

Hope in Exile
Esther 9-10
Such a Time as This: Week 7: Final Week
10/4/15

Welcome/intro/vision

This is our final week in our such a time as this series, we've been looking at the Old Testament book of Esther

Esther has an incredible story, if you're just joining us you should go back and look at this sometime on your own—Esther and all the Jewish people are in exile in Persia in 450 BC

Esther wins a beauty contest and goes from being in exile in Persia to the queen of Persia

And as the story unfolds a decree gets issued that all the Jews are to be killed throughout the entire empire of Persia

And she comes to the realization with the help of her cousin Mordecai that God has put her here and that she has come to her position as queen for such a time as this—to save her people

A such a time as this moment is when your positioning meets God's purposes
it's just about any time your unique gifts, abilities, or experiences meets a need or an opportunity that can be entered into for the sake of God's purposes
whether that be in specific person's life or in the life of an organization or a company

As Mark Matthews said earlier, we believe we're at a such a time as this moment in our church's story
where we're asking God what he wants for this church in terms of our next steps

So please do join us in praying for us this week and over the next several weeks as we discern what God might have for us moving forward

We think that YOU'RE here for such a time as this!

To join us in building a thriving, dynamic, community that is working out and living out what it means that the life, work, and message of Jesus changes everything

Esther has her own such a time as this moment as her people are threatened with genocide

So last week Esther alerted the king that she was a Jew and so he might want to do something about that whole kill all the Jews thing!

The king does act, in the process Mordecai got promoted to the position of Prime Minister and he writes a law to counter-act the previous law

That on the designated day that the Jewish people were supposed to be killed, they can now gather together and defend themselves.

And today as a result we're going to bump up against one of those passages that many of us struggle with

And if you're here and you're not a Bible person or a religious person
and if you've got some strong feelings about what's wrong with the Bible or how religion has been used in the past

What we're going to look at today might be one of those passages that makes you want to stand up and say, "This is why I don't like the Bible!"

And even for those of us who LIKE the Bible and who's lives have been changed by this book

We have a hard time with the types of passages like we're going to look at today.

Today we're going to read the grand finale of Esther

as the tables are turned and now the Jews who were scheduled to be slaughtered now defend themselves and the result is a whole lot of carnage

And the question for many of us will be is this right? Is this ethical?

How can this be celebrated in the same Bible where there are any number of commands to NOT behave this way

Most of all by Jesus, who calls us to turn the other cheek

What I want to suggest to us today as we wrestle with the ethical implications of the violence we're going to read about today

At the end of it all, there is very, very good news.

Because have you ever been in a spot where you wondered if God was even there? Or if he even cared?

Or if he was going to abandon you and just leave you in a miserable place?

Even those of us who aren't God people and who don't think much about God otherwise

it's shocking how many of us quickly turn to thoughts of God in the midst of that kind of a crisis

As we close out Esther this morning the punchline for the original hearers of this story

and the big idea for all of us who have ever wondered if God noticed, if God was just absent, if he cared and if he could or would act

The good news for all of us who have ever asked questions along those lines is that God is present, he does move, he is moving
and even when and where we struggle to understand why he allows some things to happen

The thing that he promises is that he does not and will not abandon his people. He is present and he is a deliverer.

And so we're going to close this series wrestling with this story and its implications, hopefully coming to at least SOME resolution on the good news of it

And then we'll pull back a bit and pull some of the big ideas together for all of us as we close out our conversation about our such-a-time-as-this moments

To help each of us to be prepared and have eyes wide-open for those moments, often unexpected and often mysterious
when God moves us and positions us to meet his purposes

So if you've got a Bible you can turn with me to Esther 9, the passage that closes out Esther and the deliverance of the Jews from the edict that they were to be wiped out

On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out.

If you're just joining us, this was the day and month that the original edict was issued that the Jews were to be killed

And the original decree back in Esther 3:13 was this: ***destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.***

So that was the original decree issued in Esther 3, and last week we heard the news that any edict issued by the king can't be repealed or over-turned

So what Mordecai did once he was promoted to Prime Minister was they issued another decree that the Jews could rally together and defend themselves—here's 2nd law that Mordecai wrote after Haman was deposed that we looked at last week:

The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province

who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies

So on this same day, you've got both of these bi-polar, polar-opposite, counter-acting decrees and laws going into effect.

But word has circulated throughout the vast Persian Empire that Mordecai the Jew is now prime minister

And so now not only do the Jewish people have the right to defend themselves

but many of the governors of the local provinces and states recognize that it might behoove them to protect the Jewish people

So now this crazy day on the calendar has arrived and here's what unfolds:

On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them. ²The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those determined to destroy them.

No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. ³And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them.

⁴Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.

A couple of years ago I read an article about a CEO who was told that if he carried around the same magazine with him every time he passed through the offices of the people who worked for him

Within a few weeks, the people who worked for him would all be reading that magazine

so he did it and exactly as predicted within a couple of weeks he saw copies of that magazine on the desks of just about all his people

So tell your girls, next time you're selling your girl scout cookies, ditch working outside Harris Teeter and just go for the top of the corporate food chain!

So by this point in the story Mordecai has been prime minister for several months and his reputation and fame and power and influence has grown

The king has given him lots of room to roam and probably write several more irrevocable laws that he signed with king's seal

And so there are all these nobles and officials on the side of the Jews now—the boss likes Jews, we do too!

But there are still many people who are determined to see if they can kill the Jewish people off

They are so determined that in spite of the fact that they're now risking their lives to attack a Jewish family, they still attempt to do so!

And so here's how the story unfolds next, here's where it gets disturbing and we're just going to let this part sort of tell itself for a bit:

⁵The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. ⁶In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.

⁷They also killed these guys with long names who I shall not stumble through for you... ¹⁰the ten sons of Haman... the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

¹¹The number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day. ¹²The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa.

What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted."

¹³"If it pleases the king," Esther answered, "give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also, and let Haman's ten sons be impaled on poles."¹⁴So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman.

¹⁵The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

16 Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder.

17 This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.

Have you ever known anyone who's gone in for make-or-break surgery? This is it: either they can fix it or get all of it out or heal it or this will be the end of them?

On the front-end of that experience there is often this weird juxtaposition of sadness, hope and pre-grieving, right?

You start to say good-bye but you all want to believe and hope with all your heart that it'll turn out okay

But it's heavy, it's mourning, it's difficult

And then if the surgery goes well, and it's not as bad as they feared or they were able to take care of it or it looks like miraculously this is going to turn out well

what's the feeling on the other side?

Jubilation! Joy! Relief! Throw a party! Have a feast! Let's celebrate! Do a little freedom dance! Up, up, down, down, around, around, around, around!

This thing that was threatening my life is gone!

I was in a zero-sum situation: either the threat was going to end my life or we were going to exterminate and deal with this threat

There's no negotiating with cancer, is there? There's no negotiating with a heart or kidney that's malfunctioning.

Either the sickness wins and you lose or you win and the sickness loses but one of you is going to win and one of you is going to lose

Here is the king's first edict: ***destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children...and plunder their goods***

Here's the second edict: ***[the Jewish people have] the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men... who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies***

At the end of this story, ONE of these edicts is going to win. Either the Jews will be exterminated or the people who are trying to kill them will be.

This is a zero sum game

The Jewish people are given the right NOT to randomly attack anyone they want but the ARMED men who might attack them and their women and children—what kind of men? ARMED MEN.

They are not playing offense here, they are only playing defense.

And it is EXTREMELY TELLING that even after the second edict goes out and it's clear that Mordecai is in charge and there's lots of people on the Jew's side

That STILL there are over 75,000 men who take up arms and line up to try to attack and kill the Jews.

Given this, if Esther and Mordecai's rise to power did not happen, how likely is it that the goal of killing all of the Jews would have been realized?

Very likely!

It is VERY probable that had Esther and Mordecai not been given position and authority to do something about this situation

that the Biblical story of God's people and his work particularly with the Jewish people would have come to an end right there in Persia

Haman set the stage for a bloodbath with the initial decree and apparently there were tens of thousands of people who were eager to participate in that bloodbath

There were people eager to destroy the Jews who were prepared to live by the sword, to profit by the sword, and instead they end up dying by the sword

The initial decree was evil and it stirs up and incites people to do evil things.

They are so incited and stirred up that even when it's clear that they could lose their lives

they are so committed to killing these people and taking their stuff that they willingly put their lives on the line

And they end up paying the price.

My friends, here's the first part of the good news that we see throughout the Scriptures: evil will eventually collapse in on itself—this is what happens here in the story of Esther

Evil collapses in on itself!

One thing that Steve Tamayo likes to say is that 'evil always overplays it's hand' –evil always eventually over-reaches

And one of the greatest promises of Scripture that we have is that one day evil will ultimately collapse in on itself permanently and forever.

And we see that here in Esther as evil over-reaches and attempts to destroy God's people

But ultimately that blood-thirsty-ness only results in their own deaths.

But the place where we see this most vividly portrayed in history is at the cross of Christ, where evil unwittingly played into its own destruction.

What looked like a final decisive victory for sin and death was, in the end, the very instrument of the destruction of sin and death

gets turned around into humanity's greatest hope

Evil will collapse in on itself eventually. Sometimes we have to endure a season of the apparent victory of evil over good. But the promise is that God in his justice triumphs over all evil.

I've talked with grown adults who have had to help care for aging parents who were miserable and terrible to them for most of their lives

And in many of those cases, the desire for retribution is loud and strong

When when we're put in a position of power over people who would otherwise make our lives miserable, it can be hard to exercise restraint and discipline, can't it?

But that's exactly what we see from the Jewish people here in this story.

Notice in the first decree that people are incentivized to wipe out the Jews by the promise that they could keep any of the goods that they could get from them

In Mordecai's decree, the Jews are given the same permission: if you defend yourself from an armed attacker and kill him, you get to keep their stuff

But did you notice what was said three times in the text? They didn't do it. Three times the author emphasizes that they did not plunder their goods

[v. 10: But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.... V. 15: but they did not lay their hands on the plunder...v. 16: but did not lay their hands on the plunder.]

This was not a wanton power-grab, this was not a reverse genocidal rampage driven by greed and the desire to get more power and stuff

This was bounded response to a direct threat, zero-sum game where either the cancer won or God's people won BUT they did not get greedy in the process

And it all came about and God's people were spared because of what God had done to pave the way for Esther and Mordecai to have disproportionate influence

That they might act to save this community of people from extermination while in exile

The violence in the story of Esther is disturbing, no way around it.

But *the story of Esther is always uncomfortable to the comfortable and the powerful; and it is always great news to the oppressed and persecuted*

And to the Jews living around 400 B.C, this story was gold, not because of the vengeance

But because of the promise of God's presence, justice, and ultimately deliverance

And today, all around the world, the Esther story is read and re-read over and over again by people who are persecuted and oppressed as great, great news.

To the Christian man in the Middle East whose village is surrounded by ISIS this morning, Esther is good news.

God is not absent, and we here are called to pray to him to pray that the Lord might deliver him.

To the 8-year-old boy who was abducted in a country in Africa and this morning is being trained as a child soldier, Esther is good news. God is not absent, he is not silent—he sees, he knows, he cares.

To the 16-year-old girl waking up this morning chained to a bed in a brothel in Indonesia or even here in the United States of America, Esther is good news: God is not ignorant of her pain

And God doesn't always act in our timing or in ways that we understand to put an end to wickedness

But maybe that's because the people that God has positioned for such a time as this to do the work that he's called them to do have ducked that work

Maybe that's because God has positioned some, maybe even one of us, to do something about an untenable situation that he is eager to end

but we're too scared or too comfortable to step into the unknown and act courageously like Esther did

God's plan A to work justice and mercy in this world is PEOPLE. God brings about relief and rescue and help through PEOPLE

this is why it matters so much that we be awake for our “such a time as this” moments!

There is evil in this world. And someone or something has to put a boundary over it and deal with it or else it could utterly destroy everything good and beautiful

The Scriptures declare ULTIMATELY that God reigns graciously and generously over all that he has made

and that after his death and resurrection Jesus Christ himself is now Lord and King over the earth

The goal of the reign of this king is a word we’ve used around here a lot off and on over the past year: shalom

it means right relationships all around, well-being, human flourishing, human interactions and relationships as life-giving

it’s translated peace but it doesn’t just mean warm-fuzzies or shiny happy people holding hands

It means a holy and rigorous web of right relationships between people, nations, God’s creation, money, stuff, time—everything rightly ordered.

That’s the goal of the reign of the righteous king of the universe, Jesus Christ.

And if the wicked refuse to participate in the gracious reign of the righteous, they will be judged. Sometimes harshly.

And this is the great hope of many people all around the world this very minute who have no other recourse and no other hope

That doesn’t answer all the questions and issues swirling violence in the Scriptures, but hopefully it at least gets us some traction as we wrestle with this issue.

And they establish this 13th and 14th day of the 12th month as the festival of Purim to be celebrated forever—and to this day it is one of the most celebrated feast days in the Jewish calendar

But let’s say that you are a Jew celebrating Purim about 50 or 60 years after all this happened and you are still living in exile

And while some of your people have gone back to Jerusalem and kind of attempted a half-way re-start to re-building your nation, there’s plenty of you still scattered all around

And there’s still plenty of enemies in place, still lots of threats around you—but it’s Purim, and it’s the day that the Esther story gets read or recited

And the take-home from this story is this: ***God is still God and God is still good, even in exile.***

And to take it even one step further: God is still God and God is still good, even if we're in exile because of something foolish or sinful that we did.

Because the Biblical story is clear that Israelites are a conquered nation because they have turned their backs on God

But God does not abandon them, even as he's disciplining them. He's always moving and working on their behalf

And the good news for us today, especially if you feel like you're in exile of some sort, a trial, a difficulty, a dark season

And even if you're there because of something foolish that you did, the good news is that God will never, ever stop working for you, pursuing you.

God is still God and God is still good, even in our own exile-like experiences.

And sometimes while we're in exile, he will work in even more spectacular ways to position us for a such a time as this moment

where we might be a part of his redemptive purposes not from a position of strength but from seeming weakness

And the invitation for all of us in our dark days and our difficult seasons, is to look to the God who never stops pursuing us, never stops working for us
and to trust the he's still God and he's still good, even in exile

And even to be so bold to believe that he might call us to step into a such a time as this moment and do some of our most significant life work in some of the darkest seasons of our lives.

God is still God and God is still good, and HE's the one that can take our little such a time as this moments

and move them from the category of FLEETING and PASSING and actually make them into the category of ETERNAL

All of our moments in this life, even the ones that feel weighty and significant
only have staying power and only echo into eternity in as much as we offer them an exercise them under the gracious umbrella and canopy of the fact that God is still God.

Our activity, our doing, only lasts but so long, whatever we do it's a moment and it passes

even if it's something we do over a long haul, a life's work kind of a thing,
sooner or later it's gone

But if we've submitted ourselves and our lives to the God who loves us and pursues
us, even in our own stupid self-imposed exile experiences

Then instead of our great such a time as this moments flaring up and then
disappearing, they are gathered up and woven into the fabric of a larger story

Any of you ever been to see live improv comedy?

Part of what makes improv comedy so compelling is that you've got this live without
a net, un-rehearsed experience often with a couple of comedians on the stage

And basically there are a number of ways they do this but sometimes they'll start
telling a funny story

so say they're telling a funny story about a mom taking her two toddlers to
the grocery store

and then an emcee will tell them to freeze and invite someone in the
audience to shout out a famous person they meet at the grocery store

So someone shouts out Napoleon or Elvis or Einstein and their job is to work with it
and weave it into the story that they were already telling

What makes our such a time as this moments so great, so compelling, so genuinely
transformative is not our own natural greatness or abilities

Although you ARE wonderful gifted people whom God loves very much.

What makes our such a time as this moments so transformative is that GOD is the
one who positions us for them

And then GOD is the one who gathers up each and every good work ever done by his
people

each work is done in a distinctive way expressed by our own God-given
personalities and temperaments

And he takes whatever is given to him by his people and he says "I can work with
that" and he weaves it into his great, big story of redemption all throughout history

Whatever work that is done by God's people will be gathered up into God's great big
story, not one bit of it will be wasted

If you're here today, feeling like you're in a hard spot, and it looks for all the world
like God, if he exists at all, has utterly forsaken you and abandoned you

Then hear this good news from Esther
God is still God, and God is still good, even in exile.

And if you're NOT in a hard spot, if life is peaches and roses and butterflies and promotions and raises and nothing but happy, happy

God is still God and God is still your BEST good, even in the midst of all kinds of other blessings

And under the canopy of the good news that God is God and God is still good, even while we're in exile of some sort, we read the story of Esther

And we hold onto the good news that we saw in Esther 1:
that if our lives are given over to God, then our obstacles do not define our destiny, because God is bigger than our obstacles

And we take stock of what we saw in Esther 2:
that God has gifted us with exactly what we need to leverage and enter into our 'such a time as this moments'
including the gifts of friendships and relationships who have gifts or insights that we don't have

And part of what it means to trust that God is good and is at work even in exile is that we go to work to grow so that the BEST US, the best version of us, might be present for our such a time as this moments that God is making a way for

And then, when crisis hits and we're tempted to freak out, melt down, stop drop and roll or rush out to Wal-Mart and buy bread milk and toilet paper in order to prepare for the apocalypse

we hold onto what we learned in Esther 3: that the crisis isn't the obstacle to our such a time as this moments, the crisis IS the moment!

We're not running AWAY from the crisis, as God's people with God-confidence, believing that God is still God, even in exile, we're running TOWARD the crisis

Or maybe we're carefully approaching it, but we're not abandoning God or giving up hope that he's doing something even in the midst of what looks like irredeemable tragedy

Because nothing is impossible with God!

And then just like Esther does in chapters 4, 5 and 6, we look at our lives through the 3-D lenses of faith and wisdom

And we ask the question: could I be positioned here, in this crisis, by God, for such a time as this?

Or even if it's not a crisis, just a moment, just an opportunity, just a particular situation at home or at work or with a friend or family member

Could God be up to something here to uniquely put me in this place, in this time, with these people and situations all around me, for such a time as this?

And then, as we saw in these last couple of chapters of Esther, we act in faith, trusting that God is still God and that God is still good, even if we're still in exile

And so we ask our take-home question today, boldly, courageously, with great hope and great joy even in the midst of trials or trauma or hardship

Is God at work, positioning me for a such a time as this moment right now?

Big or small, in your industry or business or at home or with a friend, in the life of someone you love or even in the life of someone who drives you crazy

Is God moving in a particular way to put me in this moment, this place, this time, for such a time as this?

May we have eyes to see it, and the courage and the faith to step into it.

PRAY

Benediction: Chatham Serves next week reminder

Prayer room open

Guests: come see me!

Because ultimately our great hope in life given that we are all ultimately in a zero-sum game of life or death

Is that in Christ Jesus, God has conquered and over-turned all that sin and death would do to us

In order to usher in HIS kingdom of shalom, right relationships all around and to save us from eternal death

This is the good news of Christianity

and this is our hope as we've spent these past several weeks talking about being ready and entering into our own such a time as this moments

Because when God sets us up for a such a time as this moment, he's calling us to step into the purposes of his reign and rule to bring right relationships to this earth

This is what Esther and Mordecai were positioned to do, and it's what those of us who are Christ-followers are called to do as well

And so I want to close this series with a final encouragement for you to be on the look-out for your own such a time as this moments

Because here's what I think is true: such a time as this moments are happening all around you, just about all the time

Occasionally they're big enough for you to sit up and take notice, but mostly they're small and specific and particular.

I was talking with someone about this this past week and he was framing it this way:

You are an expert on your life.

And all around you are people that only you can touch, people that only you can reach, people that God has positioned you uniquely to impact in ways that could make an eternal difference in their lives

And the question as we leave this place each Sunday is are we wide open to what God is doing and is calling us to step into

as we head into the lives that he's given us and the relationships and situations he's placed us in for such a time as this?

If a such a time as this moment is when your positioning meets God's purposes, then there are number of things we learn about them from Esther that I want to drive home

1. Esther shows us that if our lives are given over to God, then our obstacles do not define our destiny because God is larger than any obstacle we might face

All of us face obstacles to making some sort of difference in this world and sometimes those obstacles are HUGE

But no matter how big our obstacles are, nothing is impossible with God

Esther has no business being queen of Persia except that God is in the business of teeing up unlikely people to make an extraordinary difference in this world

2. We can't generate a such a time as this moment but we can be prepared/ready for them—and we've seen throughout Esther how we might do this:
 - a. Knowing our gifts and recognizing that those gifts have been given by God to us on loan, to be put to use for his purposes in the world

Sometimes we have to wait to put them to use, but they're always God's gifts first and he can call on us to put them in play whenever he might say "it's time"

- b. Community.

If Esther doesn't have Mordecai in her life to help her to see she's queen for such a time as this, she very likely misses it.

If we don't have people in our lives to help us to see when God has positioned us for a such a time as this moment, chances are that we will miss a couple of our moments, too.

Every night at bed time I pray with my kids and just about every night I pray that they'll have friends all their days that point them towards Jesus.

Because throughout the course of our lives, the people we hang out with will significantly shape who we are and what we do—that's just human nature!

So having the wisdom to pursue people and friendships in our lives who will speak graciously, lovingly, but with brutal honesty is mission-critical to us being the men and women God wants us to be in this world

From middle-school on, one of the top 3 the most important decisions you can make are who your friends are. This is more important to who you're becoming than your career or any job.

Who are your friends? Do you have any real friends?

And more importantly, do you have people in your life who can encourage you towards the Lord, even when it might be costly or risky?

- c. Every-day decisions to act faithfully and with integrity, no matter what it might cost us, with God's story at the center of our lives

Almost every time we do Chatham Serves, we discover there's at least one project that's a "such a time as this" project.

Almost every time, we're bringing the right help to the right person who has the exact need that we can help meet

We're not generating the such a time as this moment, we've just made the pre-decision that being a church built around the life and teachings of Jesus means that we have to pour time and energies and life into our community, loving our neighbor

That sets the stage and the context for God to give us some divine appointments where our resources meet specific needs in our community that participate in his kingdom work of bringing healing and right relationships to this world.

- d. And finally a couple weeks ago we talked about how debilitating cynicism is. We tackled that directly because it's one of the most pervasive heart-postures in our culture.

We talked about how cynicism can only undermine and inhibit and thwart anything good, noble, or of eternal value because a heart that's built around cynicism can only tear down, it has no ability to construct anything that is long-term valuable or good

And we talked about the deliberate and disciplined decision to replace cynicism as our primary lenses with something much better that Scriptures encourage us to look at our lives through:

The twin lenses of faith and wisdom that enable us to see God at work and give us the courage to step in with his work

So that we might not miss our such a time as this moments

Take-home questions for you this morning:

1. Which of these resonates as an area where you need to grow and work on?

Maybe you know you don't really have any real community? Maybe your fuzzy on the whole knowing your gifts thing?

Maybe you know you need to working on that whole cynicism thing?

Some of you aren't even sure you buy the whole God thing—we're so glad that you're here and because I believe if there is a God he's God over the whole world, not just the people who happen to believe in him

I would encourage you to start to look around your life and see if there are such a time as this moments that God might be calling you to step into

That in spite of your unbelief, he's working all around you to show you that he's real just by teeing you up for such a time as this moments

Where you might step back and say,

"You know, I could write that off as a coincidence or whatever.

But just maybe that was God at work both setting me up to make a difference somewhere AND at the same time trying to alert me to the fact that he's really at work pursuing me, showing me himself!"

2. What difference can you make for such a time as this?

Where is God teeing you up for a moment that might require something of you to be a part of healing a broken and messy world?

One of the coolest parts of this series have been the conversations and emails I've gotten from people who are seeing and naming "such a time as this" moments in their lives

Often small but poignant experiences where they realize that God has put them in a specific situation

to be able to meet a specific need or leverage a specific opportunity for downstream impact that blesses one person or many other people in disproportionate ways

And my hope and prayer for all of us as we close out this series is that we'd end our time in Esther doing what we can do each day to be ready and available for God's work in and around us

As we look for him through eyes of faith wisdom to be teeing us up for our own such a time as this moments.

