

5-27-2016, COTR Texarkana

Title: When Opportunity Knocks

Purpose: Provoke people to seize God given opportunities to do something big for Him.

Spiritual Truth: God promotes us so we can have an opportunity to do something big for Him.

Text: I Corinthians 16:9, Esther

Topic: Esther, Hero, Doors, Opportunity, Risk, Bravery

Series: Heroes

Series Purpose: Provoke people to follow the example of Biblical heroes.

## When Opportunity Knocks

- I. Memorial Day is a national holiday in which we honor the men and women who died in the military. Video: Sermon Spice, *A Soldier's Pledge*. 1981, Reagan's 1<sup>st</sup> inaugural address.
- II. Introduction
  - A. Review: Series, "Heroes"
    - A.1. Listen to messages @ChurchOnTheRock.org or on the COTR iPhone/ Android app
    - A.2. Def. Hero: someone we admire for their actions, achievements or character; someone we want to be like.
  - B. Today we'll go to the OT and talk about Esther. Her story begins in tragedy but she rose from a life of insignificance when God promoted her for a purpose. She's my hero because she took a great risk to seize the opportunity to do something big for God.
  - C. Title: When Opportunity Knocks
    - C.1. Def. opportunity: A favorable juncture of circumstances that promise advancement or progress, e.g. Forrest Gump became a millionaire when he bought Apple stock. If you invested \$1,000 in 1980's IPO @\$22 a share, it was worth over \$300k last year. That was a great investment opportunity. Similarly God gave Esther an opportunity to save the Jewish people when Haman tried to destroy them.
    - C.2. An open door is a picture of opportunity, Paul in Ephesus, 1 Corinthians 16:9 (NLT)  
There is a **wide-open door** for a **great work** here, although **many oppose me**.
    - C.3. App: Like Paul, God gives us opportunities to advance His Kingdom. Oftentimes our success opens the door to an opportunity to do something big for God but we've got to be willing to take the risk and go through the door in spite of the opposition.
  - D. Purpose: Provoke people to seize God given opportunities to do something big for Him.
  - E. Sp. Truth: God promotes us so we can have an opportunity to do something big for Him.

### III. Lessons from Esther

- A. Overview: Esther, a Jew, is an orphan girl raised by her cousin Mordecai. They were exiled to Persia and wicked Haman is intent on killing all the Jews. In a surprising turn of events we see the sovereign hand of God. Queen Vashti loses her royal position and Esther becomes queen. She and Mordecai are used by God to stop the genocide by Haman and both Esther and Mordecai are honored by God for their bravery and service.
- B. Esther refused to be a victim when life was unfair.
  - B.1. Esther 2:5–7 (NIV) Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew...named Mordecai ...6 who had been **carried into exile from Jerusalem**...7 Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah...This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when **her father and mother died**.
  - B.2. Esther was forcibly taken from her home and made a slave in a foreign country. She had to live in a place she didn't want to be. Her father and mother died and she was alone. It seemed like it couldn't get any worse. She had a huge choice to make that would determine her future. She could get depressed, get mad at God, commit suicide, blame people for her problems, protest, become an angry person, live in the past or believe that God was still good even though bad things had happened. If she looked to God she would find God's plan in a place she didn't want to be.
  - B.3. Romans 8:28 (ESV) And **we know** that for those who love God **all things** work together for good, for those who are called according to **his purpose**.
  - B.4. What do you do when life is unfair? Do you become a lifelong victim or do you forgive and trust God with your future.
  - B.5. There are people in America that want us to be an angry victim the rest of our life while God wants us to move us from the past into the future He has planned for us. E.g. will the race war ever be over in America? The 1<sup>st</sup> thing people want to know when a crime is committed is what the color of their skin is and who can we blame? Esther the orphan slave didn't define herself as a victim; neither should we.
- C. God promoted Esther for a purpose
  - C.1. The problem: Esther 3:8–9 (NCV) Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain group of people...in all the states of your kingdom. Their customs are different from those of all the other people, and they do not obey the king's laws. **It is not right for you to allow them to continue living** in your kingdom. 9 If it pleases the king, let an order be given to destroy those people...

- C.1.a Haman used a mixture of truth, lies and exaggeration to convince the king that a Jewish genocide was the right thing to do. Those who oppose God’s work use seemingly logical arguments to influence people. It’s the same in America today, e.g. Christians are called bigots when we stand for traditional marriage.
- C.1.b The Jews were all going to be killed but God has a solution for every problem. His solution often involves a person, willing to take a risk, willing to go through an open door and seize the opportunity to do something big for God.
- C.2. Esther 4:8–14 (NCV) Mordecai also gave him a copy of the order to kill the Jewish people...He wanted Hathach to show it to Esther and to tell her about it. And Mordecai told him to order Esther to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy for her people...<sup>13</sup> Then Mordecai sent back word to Esther...And **who knows, you may have been chosen queen for just such a time as this.**”
- C.3. There was a bigger purpose for Esther’s promotion from slave to queen. Something bigger than her was going on. There was a Kingdom purpose behind the scenes. She was about to be given the opportunity to do something big for God.
  - C.3.a Mt 4:19 (ESV) he said to them, **Follow me**, and I will make you fishers of men
- C.4. She had to decide if she just wanted the benefits of being queen or if she’d accept the responsibility as well. There’s a question we need to ask ourselves: when God helps us become wealthy and successful is it just so we can be more comfortable, have more fun and get bigger and better stuff or does he want to give us the opportunity to use our position and wealth to do something to expand His Kingdom.
- C.5. 1 Timothy 6:17–19 (MSG) Tell those rich in this world’s wealth...**to go after God**... <sup>18</sup> to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. <sup>19</sup> If they do that, they’ll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.
- D. Esther was brave; she was willing to take a risk to go through the door God had opened.
  - D.1. Esther 4:10–14 (NCV) Then Esther told Hathach to tell Mordecai, <sup>11</sup>...no man or woman may go to the king...without being called. There is only one law about this: Anyone who enters must be **put to death** unless the king holds out his gold scepter. Then that person may live. I have not been called to go to the king for thirty days.
    - D.1.a The door of opportunity to do something big for God is often risky. When Peter stood up on Pentecost he could have been arrested. 2000 years later...
  - D.2. Esther 4:15–16 (NCV) Then Esther sent this answer to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> “Go and get all the Jewish people in Susa together. For my sake, **fast; do not eat or drink for**

**three days, night and day.** I and my servant girls will also fast. Then I will go to the king, even though it is against the law, and **if I die, I die.**”

D.2.a Esther didn't rely on her ability; she recognized her great need for God.

Fasting was a way to express her dependence and desperation for God to help.

IV. Conclusion: Something big was on the other side of Esther's door of opportunity.

- A. Esther went through the door and the king was elated to see her. Esther 7:2–6 (NLT)... the king again said to Esther, “Tell me what you want...I will give it to you...3 Queen Esther replied...I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. 4 For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us...5 “Who would do such a thing?” King Xerxes demanded. “Who would be so presumptuous as to touch you?” 6 Esther replied, “**This wicked Haman is our... enemy.**” Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen.
- B. The king went outside and Haman knelt on Esther's couch begging for his life. The king thought he was trying to molest her and ordered Haman be hanged. The king saved the Jews from genocide and gave cousin Mordecai Haman's estate and Haman's job.
- C. The lesson is clear. God promotes us so we can have an opportunity to do something big for Him. If we are brave and face opposition God will do great things through us! Opportunity knocked and Esther said yes; what will you say when opportunity knocks?

v. Response: Prayer/ Souls

- A. \*\*\* *Logos Bible Software and library, The New American Commentary, Esther were used to prepare this message.*