

WEEK THREE | BIGOTRY, RACISM, GENOCIDE & LAMENT

INTRODUCTION

It's appropriate to name the 'elephant' in the room. Esther 3 and Brad's sermon bring to light some very difficult subjects.

1) What is your usual default to "controversial" or "challenging" topics? Do they make you nervous and want to leave the room, or do you get excited and lean in? (both reactions are normal, depending on your personality and experiences so, whatever the response here - it's a welcome response!)

2) What do you think you respond that way? (I don't know is an acceptable answer)

Brad said Sunday, *"...it seems nearly impossible in our current cultural climate to have meaningful, thoughtful dialogue about difficult subjects, such as racism, bigotry, and so forth.*

·The national dialogue – whether on TV, social media, and probably at your work's water cooler – is oftentimes dominated by the extreme, the loud, and the brash."

Do you agree? If so, what exasperates this tension in your view?

START WITH SCRIPTURE

READ ESTHER 3-4:4 OBSERVATIONS

Mordecai and Haman are descendants of generational enemies. (Mordecai - King Saul of Israel. Haman - King Agag of the Amalekites)

The Amalekites were vicious, evil, and violent enemies of Israel. ***Read the story of Saul and Agag in 1 Samuel 15:1-11***

How does Saul's lack of obedience and selfish ambition factor into the events of Esther 3?

What lessons can we learn from this backstory?

Describe a time when disobedience came back to haunt you?

DISCUSSION

Theology: According to Esther 3:12, the king's edict went out on the thirteenth day of the first month, which would have been Passover eve for the Jews (see Ex. 12:18). Compare and contrast the situation described in chapter 3 with the events surrounding the first Passover (review Ex. 12:1–28).

What themes about God's covenant promise stand out?

Culture and Discipleship: Bigotry and racism are 1,000-year-old problems. From Hitler to Jim Crow in America, there are countless examples of people flirting with or flat-out embracing ethnic superiority. A major emphasis in all of Scripture, especially as it relates to the Gospel (see Ephesians 3, Acts 15, and Galatians 2 as examples) is the total destruction of this demonic and dehumanizing belief system.

Have you observed examples of bigotry and racism around you?

If so, how has it affected you?

Have you ever had a meaningful conversation with a racial minority about their experiences with racism? What did you learn?

Were you aware of the effects the Urban Renewal Project had on the African American population here in Knoxville? If not, how does that shape the way you experience some of the communities we regularly serve - the Lonsdale community for example?

PRACTICE

Sunday, Brad said:

"Lament is the right response to injustice. Because Lament allows us to honestly express our sorrow to God, and trust in His goodness."

1. **It centers our response to whatever injustice or disruption we encounter in God.**
2. **It cultivates a Gospel-formed response.**

"Lament is the act of going to God with sorrow, sadness, and sin to say: "we cannot fix this! We need you to save us."

Close your time in a prayer of Lament for racial injustice. Consider adapting Psalm 13 for your prayer time.