



Whom Does the King Delight to Honor?

David Sunday

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We're in the fourth of five sermons from the Old Testament book of Esther. You can turn to Esther 5 and we're going all the way to Esther 8:2 this morning—a long passage. This episode in Esther is a living tale of a timeless truth. The book of Proverbs says, "*Prides goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18). This is illustrated brilliantly in this story.

Since we're talking about pride and humility, I should start by humbling myself a bit this morning. One of the first principles of leadership is that a leader always gives credit to others when credit is due, and a leader always takes blame when blame is to be taken. You'll notice in the bulletin this morning there's an error and it's totally my responsibility. The sermon title is wrong. If you look at that, "King" is the subject in that sermon title, so the first word, the pronoun, should be "Whom" not "Who." So for all you English teachers and grammarians, I ask your forgiveness and promise never again to make a sermon title before my first cup of coffee in the morning. That's my mistake.

Act One: A Bold Queen & a Brazen Prime Minister

"Whom does the king delight to honor?" That's our question this morning. We'll see the answer to this question as the story unfolds in three acts. Let's read beginning with Esther 5:1:

¹ On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace.

Now, we know that at break of dawn the King of Heaven is famous for doing mighty things, but Esther doesn't know what God is going to do right now. She doesn't have any promise of personal protection or deliverance. She is choosing to identify herself with the people of God and knows that doing this could cost her her life. That's why she said in Esther 4:16, "*If I perish, I perish.*"

At this point, after fasting and not drinking anything for three days, her face and body are showing the effects. She's coming in weariness and weakness. She's embracing her vulnerability, but she's also showing courage. She's coming in the dignity of her royal position and wearing her royal robes. Everything hinges on what will happen next. Will the king extend his royal scepter? Will she be given access to draw near his throne? And will it be a throne of grace or a throne of judgment? Will she find favor in the eyes of the king?

² And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

One commentator wrote, "What do we see here? We see a gracious act from a sovereign king who holds absolute power over life and death." Where would we be if it were not for a gracious King showing mercy to us when He had life-and-death power over us? Where would we be if He had not extended His cross-shaped scepter to the world while we were lost in our sin? Praise God that He has beckoned us to draw near. He has given us access and His throne is a throne of grace. Let's continue reading:

³ And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." ⁴ And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king." ⁵ Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. ⁶ And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, "What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ⁷ Then Esther answered, "My wish and my request is: ⁸ If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

Another feast. She's waiting another day. Now, realize that in the first four chapters of Esther, we're looking at a time span of nine years for all that to happen. The three chapters we're looking at today are going to happen in just two days. The narrator is slowing down the pace remarkably and, in doing so, he's showing us how God's plan unfolds. What does the hymn writer say? "His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour. The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet

will be the flower.”¹ When we understand how God works, we won’t feel the need to rush things along. Sometimes situations call for immediate action, but often it wouldn’t hurt if we slow down, take time to reflect and wait for God to do what only God can do, because God can get more done in two days than we can in 20 years.

Esther is being very deliberate here. She’s learning to wait upon the Lord and seeing that hope will rise as stars appear when day is dimming². She’s calmed and quieted her soul. Even though winds of change may rage tomorrow, she no longer dreads the fires of unexpected sorrow³. God is molding her into a woman of tremendous courage, faith and wisdom. Meanwhile, the villain of this story is seething with a pride that cannot be satisfied. Look at verse nine:

⁹ And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai.

Friends, this is how pride ravages the heart of a human being. It doesn’t matter how much you have, it doesn’t matter what privileges you’ve been given, pride robs the heart of joy because it cannot be satisfied with anything, as long as someone else has something your heart craves. What does Haman’s heart crave? He craves praise, adulation, the approval of people and respect. Haman’s heart craves these things, but Mordecai is someone who refuses to show respect where respect is not due. This enrages Haman. Mordecai is withholding the one thing his heart most craves: glory and honor, praise and esteem from men.

As you see this, just think about how insidious pride is. One moment you can be happy and in high spirits, then the next moment you’re filled with rage. You can never just enjoy what God has given you. You can never rest and relax in the gifts you’ve received. You can never pour yourself fully into what you’re doing or invest your attention on anything or anyone else, because you’re all wrapped up in yourself. That’s what pride does.

Here’s a great definition of pride by C.S. Lewis: “Pride is ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration on the self.” Boom. That’s it. That’s pride. Pride is self-absorption, where everything is about you. On the other hand, says Lewis, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.” That’s a great definition, but it’s impossible to do apart from grace.

Tim Keller talks about pride’s “endless ego calculation.” A prideful person is always adding things up. “Am I getting the thanks I deserve? Am I being appreciated? How am I being regarded

¹ God Moves in a Mysterious Way by William Cowper; 1731-1800

² Words adapted from “Still, My Soul be Still” by Keith & Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend, 2009

³ Ibid

right now? How am I looking? Everything is about me, myself and I. So what are people thinking about me right now? How do they view me?”

Haman can't do it. Haman's heart is controlled by pride. It's devoid of humility. It's so bad he can't even talk to his friends and his wife without boasting in himself. Look at verse ten: *“Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home...”* He's filled with this rage, but he's also filled with excitement about what has just been done. He gets to go to this feast tomorrow.

So he sends for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Verse 11: *“And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches [and] the number of his sons...”* Seriously? He's boasting about how many sons he has to his wife? Didn't she have anything to do with bringing these sons into the world? I think she knows about all his riches and all his sons. But he can't stop boasting.

¹¹ And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king. ¹² Then Haman said, “Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. ¹³ Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.”

Hear me, friends. It doesn't matter how much you have. Pride will always demand more. Pride will eviscerate your enjoyment of the gifts God has given, because—as Lewis said—pride is spiritual cancer. It eats up the very possibility of love or contentment or even common sense. Lewis also said, “Pride is like bad breath. Everyone knows you have it except you.” You just wonder if Haman's wife Zeresh and his friends had had their fill of Haman's halitosis at this point.

Look at verse 14:

¹⁴ Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

More accurately, this “gallows” was a stake about 75 feet tall. Haman wanted Mordecai to be impaled on this pole. For some reason, this thought made Haman joyful. He thought, “Brilliant! We'll get this guy killed and he will be up there so high that everyone in the city can see him hanging up there dead.” Haman was so excited. The contrast here between boldness and brazenness couldn't be painted any more clearly than the author does in this chapter.

Act Two: A Royal Insomniac

This leads us to the pivot point of the whole book of Esther, which is in the next chapter. Let's read beginning in Esther 6:1: *"On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king."* This is it. This is the defining moment in the whole book of Esther. It's the turning point.

Literary studies have shown how the author of Esther meticulously crafted this narrative so that everything hinges on Esther 6:1. It's not in some supernatural display of power. It's not in some incredible act of human valor. No, it's right here in the sleepless night of the king. This is the turning point of the whole narrative, written in such a way as to make us think, "What a coincidence." But think again.

Haven't we been seeing coincidence after coincidence in this book? Vashti is deposed, then a young and beautiful Jewess named Esther rises to the throne. What a coincidence. Then Mordecai overhears a plot to assassinate the king. He tells the queen, she tells the king and gives credit to Mordecai—and it's written in the annals of the king's chronicles. What a coincidence. Then the king forgets about it and instead of rewarding Mordecai, he honors Haman the Agagite instead. An Agagite is from the tribe of Amalek, the ancient enemy of the Jews. God had commanded king Saul to destroy the people of Amalek hundreds of years earlier, but he failed to do it. What a coincidence that here in Persia is an Agagite, an ancient enemy of God's people.

So everyone is commanded to bow down and pay homage to Haman, but Mordecai refuses. Haman is enraged and when he finds out Mordecai is a Jew, he manipulates the king into issuing a royal decree that requires every Jew in 127 provinces to be annihilated. What a coincidence.

Then in chapter four, Mordecai pleads with Esther to intercede on behalf of her people. In Esther 4:14 he says, *"...who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* In other words, "Esther, maybe it's not so much of a coincidence after all. Maybe there's a plan here. Maybe there's a design." So the queen intercedes, the king looks on her with favor, she invites the king and Haman to a banquet—and then another banquet.

In the meantime, Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman again, so Haman is enraged and commands that these gallows be made in order to impale Mordecai on it. Is this a coincidence? I can imagine that night Haman is tossing and turning through the night in ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration on himself. And the construction crew is outside sawing and hammering and nailing away. Haman can't sleep. All he can think about is what is he going to do in the morning when he sees the king? How is he going to arrange the execution of Mordecai?

Wouldn't you know that very same night, the king also could not sleep. What a coincidence. So the king, with all the options for entertainment at his disposal, instead says, "Come, attendants,

and read me the book of the chronicles of my reign.” This is like asking someone to read you the phone book. I realize half the congregation doesn’t know what a phone book is, but you get the point anyway.

As they read through this mind-numbing record of Persian trivia, Esther 6:2 continues, *“And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.”* What a coincidence that he remembers this on this very night. No ancient king would let a noble deed like this go unrewarded. So the king asks what has been done for Mordecai.

³And the king said, “What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?” The king’s young men who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.” ⁴And the king said, “Who is in the court?”...

Everyone responds, “Hey man, there he is!” What a coincidence. Haman is in the court. “Bring him in,” the king orders. And when Haman enters, the king asks him in verse six, *“...What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?...”* There’s the question of the day: what should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Of course, as Haman thinks about this question, he can’t imagine anyone—from India to Kazakhstan to Greece to Eritrea—who fits that description better than himself. Verse six continues, *“And Haman said to himself, ‘Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?’”*

What does Proverbs 18:12 (CSB) say? *“Before his downfall, a person’s heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.”* Haman is craving the recognition of the most important person in the empire. He wants everyone to know, “The king loves me. The king honors me; I mean the world to this king.” So he asks the equivalent of being flown around on Air Force One and having “Hail to the chief” played for you upon landing. That’s what he’s asking for in verse seven:

⁷And Haman said to the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor, ⁸let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. ⁹And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king’s most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.’” ¹⁰Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew.”

The gall of it! What a coincidence! Or not. Sometimes we're looking for miracles, for God to do something extraordinary, something supernatural, to intervene in our lives. Maybe we feel overwhelmed with affliction or numb with boredom or assailed with temptation or assaulted by evil. We want God to step in, summon His power, bare His arm and do something that will make the earth shake—something very significant.

But Esther is reminding us in chapter six that He's the God Who is working through a sleepless night. He's the God Who's orchestrating the rise and fall of kings and leaders. He's the God Who is watching while good deeds go unrewarded. He's the God Who will insure that in His Kingdom, not a cup of cold water that has been given in His name will be left without a reward. He's an extraordinary God, for sure.

He is extraordinary, but He's also the God of the ordinary. He's the God Who, through all the common events of our lives, is weaving out His purpose. He doesn't rely on miracles to get His work done. He's so great, so powerful, He can fulfill His plans and promises without a miracle, by weaving together ordinary events in billions of human lives through thousands of years, accomplishing His purposes. He's the God of providence.

What do we mean by that? Look at what the Heidelberg Catechism says about providence.

Question 27: What do you understand by the providence of God?

Answer: God's providence is His almighty and ever-present power whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty—indeed, all things—come to us, not by chance, but by His Fatherly hand.

Isn't that beautiful? The little and the great, the leaf and the blade, the rain and the drought, the food that we eat and the water we drink, the health and the sickness—all of these things come to us, not by chance, but by His Fatherly hand.

So the next question in the Heidelberg Catechism asks: "What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?" Here are the benefits of really taking this doctrine to heart:

Answer: We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love; for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move.

Wow! "All creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move." That's true of Ahasuerus and Haman. That's true for Trump and Trudeau. That's

true for rich and poor, young and old, the mighty and the weak. God’s providence rules over all, weaving the most ordinary events of our lives into a grand tapestry. When it’s all done, we will look at it and see that all His promises have been yes and amen in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20). He’s fulfilled every one of them.

A poet described it like this: “Death to life, a sleepless night, the serpent and seed of woman fight. Haman rises to destroy, lest there be born a little Boy. The plan is hatched, deed almost done, yet intervenes the Sovereign One.” That’s what’s happening here in Esther 6. The Sovereign One Who gives sleep to those He loves can also withhold sleep from those He’s chastising. He Who never sleeps or slumbers brings death to life through a king’s sleepless night.

Act Three: A Stunning Reversal

This all leads to Act Three, which is a most stunning reversal that starts in Esther 6:11. The God of great reversals is rerouting the traffic of Persian history and accelerating the course of salvation history. He’s making a way for His salvation to move forward in human history. In just 400 years, the Messiah, the Deliverer of God’s people, is going to be born.

¹¹ So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.”

Haman is appalled that he has to do this to Mordecai! He’s looking up there thinking, “I should be on that high horse and you should be down here licking my feet. You should be the one heading to the gallows. That’s what should be happening to you.” There’s a lot of scurrying around in verse 11, showing us that Haman is not in control.

Someone has compared this to being at the top of a water slide. Maybe you’ve gone to the top of a water slide that’s really high—some of you kids can see this in your mind. After you’ve climbed up all the stairs, you look down and think, “Wow, that’s a long way down.” Then it’s your turn and you very cautiously sit down. I used to put my feet out, like brakes on the side of the slide, thinking, “Should I go? Should I go?” The minute you let those brakes loose, boom, you’re on your way down. You’re going faster and faster and faster, all the way down that slide.

That’s what’s happening here in this story. Haman is going down. Look at verse 12:

¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. ¹³ And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai,

before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.”

Did you hear what she’s saying? “Wait a minute. You are trying to stand against the Jews? Seriously? Are you crazy? Mordecai is one of those people whom God said through the prophet, ‘He who touches you, touches the apple of My eye.’ If you’re trying to go against those people, it’s over, Haman. You’re done. You’re a dead man. You will not overcome him. You will surely fall before him.” That’s exactly what’s happening.

Let’s continue reading at verse 14:

¹⁴ While they were yet talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

⁷ So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther.

² And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.”

³ Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. ⁴ For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.”

Esther has dropped the big bomb. She’s identified herself, “These are my people.” Now the king knows that she’s been as wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove in the way she’s done this. First, notice in verse four, she speaks in the passive voice. “We have been sold,” not, “You sold us, you wicked king.” Just like the prophet Nathan told King David the story that reeled David in, so that David was enraged before he realized the story was about him and his sin, that’s what Esther is doing here.

Second, she appeals to the king’s massive ego and self-interest. She says, “If this was just about us being sold as slaves, I wouldn’t have even bothered you, dear king. Our affliction is nothing compared to your loss.” She’s buttering him up.

Third, she gives a little time for Haman to tremble in his boots. What do you think Haman thinks when she says “my people” and when she repeats the words of that decree exactly as it had been written: “to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated”? I would not want to be in Haman’s shoes right now. He’s finally starting to see what his pride had blinded him to before. He’s been guilty of conspiracy against the queen. And in the process of all of this, Queen Esther is

managing to obey God, where King Saul had failed to obey hundreds of years earlier. God is using an unlikely instrument to bring about the destruction of the Amalekites as He decreed way back in the time of Saul.

Her mission is accomplished—look at verse five: *“Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, ‘Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?’”* Commentators say that in the original language, the words come out in fierce staccato style, like a machine gun firing. While Haman whimpers in terror; she turns her gaze on him and pierces through his wretched soul, saying, *“An adversary and an enemy! This vile Haman!”* He has nowhere to hide. This man, who less than 24 hours earlier was thinking to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor more than me?” now finds himself public enemy number one in Ahasuerus’ empire. What a turn of events. What a reversal of fortunes.

Friends, that’s exactly what happens when you place your hope and trust in the empire of this world. When you look to what this world can provide—honor, security, wealth, power, influence—when we turn to this world for these things, you may find it for a little while, but it will all be stripped away in a heartbeat. Someone has said, “If you marry the world in this age, you’re going to be a widow in the next.” The world will turn on you in an instant.

⁷ And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king.

This was a huge violation of Persian etiquette. He should have left the room, because no man was allowed to stay in the same room with the queen alone. There was another rule that if any man came into contact with the king’s harem, he was to keep at least a seven-foot distance between himself and the harem. But Haman can’t go anywhere else. So he just starts thrashing around, desperately pleading for his life.

Look what happens in verse eight: *“And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was.”* Ooh, not a good position to be in. Now, it is unimaginable that Haman is actually trying to sexually assault the queen. He could be just floundering out of control, landing on her couch at just the wrong time. In fact, one ancient Jewish Targum suggests that at this very point the Angel Gabriel gave Haman a little shove, just to help him out a little.

That is when the king comes in. Now the king doesn’t need to worry about the irrevocable laws of the Medes and the Persians, because he has another capital offense he can bring against Haman. “He’s trying to take my wife from me!” So the king is off the hook.

And the king said, “Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?” As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman’s face. ⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, “Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman’s house, fifty cubits high.”

I can imagine Haman thinking under that mask, “Thanks very much, Harbona, for that untimely tidbit of information. Why did you have to say that?”

And the king said, “Hang him on that.” ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.

Not only is Haman put to death by the king, but he’s put to death on the gallows he himself had built. Or in the words of Shakespeare, he’s “hoist with his own petard.” He’s blown up by his own bomb. That’s what pride does. It does everything you’re grasping to achieve, robbing you from enjoying what you actually have. A prideful person never fails to self-destruct. Not only has Haman lost all his wealth, influence, power and all his family, along with his very life and soul, he also has to give all of what he had to Mordecai and Queen Esther.

Let’s look at Esther 8:1-2:

On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. ² And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

It’s a complete reversal of fortune and a perfect archetype of the story of redemption that runs through the whole Bible. Jess Ray wrote a song for the persecuted Christians in Iran today. What’s Iran? The modern Persian Empire. I find this fascinating. I find this hope-giving. Do you know that the fastest-growing church in the world today is in Persia—in Iran? Women especially are coming to faith in Christ in Iran at exponential rates. This is a country where it’s impossible to go from a girl to a woman without experiencing sexual assault. The women in this country are treated brutally. But through the working of the Holy Spirit, they are coming to faith in Jesus in huge numbers—and so are some of their abusers.

There’s a documentary that just came out a couple months ago. Fox and Friends interviewed the makers of this documentary a month or so ago. I encourage you to watch it. It’s called “Sheep Among Wolves, Volume 2.” You can find it on YouTube. This documentary shows

that in this nation, whose political leaders are the arch-rivals of Israel who are right now trying to figure out how they can annihilate the Jewish people. It's exactly what the leaders of Iran are thinking about and building missiles to do. This documentary shows how God, in His sovereign grace, is saving tens of thousands of Muslim-born believers in Iran. In fact, the estimate is that there are hundreds of thousands of believers now, followers of Israel's Messiah, in Iran.

They interviewed these believers in the film, with their voices masked so their identity can be concealed. They see themselves as modern-day Esthers. They are thinking, "Before Jesus returns, God is going to do through us what Paul talks about in Romans 11. Through our love for the Jewish people, as they see us coming from a nation who is their arch-rival, the Jews are going to be provoked to jealousy and are going to turn in massive numbers to Christ, their Messiah."

It's a marvelous documentary that I encourage you to watch and hear their cry, "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus." At the end of the documentary, Jess Ray sings the song she wrote. It goes like this:

Someone's on the prowl, trying to take us down
But we ain't giving up now
A liar and a thief, coming after you and me
But we ain't giving up now
The harder the wind will blow, the deeper our roots will go,
And the devil's gonna hang, oh the devil is gonna hang,
The devil is gonna hang from his own gallows

[From "Gallows" by Jess Ray]

That is a profound statement. That is exactly what this story is about. If you belong to Jesus Christ, this is the story you're in. You belong to a King Who came into the devil's territory in great weakness, vulnerability, poverty and humility, accomplishing His work in a way no one would have expected. Look at how Augustine put it:

The devil was exultant when Christ died, and by that very death of Christ was the devil conquered. It's as though he took the bait in a mouse trap. He was delighted at the death as being the commander of death. What he delighted in—that's where the trap was set for him. The mouse trap for the devil was the cross of the Lord. The bait he would be caught by, the death of the Lord. And our Lord Jesus Christ rose again. Where now is the death that hung on the cross?

So when you feel as though evil is triumphing, don't lose heart. Remember the story you're in. History hinges on the cross of Jesus Christ. God is going to send deliverance. Jesus is coming again. We don't know how or when, but it will take many by surprise. He's going to come, and when He does, the devil is going to hang on his own gallows. That's the story we're in, friends. So

take heart. Whom does the King delight to honor? He delights to honor His Son, Who humbled Himself, became a Servant and was obedient to the point of death on the cross. And He delights to honor all those who identify themselves with the Son.

If you exalt yourself and reject the Lordship of Jesus, you will be humbled. But if you humble yourself and crown Him as Lord, worship Him and give Him the honor due Him, you will be exalted with Him in glory. You will be glorified with Jesus when He comes and is admired among all His saints.

We live in a world that doesn't always look like God's enemies get God's judgment. But this story assures us they will. But it doesn't have to end that way for you. Haman's fate doesn't have to be your fate. You don't have to remain being a Haman. You don't have to die an enemy of God. It all starts with confessing your pride. Pride is like carbon monoxide poisoning; it's the silent killer. You can't see it, you can't smell it, but it's killing you. But the gospel is the alarm that goes off, saying, "Repent of your pride. Stop thinking you're the most important person in the universe and that everything is about you. Lift your eyes to the One Whom the King delights to honor. Give Him praise and glory." When you bow your knee to Him and say, "Jesus, You are my King, You are my Lord,' God will glorify you along with Jesus.

I heard Tim Keller say something like this. The problem with Haman was not that he wanted the wrong thing. He wanted to be honored by the king. That's what we all want. We all want the most powerful being in the universe to say, "I love you. I honor you. You are mine." The problem wasn't that he wanted the wrong thing. The problem was that he was seeking it from the wrong king. When you look to Jesus, lift Him high and crown Him as your Lord, God says, "I will exalt you and honor you with Him." Then you will live in His Kingdom that is forever and experience with Him glory and honor and immortality.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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