

Again, our sermon text for this evening is Esther chapter one, verses, Esther chapter two, verses one through 20, I apologize. Esther chapter two, verses one through 20.

The debate in 1960 between Nixon and Kennedy changed the face of politics forever in the United States. Why was that? Because it was the very first televised presidential debate. And political analysts study this debate as they look at the way US politics has developed over the last 60 years.

Nixon denied, would not use any stage makeup. because he thought it would make him look silly. Whereas Kennedy did use stage makeup. And political analysts, they watched the polls after that debate, and they came to the conclusion that that choice was in part responsible for Nixon losing the election. Because in the debate, Nixon looked old, sickly, and just not very appealing, whereas Kennedy looked full of life.

And this kind of mentality, looking at the appearance of politicians and actually making subconscious judgments about them continues in US politics today. I was talking to a friend of mine who's worked in politics for years. I asked her about one particular political candidate for the presidency. And she said, oh, no way, he could never be president. I said, why is that? Well, he's not six foot. It's a real thing, because if you're in a presidential debate and your opponent is way taller than you are, you look weak. This is the way humans are. We tend to judge things by appearance.

Now, we're disgusted by that. We wish that we would judge political candidates more often by what's on the inside, by what can't be seen with the naked eye, their positions, their character, their policy position, their history. Well, in this passage, we're gonna see how the cow, a king, chooses a queen solely based on external, solely based on what can be seen. He's obsessed with what's on the outside, what can be seen. But as we'll find in the passage, he's not alone. We're gonna meet two other individuals that seem very much concerned about what is seen and not about what is unseen.

So let's read this passage together. Before we do, let's ask God's help in prayer.

Father in heaven, our prayer as we open this text is simple. What we know not, teach us. What we have not, give us. And what we are not, make us for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ. Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight. Oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Reading from Esther chapter two, beginning at verse one.

After these things, when the anger of King Isaias had subsided, He remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king, and that the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of this kingdom, that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to Susa, the capital, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the women, and let their cosmetics be given them, Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti. And the matter pleased the king, and so he did accordingly.

Now there was a Jew in Susa, the capital whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shemai, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had exiled, and he was bringing up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

So it came about, when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to Susa of the capital, into the custody of Haggai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace, into the custody of Haggai, who was in charge of the women. Now, the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, and gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace, and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.

Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai instructed her that she should not make them known. And every day, Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.

Now, when the turn of each young lady came to go into King Ahasuerus, after the end of her period of 12 months under the regulations for the women, for the days of their beautification were completed as follows. Six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and cosmetics for women. The young lady would go into the king in this way. Anything she desired was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Sheshgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go into the king again unless the king delighted in her, and she was summoned by name.

Now, when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abahel, the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, came into the king, she did not request anything except what Haggai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who sought her. So Esther was taken to King Hazares, to his royal palace in the 10th month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants. He also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her. For Esther did what Mordecai told her, as she had done when under his care.

This is the word of the Lord. May he add his blessing to it.

If you were to list or give the most common sin that Israel is rebuked for in the Old Testament. What would you say it would be? One of the words that comes to my mind is idolatry. Surely idolatry, but a certain kind of idolatry. A certain motivation behind the idolatry, and that motivation was syncretism. Syncretism. Syncretism is when God's people, God's holy people, set aside to be a special people for himself want to become like the world, want to become like the other nations. Why did Israel run after the Baals? Well, because all the other nations are running

after the Baals. Why did Israel demand a king from Samuel? So they could be like the other nations. And this is the continual struggle that we find in the Old Testament. God is drawing Israel to himself and Israel keeps running after the other nations. And this struggle is not unique to the Old Testament. This continues to be, to plague the church in the New Testament continues to plague the church today. The apostles continually write about it.

One example is Romans chapter 12, where Paul says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Paul anticipates that the world is going to try to take the believer, take the church and press it into its mold. That's the continual temptation. I think all of us can identify with that, personally. I think we can even identify with that as a church.

Well, the question I want us to wrestle with tonight as we look at this passage, it's the question, really, that Esther and Mordecai had to deal with. What happens when the people of God compromise with the world? What happens when God's people compromise with the world.

So we're gonna be looking at this passage under four major headings that kind of are gonna help guide us through the story. We're gonna see how each character is striving for something. Each character's a bit of a struggle. The first character we meet in our story is Ahasuerus, and Ahasuerus seeks a queen. Ahasuerus seeks a queen.

Well, let's look at how he does it. Let's look at verse one. After these things, When the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. The connotation here of remember is to remember fondly. Ahasuerus has a bit of a nostalgia trip. He's probably just gotten back from his campaign in Greece. His anger has subsided, and he's like, where's Vashti? Oh, right, I kicked her out. And he kind of regrets it, he remembers Vashti, he remembers her fondly, maybe wishes he could bring her back.

But the problem is, he can't bring her back. As we saw in chapter one, verse 19, he had made this decree to divorce Vashti according to the law of Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked. So even though the king regrets his action, he cannot make it right, he cannot bring her back. This is something that's gonna be very important to the story as we continue forward. When a decree is made according to the law of Medes and Persians, it cannot be repealed even by the king. That's important to the plot. The writer is establishing this for us.

Now, the king is in a bit of a bind. And so he does what Ahasuerus would do, he broods. And in the words of one of my favorite storytellers, When kings brood, they get edgy. And when they get edgy, people start losing their heads, literally.

So the king's attendants decide this can't be let to stand. We need to distract him. We need to get things moving here. And so let's look at verse 2. And let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti.

Notice once again, the king is incapable of solving any problem by himself. Once again, his attendants have to be the ones who suggest a new plan. Notice also that the plan again appeals to Ahasuerus' pride and pleasure. His pleasure, he gets his choice of all the most beautiful ladies in all his kingdom. Second, his pride, he gets his choice of all the most beautiful ladies and the one who pleases him the most is made queen.

This is a rather unorthodox way of getting a queen in the ancient world. Remember, King Ahasuerus, he is not monogamous. Ahasuerus has many wives, many, many concubines, slave wives. And he can choose any of them he wants for his pleasure. The queen was a particular office in media Persia. It was a political office. It was meant as an honor. And usually a queen would be sought either from one of the royal families to help establish some kind of connections there. Keep his people in line, or maybe it could be with a foreign princess to sort of secure an alliance. That's not what King Ahasuerus is doing here. His attendants instead say, let's just find the most beautiful girl and have her be queen.

Now, why would that be? Well, a couple of reasons. First of all, it's a bit ironic. Vashti refused to please the king, and so now the woman who pleases the king the most, she gets to be queen. And second, it also plays to Ahasuerus' advantage a little bit. One of the reasons that Vashti may have felt that she could oppose the king's edict was because she came from a royal family. She had some dignity behind her, some background. Whereas if the king elevated someone of low standing, he would have complete power over her. She would be completely subservient to him. And so, again, this appeals to his pride and pleasure. And King Ahasuerus, being King Ahasuerus, of course is pleased by this and accepts it as we see at the end of verse four.

This is a pattern we're going to see with King Ahasuerus. Notice he hasn't changed. He's had a bad thing happen to him. He has learned nothing. Ahasuerus is what we call a flat character. Y'all familiar with flat characters? A flat character is a character that doesn't go through a story arc. He doesn't change. Ahasuerus is the same Ahasuerus at the beginning of the story as he is at the end of the story. A ruthless, selfish, incompetent tyrant, who's also kind of funny. The two characters we're about to meet are not flat characters. They are our two main characters. They are our protagonists, they do have an arc, they do learn something. So, let's meet them.

Our first character we're gonna meet is Mordecai, which leads us to our second major heading. Mordecai protects his daughter. Mordecai protects his daughter. Look with me at verse five. Now there was a Jew in Susa, the capital, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shemei, the son of Kish, of Benjamin. The first note we get about Mordecai here is a bit about his lineage. He is of the line of Kish and Shemei and the line of Benjamin. These names might sound a little bit familiar from Wayne's study in 1 and 2 Samuel. And if they don't, you may not have gotten quite there in the story. Shemei, this is likely a reference to the Shemei who cursed David when he was leaving Jerusalem, one of the relatives of King Saul. From that, you can probably guess this is a selective genealogy. It's not listing all of Mordecai's family. It's just listing a lot of important people so you get the sense of the family he's coming from. Mordecai is of the line of Saul. King Saul. That's going to become very important as the story progresses, especially in chapter three. So keep that in the back of your mind. Mordecai is of the family of Saul.

What else did we learn about Mordecai? Well, we learned a little bit about his background, how he is in exile. Look at verse six. Who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem, with the captives who have been exiled with Jeconiah, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had exiled. Now we shouldn't imagine that the writer is saying that Mordecai was actually one of the exiles, actually one of the people who lived in Jerusalem that were taken out of it by Nebuchadnezzar. That would make him over 100 years old. Rather, what the author is saying is he is in that category. He is of that line. His identity, his true identity, is one of being an exile. And that's gonna become very important again as we continue through the story because Mordecai, if Mordecai is in exile, so is Esther. But they don't live like exiles. They don't live like people who are not in a land that's their own. We're gonna see Esther conceal her heritage. But regardless of what they do, what the writer is establishing, this is their identity. This Persia, despite all appearances, is not their home. They are exiles, they are strangers in this land.

And you know, that's true of all of us. All of us are strangers and exiles on the earth. We learned that at the beginning of 1 Peter. In Mac's series, we are strangers and exiles in this world. Jesus in his high priestly prayer says, prays for his disciples and says, they are in the world, but they are not of the world. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are pilgrims. We are passing through. Our true citizenship is not in the United States. It's not here. It's in heaven. And we need to make sure we're living that way. Do you think that way? Do you think of yourself as a stranger or an exile? If you don't, think again, because if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, that's who you are. And that's who Mordecai was in the land of Persia, a stranger and an exile.

Third note we get here about Mordecai is a little bit about his family, his adoptive daughter. Look at verse seven. And he was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. Now we'll have a bit more to say about Esther as we continue on, but the first thing that is important for our study of Mordecai is that Esther is an orphan. Like all great Disney protagonists, her parents are nowhere to be seen. She is an orphan. And Mordecai, her older cousin, takes her as his own daughter. Notice the language there. He takes her, not just into his home, but as his own daughter. And it's implied in the text, Mordecai loves this daughter dearly. If you doubt that, look ahead to verse 11. After Esther is taken into the harem, what does Mordecai do? And every day, Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared. Mordecai loves his daughter dearly. And this love Mordecai has for his daughter is actually what leads to Mordecai's crisis.

Mordecai's crisis. Look at verse 8. So it came about when the command and the decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to Susa, the capital, into the custody of Haggai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace, into the custody of Haggai, who was in charge of the women. Esther, this dear daughter of his, is taken into the king's custody. Now, we shouldn't think about this using our modern sensibilities. Let's take ourselves back into the ancient world for a moment. From a worldly perspective, what has happened to Esther is not all bad. This is the ancient world we're talking where food was very hard to come by. Your survival and your having any sort of free time was not guaranteed to you. It was a difficult, hard world, and what being taken into the king's harem meant, being one of his wives, meant you had now had status. You were a wife of the king. Moreover, you meant living in a lap of luxury. Yes, it may have been a bit of a boring life, but it was a safe, luxurious life, and many women would have seen it as a great opportunity.

So why is this a crisis for Mordecai? Well, the problem is he's a stranger in an exile, he's a Jew. And as a Jew, as one of God's people, he has enemies. We'll meet one later named Haman, a very powerful official in the court who would love nothing more than to see the Jews wiped off the planet, to see God's people completely destroyed. And he's not alone. At the end of the book, we'll meet another 400 men just in Susa, men of high standing who also have a beef against the Jews. And so Esther being taken into the king's palace, into this precarious position, essentially possibly being used as a political pawn, as one of the king's wives could be very dangerous for her. There were enemies in the king's court. And now Mordecai is terrified. Likely, he thinks, how am I going to protect her?

What's Mordecai's solution? Well, look at verse 10. Esther did not make known her people or her kindred. For Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make them known. His solution's very simple. Esther, just don't let anyone know you're a Jew. Just don't let anyone know you're one of God's people. Hide it. And don't proclaim it, obviously. But also, think about what Mordecai is asking her to do. Esther, okay, think about it for a second. How could Esther possibly have hidden her Jewish lineage if she was keeping the Old Testament laws? She couldn't. How could she possibly hide her Jewish heritage if every time the food's being passed around for all of the king's harem, she denies it and says, no, that's not kosher. How could she possibly keep the Sabbath? How could she possibly follow all the other purity laws? Short answer, she couldn't. What Mordecai is asking Esther to do is not

just to not proclaim her heritage, but to actively conceal it in such a way where she ends up breaking God's law. That's the conclusion we must come to and we know that's the case because of verse nine.

In verse nine it says, and so he, Haggai, quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, the king's food, the very kind of food that Daniel had denied. Why did Mordecai do that? Why would Mordecai tell Esther to break God's law? We'll find out later, he is a relatively godly man.

Well, it's very simple. Mordecai cared more for Esther's physical safety and physical success than he did for her spiritual well-being. Mordecai cared for her physical security and physical success more than her spiritual well-being. That sound familiar? All of you who are parents here, that is a major temptation, is it not? to look at your kids, you love your kids dearly, and to see that there's a chance for them to succeed in the world, but it means compromising your Christian values.

And what do you do? Maybe you compromise. When the world puts pressure on the believer to compromise in order to guarantee your child's safety or to guarantee their physical success, are you not tempted to compromise? We give examples all day. A Sunday sports team. Meaning your child has to miss worship, any kind of worship, for an entire six months to a year. Or perhaps it could be you know they're weak in faith, you know that they are very susceptible to worldly influences in their current state, there's a scholarship offered at a school known for partying where you know there's a lot of bad influences.

Now I'm not saying that's necessarily wrong. I'm just saying that you need to think this through. Where are your priorities? What do you put first? Do you put your children's spiritual well-being ahead of their physical well-being and success?

For Mordecai, maintaining Esther's spiritual well-being meant risking her life. And Mordecai chose to compromise. So here we see Mordecai. We leave him here in verse 11, pacing back and forth in front of the harem, wondering how Esther is, trying to figure out how she fared. We've been seeing Esther here from the outside. Let's go into the harem and let's see how Esther is doing. What is Esther up to?

That leads us to our third major heading, which is Esther pleases everyone. Esther pleases everyone. Look with me at verse eight, I mean verse nine. Now the lady pleased him, that's Haggai, and found favor with him. Now I like the way the NIV renders this verse that she found favor with Haggai. The NIV renders it she won favor with Haggai. And that kind of captures the sense of what's going on here. When we talk about Joseph or Daniel, and how they found favor with those who were over them. This is a passive construction. They weren't trying to garner favor. God gave them favor. In this instance, Esther is actively seeking out favor. Doesn't mean God didn't give it, but it does mean that she is actively seeking it out. She wins Haggai's favor, the one in charge of the harem. And it actually works a lot to her advantage.

Look what Hey Guy does. This is the first person she pleases. Esther pleases Hey Guy. Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him, so he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food and gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem. Esther uses this influence she has with Haggai to get into the best possible position within the king's harem so that she has the best chance of becoming queen. This may make some of you a little uncomfortable. What we have here is evidence, and we'll continue to see evidence, Esther is actively seeking out becoming queen. She's trying to get the best

place in the harem, the office of queen. Now, from a certain perspective, this is at least somewhat morally questionable. However, we do need to keep in mind that all of the women that are in the king's harem are technically his wives. Remember, the king is not a monogamous. This is not a contest to see who gets to be the king's wife. This is a contest to see who gets to be the queen. And so Esther is trying to gain that office, trying to gain that crown.

Now, let's take a look a little bit at her strategy. We'll skip ahead a little bit here to verse 14. This is talking about what the women would do when they came in to the king's chamber for their audition. In the evening, when she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem to the custody of Shashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. So the virgins would go in, they would go out of the house of the virgins, go in to see the king, and would come out and go to the house of the concubines, a separate place for those who had been with the king. And we'll continue on. She would not again go to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name. So most of these women probably would never see the king again, not unless he remembered their name and specifically called for them. And this went on, we'll find out later in the text, for about two years. That's a lot of women.

Now, let's see what else he says. Yeah, let's see, verse 15. Now, when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abahel, the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, came to go into the king, she did not request anything except what Haggai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the women, advised.

So each woman, as they would enter into the king's chamber, were allowed to take anything they wanted. No price was too high. They could get a necklace of pearls, they could take any jewelry they wanted, whatever dress they wanted, however they thought they could do to try to please the king. Now, a lot of these women probably saw this as an opportunity. I mean, most likely, their chance is one in a thousand probably, that they'd actually get to be queen. So instead, they might view this as an opportunity to take, to get some nice stuff for themselves. They could take back within the harem, use it themselves, maybe sell it. It was an opportunity to enrich themselves.

That's not what Esther does. Instead, and Esther doesn't even trust her own judgment as far as what she wants to bring to the king, she goes to Haggai, the guy in charge of all this stuff, and says, hey, what would you recommend? This characterizes Esther both as humble and also very wise. Wise in the sense she's very prudent, she knows how to work people. And then the author adds this little note at the end, and Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

Esther pleases everyone. This is important. Remember, details like this are not given for no reason. This is characterization. The author is trying to help us get to know who Esther is before the major plot kicks off. Esther is a people pleaser. Esther is a beautiful, winsome, Charismatic young woman, and she knows it. And she makes use of it for her own gain. Not necessarily in a bad way, but she knows it and she knows how to use it. She's also very wise. So Esther pleases Haggai and pleases everyone around her.

What about the king? The author is sort of building the tension here in verse 16. You might ask, why is that verse there? It seems like a bit of extraneous information. Well, that verse is there partially to give you a sense of what year this is in, but partially to increase the drama. Because now you're waiting to see what's going to happen with the king. Is the king going to like Esther as you're reading this verse? So Esther was taken up to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the 10th month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. That's four years, by the way, after Vashti was deposed.

And then we get verse 17. Esther does please the king. And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. So the king is captivated by Esther, just like everyone else. And Ahasuerus celebrates this choice of a queen in a very Ahasuerus sort of way in verse 18. Then the king gave a great banquet. Esther's banquet for all his princes and servants. And he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty. So Esther achieves the office of queen. The king celebrates with a huge banquet.

There's a bit of parallelism here with Vashti. Vashti's trouble came at a banquet. It ended with a nationwide decree. This one, Esther's honor comes from this banquet and gifts go out to all the provinces.

But with Esther's success, she does not forget the little people. Look at verse 19 and 20. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther did what Mordecai told her, as she had done when under his care.

So we've seen how Mordecai loves his daughter dearly. Now we also see Esther loves Mordecai dearly and loves to please him. Even now that she's the queen of a whole Persian empire, she still treats her adoptive father like her father, submitting to her, loving him very much. And she follows his advice.

Now, there's a problem here. So we've seen Esther pleases Haggai, Esther pleases the king, and Esther seems to be pleasing Mordecai. But there's one person Esther has undoubtedly displeased, and that's God.

Yes, yes, we owe obedience to our parents. We should obey our parents unless they tell us to do something against God's law, and that's exactly what Mordecai had done. He told Esther to hide her Jewish heritage, to not eat kosher, to not keep the Sabbath. And even if she found a way to finagle things in such a way where she could somehow maybe kind of keep those laws while hiding her Jewish heritage, even then, even if she's keeping the letter of the law, she is surely not keeping the spirit of the law.

What was the point of those ceremonies? The point of those ceremonies was to proclaim to the whole world that they are a special people, that Israel is not a normal people, that they're not like the other nations. They eat differently. They live differently. They're holy. And Esther now has compromised to become like the world.

Why did she do it? Why did Esther compromise to the world? Not every Jew dared to be a Daniel. Why didn't she dare to be a Daniel? Well, the answer is rather simple. Like most people pleasers, she sought the approval of men rather than the approval of God. particularly the approval of those who loved her the most. The approval of her peer group, Haggai and the other members of the harem. The approval of those in authority, Ahasuerus. And really, let's be honest here, wealth and power obviously played an influence.

On one side, there was the opportunity, not just to please everyone she knew and loved, not just to gain glory and fame, but the opportunity to become queen of an entire empire. And on the other end, displeasing the only father she'd ever known, displeasing pretty much everyone around her, and possibly endangering her own life.

And we shouldn't be too hard on Esther. Many of us in a similar position may have made the same choice. We shouldn't think that Esther and Mordecai are somehow unbelievers, utter pagans, because they made these decisions. In a way, they sound like many of us. I'm not sure what I would do in that instance. I hope I'd pray that I'd make the right call. I'm probing pray that I'd keep God's law, but I don't know. I pray God's grace.

But when the world puts pressure on Esther and Mordecai, they compromised. How about you? Do you look around you and you see people in your life and think about displeasing them and so choose to displease God? When the world puts pressure on you to compromise, to become like the world, do you do it? Even if it's in little ways. The pressure can be a lot.

Listen to the words of Jesus, though. Store for yourselves treasures in heaven, not on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. Store for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Friend, this world is temporary. This world is temporary. Anything we can gain here is temporary. The world to come, the treasures in heaven, The glories of new Jerusalem far outweigh the gold of Babylon.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. God will take care of your needs. Yes, obeying God, refusing to compromise might lead to suffering. It would probably would have led to suffering for Esther and Mordecai, but God is faithful even in the midst of suffering.

I think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Even if God does not save us from this fire, we will not bow down to the image you have set up.

So is that where the story ends? Is that where we're left here? Well, no. First of all, remember, Esther and Mordecai are round characters. God's not done with them yet. They're both going to learn something. They're both going to be brought out of this sin they've entangled themselves in.

But bigger than that, bigger than that, God is not done with their story yet. See, the crazy thing about this story is that even though Esther and Mordecai sinned in getting Esther on the throne, It was actually God's plan to get Esther on the throne. That God actually worked through his own people's sin to accomplish his sovereign will and to preserve not just their lives, but the lives of all of God's people and to preserve The holy seed, the seed of Jesus.

Because one day, Haman would come, another advisor who would have another plan for the king. A plan that would have spelled the annihilation of the entire Jewish people. The annihilation of that holy seed. If not for a young woman on the throne named Esther. A young woman, yes, who got there through compromise, but God worked through that.

Now, that doesn't excuse their sin by no means. It didn't excuse the sin of Ahasuerus when God used his sin to get Vashti off the throne, did it? No. His sin remained sin, and the sin of Esther and Mordecai remained sin, but God redeemed it, worked through it.

And what that means for you, ladies and gentlemen, I know you've compromised at some point in your life because I know I've compromised at some point in my life. The pressure, it's there. We're all sinners. Fall short of the glory of God every day. And when we compromise, we're tempted to think it's all over. I've ruined God's plan for my life.

This can happen in big ways. The girl who makes a mistake one day and becomes pregnant as a teenager. the person who marries an unbeliever, the person who finally realizes that they've been denying that God's calling on their lives for many years and now all they see is wasted time and they think, God, have I broken your plan? Have I lost an opportunity to be useful in your kingdom? The answer is no, God forbid. Because the good news of the gospel is that God can use even your sins for his glory. That doesn't mean that your sins are okay. It doesn't mean that we should continue in sin that grace may abound. God's comfort in sovereignty is not there to excuse our sin. It's there to comfort us in our weakness and our failings.

Though God's people are often unfaithful, God is faithful. Think about Peter. When Peter sat outside the house of Caiaphas, as Jesus was on trial, and he was asked three times, do you know this man? Are you one of his disciples? And he denied it. He compromised. When the world put pressure on Peter, he compromised. And he wept bitterly over it. He probably thought, I'm done. He went off and John chapter 21 said, I'm going fishing. I'm done. And then Jesus came and found him. And he makes a fire for him, a fire much like the one he sat beside at Caiaphas' house. And he said, Peter, do you love me? Yes, I love you, Lord. Peter, do you love me? Yes, I love you, Lord. Peter, do you love me? Yes, I love you, Lord. And Jesus three times says, feed my sheep, feed my lambs, tend my flock. Jesus took Peter's denial, the lowest point in Peter's life, his moment of greatest compromise, and turned it into a pastoral commission.

Jesus took the intentions of the sinful men who nailed him to the cross and brought about our salvation. Friends, yes, don't compromise with the world. But if you have compromised, remember, Remember, God is faithful.

So we've seen King Isaias' plan, King Isaias seeking for himself a wife through his sinful, godless ways. We've seen Mordecai attempt to protect his daughter, but in such a way that it compromises his faith and hers. We've seen how Esther compromises her faith in the pursuit of pleasing her father and making a play for the throne. And yet, through it all, we see a God who plans. God planning salvation. This is the God we serve.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you that your sovereignty is bigger than our stumblings. Your plan is bigger than our compromises. You are a good God. You do not condone our failings. but in your grace, you redeem them. Father, I pray for anyone here who is struggling, anyone here who is compromised in their lives. Lord, show them they're near not done yet. Take them out of the miry pit, set them on a rock, and give them a new song, a song of the redeemed. In Jesus' name, amen.