

all the way to verse 14 of chapter 6. Again, that's Esther, chapter 5, verse 9, reading until chapter 6, verse 14. The sentence of death has come down on the people of God. In only a year's time, they will all be wiped out by the Persian decree. Haman has gotten exactly what he wanted. But in our last sermon, we saw how another plan is unfolding, another scheme is unfolding, a bit of a counter scheme, the scheme of Esther. How Esther has now come before the king, she's invited him to the first banquet, and she's starting to butter him up a little bit, and now she's got him to agree to accept whatever proposal she might have for him at the next banquet 24 hours later.

And so we're on the edge of our seats and we're thinking, is he going to accept her intercession? Is she actually going to be able to save her people? And so what does the author do? Well, he says, now let me tell you a little story about what happened in the 24 hours in between the first banquet and second one. And we might ask, why is he doing that?

Well, there's a couple of reasons. First of all, builds dramatic tension. How many of y'all ever seen a movie where it's the big climactic battle between the hero and the villain, they're just about to clash, and then it switches over to something the side characters are doing? There's a purpose to that, it's building dramatic tension. The second reason is foreshadowing.

Remember how all of this big fight, how this decree began. It didn't begin with Haman's hatred for the Jews in general, that was certainly in the background. It began with Haman's hatred towards Mordecai. It started as a personal fight, and so it makes sense that the resolution's gonna begin with the personal resolution. And I'll give you a little spoiler, the end of the personal resolution, how that personal fight ends, foreshadows how the last one's going to end, how the bigger fight is going to end.

So let's read this text together. Before we do, let's ask God's help in prayer. Father in heaven, as we open up your word, we pray that you would sanctify us in your word, for your word is truth. I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart might be pleasing in your sight. Oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen. Reading from Esther chapter five, beginning at verse nine.

Then Haman went out that day, glad and pleased of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai. But Haman controlled himself, however, and went to his house and sent for his wife and sent for his friends and his wife, Zeresh. Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches and the number of his sons in every instance where the king had magnified him. and how we had promoted him above all the princes and servants of the king.

Haman also said, even Esther, the queen, let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared, and tomorrow also I'm invited by her again with the king. Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Then Zeresh, his wife, and all his friends said to him, have a gallows fifty cubits high made, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it.

Then go joyfully with the king to the banquet. And the advice pleased Haman, and so he had the gallows made. During that night the king could not sleep. So he gave orders to bring the book of the records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

And it was found written what Mordecai reported concerning Bithana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who were doorkeepers, that they sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. And the king said, what honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?

Then the king's servants who attended him said, nothing has been done for him. So the king said, who is in the court? Now Haman had entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. And the king's servant said to him, behold, Haman is standing in the court. And the king said, let him come in. So Haman came in and the king said to him, what is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor? And Haman said to himself, whom would the king desire to honor more than me?

Then Haman said to the king, for the man whom the king desires to honor, let them bring a royal robe which the king is worn, and a horse on which the king is ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed, and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes, and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor, and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor. Then the king said to Haman, take quickly the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so for Mordecai, the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate. Do not fall short in anything of all that you have said. So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, but Haman hurried home, mourning with his head covered. And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, if Mordecai before whom you have begun to follow is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him. While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

This is the word of the Lord. May he add his blessing to it. You'll see in the bulletin I've titled this message, He Who Sits in Heaven Laughs. And that's not just because this is one of the funniest stories in the Bible, and it is. It's got one of the best punchlines, in my opinion, that I've seen in scripture, period. But there's another reason. That particular line is taken from Psalm 2. Most of you are probably familiar with it.

It's a story of the kings of the earth taking their stand against the Lord and against his anointed. How the world stands opposed to God. How Satan drives the princes of the world against the Lord and against his people. And what is God's response? He who sits in heaven laughs and he holds them in derision. It's not so much a humorous laugh as it is a laugh of derision. A laugh that says, who do you think you are? And that's really what this text is all about. Haman has taken his stand against God's people and in doing so against God himself. And this passage is really God saying, who do you think you are, Haman?

And there's a broader message for us in that as well. Satan continues to take his stand against the Lord and against his anointed, doesn't he? And that's visible all throughout the world. We see that in the persecuted church. Why do you think what happens in places like Iran, Pakistan, and India and other places where God's people are persecuted is happening? Satan is taking his stand against the Lord and against his anointed. Why is it that the

church continues, seems to continue to be marginalized? Why is there this constant pressure from the world against the church?

Because Satan takes his stand against the Lord and against his anointed. And this passage we're gonna find is that when that happens, God mocks the schemes of his enemies. I'll say that again. In this passage, we're gonna see that God mocks the schemes of his enemies. We're gonna look at this passage under four major headings. The first major heading is things get personal. Things get personal. Look with me at verse nine.

Then Haman went out that day, glad and pleased of heart. Why would Haman be glad and pleased of heart? Well, he tells us in verse 12. Haman also said, even Esther, the queen, let no one but me come with the king to the banquet, which she had prepared. And tomorrow also I'm invited with her, by her, with the king. Haman, of course, has no idea that this whole banquet thing is a scheme against him. But the only reason he was invited to the banquet was because Esther wants to turn the king against him.

From his perspective, This is all working to his own honor. Back in the ancient world, it was a huge deal who you ate with. If you were invited to a private dinner with someone of high standing, that spoke very highly of your honor. It'd be like if I were all of a sudden invited to have dinner with the President of the United States. I get back from that. I mean, I'm not the kind of guy that likes to brag about that kind of stuff, but I would probably brag about that. That's a big deal. And it would signal to everyone around me, hey, this guy's got connections.

This guy had dinner with the president. The same thing goes for Haman. Haman, of course, has already received all this honor. He's the highest guy in the land. But being invited to a private dinner that was only the king, the queen, and him spoke extremely highly of his honor. So Haman's coming home. He is on top of the world until. Look at the second part of verse nine.

But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai. He could be on top of the world, but the moment he sees Mordecai, his blood boils. Why? Well, think about it from Haman's perspective. Yes, he already disliked Mordecai. And Mordecai had refused to bow to him, refused to give Haman the honor he believes he deserves. And so in response, he has had this decree of death against Mordecai.

Now from Haman's perspective, he's thinking, well, really, I'm the only one that can help Mordecai at this point. I mean, he doesn't have any connections higher than me. None of the other wise men are going to be able to get in to see the king the way I can. He doesn't know that Mordecai is related to Esther, obviously. And so from Haman's perspective, he's Mordecai's only hope. He may have expected Mordecai to come groveling before him and say, oh, Haman, please, I didn't mean it. I'll bow to you all you want. Just spare me or spare my people. But if you don't spare my people, at least spare my life.

But he doesn't. Not only that, Mordecai doesn't even tremble before him. But not only does he not even tremble, he doesn't even stand up. Mordecai's sitting at the king's gate, clothed in his sackcloth and ashes, and just acts like Haman isn't even there. Now as we've said something before about Haman, Haman is Mr. Glass Bobblehead.

He's got a big head, but it is fragile. One guy dishonors him, ruins his whole day. And so what does he do as a guy whose day has been, you know, had a big day, but also his day's been kind of ruined? He calls together his friends and his wife to have a nice little party, to prop his ego back up.

Look at verse 10. Haman controlled himself, however, and went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife, Zeresh. Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches and the number of his sons in every instance where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king.

From any worldly standpoint, this is a phenomenal listing. In fact, it actually reminds me a lot of the listing that Job is given, the list of blessings that Job experiences at the beginning of the book of Job. He has every box ticked. He has riches.

Now, from our perspective, we value riches, obviously, but let's be honest here, we live in America, and as Americans, we are all very rich by world standards. More than that, this was the ancient world. In the ancient world, most people were dirt poor. You had to be in the top 0.01% to not live hand to mouth, basically. Haman had riches. He was loaded. He had a huge estate. We'll find out just how valuable it was in chapter seven. But not only did Haman have a huge estate, he also had a legacy. He had 10 sons, according to chapter seven. 10 sons. Think about that. Jacob with his four wives, well two wives and two concubines, had 12 sons. Haman only had one wife, at least only one listed, Zeresh, and he had 10 sons.

This man had a legacy. He was the head of a clan. But not only did he have riches, not only did he have a legacy, He also had honor and prestige. He was the top dog. He was promoted above every servant, every person in the whole empire. Basically, the only person that was higher than him was the king in honor and prestige. He was on top of the world. And not only that, but he had just been honored by the queen.

Not just the king likes Haman, the queen does too. Everyone likes Haman. And yet, And yet, look at verse 13, yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Again, Haman is the glass bobblehead. It doesn't matter how many people honor him. It doesn't matter how much people raise him up. He still believes he deserves more. It's never enough.

And we've, now we've said before that Haman is an Amalekite, he's an Agagite. That is, he is a part of a people that are opposed to God. If the Israelites are God's people, the Amalekites are Satan's people. So in that way, Haman is a representative of something much darker, something much deeper. He's a representative of the seed of the serpent, of Satan himself. And you know, Haman here kind of reminds me of Satan. What does scripture say about Satan?

Well, he's the ruler of the kings of the earth. He has a lot of authority, doesn't he? He's got a legacy. He's got all these demons, a third of the angels of heaven beneath him. He's the dragon, whose image the whole world worships. He is the ruler, as Paul calls him, the god of this age.

Yet it's never enough. Every time he sees the church, how it does not bow to his image, he is filled with anger. Just as Haman, all his antipathy, all of his anger, all of his hatred is directed against Mordecai, so all of Satan's hatred, all of his animosity, all of his vile guile is directed towards the church. We need to remember that. We have an enemy. And he wants nothing more than to destroy us, just as Haman wanted nothing more than to do anything he could to destroy Mordecai, so Satan will not rest until he can find some way to destroy the church, to destroy you, personally.

That's his goal. Do you think, now, to put this in perspective, do you think that Mordecai would be receptive if Haman came over and said, hey, I got a deal for you. I got something that I think will help you out. I want to offer you something. Do you think Mordecai would take that? Of course he wouldn't.

He knew Haman was his enemy. And yet, isn't that what we do? We know Satan's our enemy. Why do we listen to his accusations? We know Satan is our enemy. Why do we listen to his temptations? If you want a sure defense against temptation, remember who's talking to you. If you want a sure defense against Satan's accusations, obviously flee to Christ, but also remember your enemy. Remember who's talking. This is your enemy. Your mortal enemy. As much as Haman wanted to destroy Mordecai, Satan wants to destroy you. So Haman is filled with anger and malice towards Mordecai. He just, he can't rest. So we move from the thorn in Haman's side to the solution from Haman's wife. Look at verse 14.

Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, have a gallows 50 cubits high made in the morning and ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go joyfully with the king to the banquet. Hey man, if you're top dog, if you're the highest in all the land, if you have all this honor and authority, well just have Mordecai killed.

I mean, he's on death row anyway. I'm sure the king wouldn't mind if he got one in early. Just go for it. Now, yeah, and Haman, of course, this is playing to his own ego. It's playing to his own prestige. And so he obviously says, yeah, that sounds like a great idea. And so he decides he'll do just that. Look at the end of verse 14.

And the advice pleased Haman. So he had a gallows made. Now, we have to remember, a gallows in the Persian world once again, was not a place where you hung someone for execution. It was a large stake on which a body was impaled in order to shame them.

Again, Haman is all about honor. He wants to be honored. He wants everyone to think he's the top dog. And so what's the worst thing he can do to someone else? To shame them. I want this guy on a stake for the whole world to see. Now, 50 feet, 75 feet tall, that is an incredibly high stake. Actually, by most estimates, that's higher than the palace of the king. So either this could be an example of hyperbole, or Haman is willing to invest some serious money in getting this stake put up. Now, if you're following this story and thinking of this story in this broader context, you might be getting a little nervous at this point.

I mean, after all, We have some hope from Esther. Esther's gonna intercede for the Jewish people. She's gonna try to save them. Tomorrow evening. And when is Haman going to ask to have Mordecai killed? Tomorrow morning.

Esther's plan is not going to be in time to save Mordecai. What's gonna happen to Mordecai? Is Mordecai gonna be okay? Is Esther gonna be too late to save him?

Well, that moves us from things get personal to things get confused. Look with me at verse six. During that night, the king could not sleep. Pause there just a second. This is the first of three major coincidences. Three coincidences, shall we say, that save Mordecai's life. The king couldn't sleep. Why did Mordecai survive that night? Well, because the king had insomnia. The little, small things. The king just could not find a way to sleep.

So what does he do? Well, he tells his aides to bring the book of the Krekkerds, the Chronicles, and they were read before him. The king, being Ahasuerus, wants to read about his favorite subject himself. So that leads us to coincidence number two. In verse 2, and it was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthin and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they sought to lay hands on King Azeris. Out of all the records that could have been opened before King Azeris that night, that story, that record of how Mordecai saved the king is the one that was read. And the author reminds us of something in verse 3.

Now as we talked about back in chapter 2, in chapter three, that was a huge no-no for the Persian Empire. If you're a Persian king, you always sought to reward loyalty. Persian kings were known for giving huge grants of money, land, titles, to those who displayed loyalty to them. Now, reporting on the king's doorkeepers deciding to kill the king is a huge act of loyalty. And yet, Mordecai had received nothing. And this is a huge problem for the king. After all, if word gets out that someone saved the king's life and he went unrewarded, that not only reflects poorly on the king, but it could even endanger his life.

So how is the king going to rectify this issue? How is he going to fix this? Well, again, Ahasuerus, being Ahasuerus, can't think of any solution himself. And so what does he ask? So the king said, who is in the court? He's gotta look for an advisor. This leads us to coincidence number three.

Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about the hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. Out of all the nights the king could have had trouble sleeping, it was that night. Out of all the times, out of all the passages that the king could have opened up to read, it was that passage. Out of all the times Haman could have entered the king's outer court, he entered when the king was looking for a way to honor Mordecai. This is one of the most obvious examples of what we talked about from the very beginning.

The story of Esther, while it does not mention God by name, God is absolutely present. That is intentional by the author. The author says, this story screams God's providence. He is at work even when you can't see him. And he's at work even through the small things. God doesn't need to do big dramatic things to save, to deliver his people, to accomplish his purposes. He can do the small things.

Think about the story of Ruth. And Ruth went out to glean and she happened, she happened to enter the field of Boaz. And Joseph was sold into slavery and he happened to be bought by Potiphar, the captain of the king's bodyguard. And when he was arrested, he happened to be in, to share a cell with the king's cup bearer and the king's baker. God is at work even through the small things. God is always at work in his providence. He laughs at

those who would oppose him. So these three coincidences lead us now to one misunderstanding. to one misunderstanding, look at verse five.

And the king's servants said to him, behold, Haman is standing in the court. And the king said, let him come in. So Haman came in and the king said to him, what is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor? And Haman said to himself, whom would the king desire to honor more than me? Again, Haman, glass bobblehead.

Of course it's about him. Obviously. Why wouldn't, who else could it possibly be about? In Gen Z terms, Haman has main character syndrome. Haman thinks he's the main character. He, in a story, obviously, in a story, everything that happens in the story is always about the main character. That's how a lot of people live their lives. They act as if, oh, a tragedy happens. Oh, I mean, it's probably just, oh, I can't believe that happened. I'm gonna be so sad about that now. Oh, it ruined my day.

That's Haman. Haman is Mr. Glass Bobblehead. Everything's about him. Now, this sets up a very interesting look into Haman's psychology. Haman now gets to dictate the reward that he believes he deserves. We've talked about how Haman doesn't believe he's received the honor that he really deserves. He hasn't received the glory that's his due. What does Haman think he deserves? What does Haman believe is his due?

Well, let's look at the text. Verse seven. Then Haman said to the king, for the man whom the king desires to honor, let them bring a royal robe, which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king is ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed, and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes. and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square and proclaim before him, thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor. In other words, look at what he asked for. He asked for the royal robe, for the royal horse, and of course he can't ask for the crown he put on his own head. That would be one step too far. So he says, well, crown the horse then. Put the crown on the horse.

Haman wants to be king. Haman wants to play at being king. Now, we have to be careful here. We're not saying that Haman was planning to assassinate Ahasuerus or something. But Haman believes what he's truly due, the honor that he should truly receive, is the king's honor.

I should be king. I should have Ahasuerus' honor. I should have his kingdom. I should have his authority. I'm more worthy. I mean, Haman's not stupid. He's seen how incompetent Ahasuerus is, and how he isn't really worthy of the authority in the kingdom he's been given. And so Haman says, I deserve it. Now, what's super, what is really ironic about this, is look back again at verse 14 of chapter five. And the advice pleased Haman, and so he had the gallows made. What does that remind you of? It reminds you of the refrain about King Ahasuerus.

How does the story of Esther begin? Ahasuerus, he's on top of the world, he's got everything. And then one person dishonors him, completely disproportionate response. How does this story begin? Haman's on top of the world. One person dishonors him, completely disproportionate response. Haman really is just like the king. He doesn't deserve this anymore than the king does. He's full of himself. Again, we see here a figure of Satan.

What does Satan want? What honor does he think he deserves? He wants to be God. That's what he tempted Adam and Eve with, wasn't it? You eat of the fruit, you'll be like God, knowing good and evil. That's what he does on this planet. That's why he has the nations serve his image in the book of Revelation, because he wants to play at being God. And he will play at being God in your life if you let him.

Watch out. Now, things getting confused in Haman's mind leads to things getting awkward, our third point. Things get awkward for Haman in verse 10. Then the king said to Haman, take quickly the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so for Mordecai, the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate. Do not fall short of anything, of all that you have said. Can you imagine Haman's face after this, as Aziris said that, as he tries to hold it together?

Mordecai? Out of all the people in the land, it was Mordecai? Now, can you imagine what the conversation between Mordecai and Haman would have been like? Haman comes up to Mordecai, Mordecai is out in the city square, he's wearing the sackcloth, he's throwing the ashes on his head, and Haman comes up to him with a horse, a crown, and a robe, and it raised him?

What was that like? This is insane, this is crazy. And then now Haman is taking Mordecai through the streets of the city square, the streets of the city square where Mordecai had once been clothed in sackcloth, where his cries for justice, his wails and cries in chapter four had only just finished ringing. And now what's ringing in the courts, this is the way the king honors those he delights in. God has completely turned this situation on its head.

What do you think the people in the city square were thinking? Who's that on the horse over there? I don't know, I think that's Mordecai. No, that can't be Mordecai. Wasn't he the guy in the sackcloth and the ashes? Isn't he like a condemned man? Yeah, I think so. I wish the king would make up his mind about these Jews. Are they the scum of the earth he wants to kill or is he gonna exalt them? I wish he'd make up his mind. Who's that leading him and shouting? Is that Haman? No, that can't be Haman. Haman hates Mordecai.

That's him, that's his face. Look, he's leading him on the horse. He's crying out. This is the way the king honors those he delights in. Well, this is strange. Everything seems to be turned on its head. That's because it has been. God the great reverser. So after this nice little impromptu parade, Mordecai goes home, look at verse 12. Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, goes back to his place, back to his responsibilities, probably back to his mourning. Perhaps though with new hope.

But Haman hurried home, mourning with his head covered. And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, if Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

Haman has just suffered under three reversals. The first, the reversal that's just happened. He sought to humble Mordecai, to destroy him, and he ended up exalting him and humbling himself. Second reversal is the reversal of his wife and his friends.

They were the ones who suggested this whole plan, and now they're the ones saying, hey, Haman, this is probably not a good idea. I'm not sure you know what you're getting into. Well, you could have told me that before. And the third reversal was the reversal they're predicting. Now these guys that are the ones that told him, hey, just go get Mordecai, just kill him, are now the ones saying, you know, if this is the result of you trying to oppose one Jew, what's gonna happen when you try to push through this decree against all the Jews?

This doesn't bode well, Haman. But before Haman can even consider these words, verse 14, while they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared. God was going to judge Haman.

And Haman was not afforded the luxury of reflection, really the luxury of repentance. And it is a luxury, ladies and gentlemen. Repentance is not something you're owed. A chance to repent is a result of God's mercy. He denied that to Haman. He's giving you that right now. If you do not trust in Jesus Christ, I pray that all of you do. I think all of you do. But if you don't, this is an opportunity to repent and it may not come again. So we see this great reversal. And this leads us to our fourth major point. This is who God is. God is the great reverser. God is the great reverser.

How does the Bible begin? Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep. And what does God do? He turns darkness to light, formlessness to order, lifelessness to life. What does God do after the fall? He takes their naked shame and clothes them. All throughout redemptive history, what is God in the business of doing?

He takes slaves and turns them into a nation. He takes barren women and makes them mothers of nations and kings and prophets. He takes the dead people, dead in their sins, rebels against God, and makes them his sons and daughters. He takes a Roman cross utter shame and derision for the Greeks and the Romans and the curse of God for the Jews. He takes the wrath of God being poured out on an innocent man and turns it into our redemption. He takes the dead body of Jesus Christ and raises it from the dead.

He takes the scared, sniveling disciples and turns them into a force a force that changes the world. And what's he gonna do one day? He's gonna take this world, broken, cursed by sin, and turn it into a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells, and he will wipe away every tear from our eyes. This is who God is. This is the God we serve. He is the great reverser. He did it in the story of Esther. He will do it for you. He will do it for his church, for this world. Amen? Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you that we don't have to just reconcile ourselves to this world and say, well, this is as good as it's gonna get. This is the world we have. This is the me I have.

It's not gonna change, but you have promised change. You have promised redemption. You have promised reversal. Thank you, Lord, that you've given us this hope. Help us to believe it. Help us to live in light, in light of it, to remember that Satan is a defeated foe, that though he schemes against your church, that though he attempts to shake it, to destroy us, he will never succeed. For you were on the rock of Jesus Christ, you have built this church, and the gates of hell will not stand against it. In Jesus' name, amen.