4:15-17 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die." So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

We'll come back to this also.

The entire Israel community fasts and prays for three days before Esther goes to Xerxes. Then there is this elaborate chronology of events, full of way too many details. A back and forth of Esther inviting Haman to dinner, Mordecai not bowing, Haman is furious, plans to kill Mordecai. Xerxes can't sleep and asks for history to be read to him. He realized he never honored Mordecai for saving his life.

Haman has to parade Mordecai around the city to be honored. Haman is humiliated. There's a second banquet, Xerxes is so in love with Esther, says he will give Esther *"half his kingdom"*. It's here that Esther outs Haman. Xerxes runs out. Haman throws himself at Esther's feet begging for mercy. Xerxes thinks Haman is attacking her. Xerxes is told Haman built impalement spikes to kill Mordecai. Xerxes has Haman impaled on that same spike. Xerxes gives all of his estate to Esther. Esther tells Xerxes that Mordecai is her cousin, and Xerxes makes Mordecai an advisor. Esther asks the king to revoke the order to kill all the Jews. He said he can't undo an order (which sounds really lame), but says he'll write an order saying the Jews can defend themselves for that one day. So, there was a lot of killing, including Haman's family, they were impaled on spikes also. There was a day of rest, recovery, and then the third day they partied. Like you do after slaughtering a bunch of people. That day is now called Purim, and is celebrated with feasts, joy, giving of gifts and charity to the poor. And that's the story of Esther. Whew...right. Okay what can we pull from this all over the place story about flipping a situation that was meant to harm, for bad, into something good?

B. Truths about flipping our situation from this story.

There are specific things from the life of Esther that speak directly to our lives.

1. To 'flip' our situations we have to overcome the things we have hidden that we believe disqualify us or make us unworthy. We all have things that others don't know about us. Things we've kept hidden but we can actually use, and 'flip' them into assets. Shame is a powerful force that often inhibits us from stepping out. Shame tells us some things we've done disqualify us from being used by God. Shame tells us who we are, our identity, personality, education level, invalidates us, makes us unworthy, from being used to flip harm into good.

Esther 2:10. Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had directed her not to do so.

We all have this tendency within us that keeps us from flipping our situation. We hide things. We hide things because we haven't dealt with them. Issues from family of origin, unhealthy habits, past poor choices, current poor choices, personal things about us, and so much more. There are some things we just don't talk about. This is; not letting those things we keep hidden shame us into believing we're not worthy to do the work of flipping our tough situation. Or even worse, causing us to believe we deserve whatever it is that happened to us. The work of flipping, redeeming, starts with the work of overcoming our feelings of unworthiness.

2. Flipping our situation isn't getting rid of fear. It's channeling fear. Even more than shame, fear is a powerful force that will often keep the harm... harmful. Fear will keep us in bondage, not moving towards turning harm into something good. Fear will power our shame, and tell us that we need to hide, not step out. Fear will override anything good that we know we can do.

Esther 4:15-16. Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die."

This is not bravado. It's recognizing the legitimacy of the fear. There are moments we may have to allow the importance of the situation to override any fear or anxiety you have about where you are. Sometimes you'll be terrified when you're faced with flipping a situation. Find that little bit of courage, in spite of your fear. Enough to flip you and a situation. Our mantra in After Party is; ***"Do it afraid"***. Flipping our situation is not about overcoming fear...it's pushing through it.

3. To 'flip' our situation we need to have trusted people who can speak into our lives. This is a truth that runs all through scripture. Have good people in your life. A community (the people Esther had fast and pray) And specific people who will say the things that make you a better person.

Do you have people (a community) that know you, all your quirks and idiosyncrasies, but can see the good in you that God can use for good? And who is your Mordecai?

When flipping your situation there is always wisdom in the council of many.

4. In order to flip our situation we sometimes have to step into our "such a time as this"

moments. One of the scariest things we can be told in a situation. *"It's on you". "You're the one that needs to do this. This thing won't happen, what was intended for harm won't be turned into something good, unless YOU step out, step forward, take responsibility."*

Esther 4:13-14. Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

God used Esther as a partner, co-worker, not only to flip her own story, but to be a central part of flipping a bigger, greater, story. In order to flip both our story, and possibly a bigger story, we have to grow an awareness of where we are in our life. Esther knew all that was going on...except for one thing. Her potential role in it. She could have chosen not to step out, to take the chance, to remain in the shadows. And the thing intended for harm, would have caused great harm. Esther would have always lived with the regret of not stepping into her moment. We always ask; *"What will happen if I do step out?"* But the real question is...and we all know this; ***"What will happen if I DON'T step out?"*** One of the saddest things in the world is unrealized potential. For someone to say at our funeral; *"they had so much potential."* You may be the only one available, and feel like you're 'not ready' to step out. Pushing through your; hidden things, fears, uncertainty, stepping into your moment.

IV Challenge.

Again, this 'flipping it' is just another example of God's work of redemption, liberation, and freedom. No matter how small it feels, how insignificant it seems. God wants to take your tiny 2 fishes and 5 loaves, and do a big thing with it. God wants to help you step forward in spite of your shaky hands and knees, things we keep hidden out of fear, , itty bitty courage, and flip those so a situation bent towards destruction can be shaped back towards life.

This will be a constant call into our lives. To be available to flip the story, we are being invited into being a part of the work of flipping it. This was just one story of one moment in Esther's life. But there were many moments that led her to this place. This means doing the 'prehab' work of living a life that prepares for us to be able to 'flip' a situation when the time comes. We may have never been in that situation before. But we are ready because we lived a life that allowed us to step into our moment.

The primary point in this account of flipping a situation is overcoming whatever it is we believe about ourselves, our ability, worthiness, deservedness, or anything like that. We have to face and channel our fear, shame, uncertainty, and step into being used by God to flip, redeem the situation.

Where and into what is God calling you to step into your moment?