

Sermon Title: **Esther, a Woman of Opportunity**

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Scripture Reference: **Esther 2:19-23**

Thesis: **Esther was obedient to her Uncle who raised her and went into the King's harem which eventually put her in a position of influence that would one day save her people;**

Purpose: **Esther's submission and sacrifice is a good example of what it takes to become a Christian where God might use you.**

Key Word: "God's Guidance"

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Esther 2:19-23**

A) The Setting:

- 1) **Last week we concluded our study of Ruth as we are looking at Women of the Bible this summer.**
 - (a) Ruth's story took place before Israel was ruled by a king but became the Great - Grandmother of Israel's greatest king . . . David.
 - (b) This week we begin a look at Esther.
- 2) **Esther's story comes a number of years later after Israel's kings had been defeated and Daniel was taken to Babylon for 70 years of captivity.**
 - (a) The Medes and Persians now ruled the land and Ezra and Nehemiah have lead many of the Israelites back to rebuild Jerusalem.
 - (b) But there are still many who lived as part of the Babylonian empire for more than 70 years who decided to stay with their families where they were.
- 3) **If you looked at a map of the Middle East**
 - (a) Traveling southeast from Bagdad about 160 miles from Babylon;
 - (b) Here at the base of Zagros Mountains you would find the capital city for Persia . . . Susa.
 - (c) Today, you would find the remains of Susa in Iran.
- 4) **Daniel was taken here after Persia conquered Babylon along with many other Jews.**
 - (a) This is the time now after Daniel where many of the Jews are living as peasants.
 - (b) **Like Daniel, Esther has two names.**
 - (i) She has a Hebrew name which is Hadassah.
 - (ii) The name Esther is believed to have been her Babylonian given name deriving from the Babylonian deity, Ishtar.
- 5) **Some interesting facts on comparisons between Ruth and Esther.**
 - (a) Ruth was a Gentile woman - **Esther** was a Jewish woman
 - (b) Ruth lived among the Jews - **Esther** lived among the Gentiles
 - (c) Ruth married a Jewish man in the royal line of David.
 - (d) **Esther** married a Gentile King who ruled an empire.
 - (e) Both are stories of faith and blessings.
- 6) **Now before we get to our scripture we need to cover quite a bit of background today in order to catch up.**
 - (a) In chapter one the ruling Persian King Ahasuerus is throwing a 7-day party in the palace for all the men of Susa.
 - (b) At the same time, his wife Queen Vashti was entertaining the women.
- 7) **At the men's party the wine was flowing freely.**
 - (a) On the last day of the party when the king was merry with wine he summoned Queen Vashti to come in before the men for he wished to show off her great beauty.
 - (b) However, she flatly refused.
- 8) **While facing this embarrassment of being disobeyed;**
 - (a) The king's wise men pointed out that the King must make an example of her;
 - (b) Lest all the wives start disobeying and thus disrespecting their husbands.
 - (c) Therefore, the King banished her and took the advice of his wise men to begin the search for a new queen.
- 9) **The word went out and the most beautiful virgins of the empire were brought into the palace.**

- (a) They were to receive beauty treatments and education for one year.
 - (b) At the end of this time they would join the already massive harem for the king.
 - (c) The chief Enoch would select a girl one at a time to spend the night with the king.
 - (d) In the morning, the girl would be returned to the harem never to see the king again unless he specifically requested them by name.
- 10) **Esther's parents had died and she was raised by her Uncle Mordecai.**
- (a) Mordecai entered Esther into the running for the Queen for she was a beautiful young girl
 - (b) He also advised her to say nothing about her heritage of being a Jew.
- 11) **Now, I can only speculate as to why her uncle would want Esther to be given to this Gentile King.**
- (a) At worst, she would live a life of seclusion and protection within the king's harem.
 - (b) Perhaps this was Mordecai way to ensure that Esther would be taken care of after he was gone.
 - (c) After all, Esther would receive the best food and live in the best of luxurious living that was available.
 - (d) At best, she would become Queen and be in a position of great influence.
- 12) **When Esther's turn came to spend the night with the king he decided that she was the one.**
- (a) The King threw another party in her honor and declared her the queen.
 - (b) This brings us to the point of our story where we will pick up with our scripture reading for today in **Esther 2:19-23**.

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **Does God care for His people?**
- (a) Maybe you are going through a tough time right now and you are asking where is God?
 - (b) Maybe it is a financial crisis or health or personal issue; whatever it is that you are facing I am here to tell you that if you are God's child, then God has not left you.
- 2) **I see God at work all the time.**
- (a) Sometimes it is meeting a need that I have; but more often than not I see God helping others; sometimes it is even you.
 - (b) God's Word tells us that "**God will never leave you or forsake you**"
 - (c) A quick check of that phrase will bring up more than a dozen verses where God has given this promise.
- 3) **Why do you think it is such a common theme in the Bible?**
- (a) Could it be because when we face the first little bit of trouble we cry out like little children . . .
 - (b) "**GOD, WHERE ARE YOU?**"
- 4) **I think it is interesting to point out that God is not listed by name in this entire book of Esther.**
- (a) And yet, the major theme for this book demonstrates God's control and care for His people.
 - (b) God presence is unmistakable when we read this story.
 - (c) Paul's words to the Romans that we used as our call to worship could not ring truer.
 - (d) **Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."**
- 5) **Esther did not do anything other than submit herself to obey her Uncle and God to do as instructed.**
- (a) It was God that raised Esther up to this position of influence.
 - (b) And now we see that God is once again going to raise that influence.
- 6) **As we study this book, don't miss God's presence or divine hand orchestrating the events.**

- (a) Esther is a Woman of Opportunity . . . but, it is God that is providing that opportunity.
- (b) We can learn about ourselves and our own opportunities that God will bring our way and how we should respond.

TS: **So the first thing I want us to see here is that . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Esther Obeyed Her Father Figure.**

- 1) **In other words, Esther submitted herself to the will of her Uncle Mordecai.**
 - (a) Mordecai had raised her and she obviously trusted and respected him.
 - (b) If our children respect us, they are more likely to listen and take the advice we give them.
- 2) **The first step in growing into a genuine relationship with the Living Lord is a willingness to submit our will for God's.**
 - (a) When we trust God, and put Him in charge;
 - (b) God promises not to let us down.
- 3) **I am not for a minute saying that it will be easy or that God will make life into a bowl of cherries.**
 - (a) Often times, just the opposite is true for God knows that we come with a lot of baggage that needs to be gone through and cleaned up.
 - (b) And as we can take it; God will patiently begin the process of transforming us into kingdom citizens

TS: **The next thing we need to see is that . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **God Orchestrates the Events**

- 1) **God said that it was HE that put it in the heart of the Babylonian King to invade Israel.**
 - (a) **Daniel 1:2** says "**God delivered Israel into the hands of the Babylonians.**"
 - (b) God delivered Israel from the clutches Egypt, of the most powerful nation in the world at that time.
 - (c) **Romans 13:1** teaches us that, "**...there is no authority except that which God has established.**"
 - (d) God's Word said that at the appropriate time He would gather the nation of Israel back to their homeland and we are witnessing that in our life time.
- 2) **So, we need to trust and believe that God is orchestrating our lives as well.**
 - (a) When we trust in the Lord and acknowledge Him, God promises to direct our paths.
 - (b) It starts with showing that we have the faith to trust him and submit to his leading.
- 3) Esther was not able to leave the palace unless with the King but she continued to communicate with her uncle through the head Enoch.

TS: **This practice leads to an opportunity as. . .**

C) Key Point #3: **Mordecai Saves the King**

- 1) **Have you ever been where people act as though you are not even there when they are carrying on their conversation?**
 - (a) Or sometimes people just believe that everyone believes that we all have the same thoughts and belief so they are willing to share their political comments.
 - (b) Sometimes, they will even make threats against someone they don't like.
- 2) **We had a State Representative just this week who got a visit from the Secret Service because he made some vague threats against the President in an email to a friend and they became public.**
 - (a) He got stripped of his committees in sanctions posed by his own party.

- (b) He had to apologize and answer for his off-handed comments amid cries for his resignation.
- 3) **Well, Uncle Mordecai would hang around the gate of the king to hear from Esther and send word back to her.**
- (a) He was a regular and one day while sitting out by the gate a couple of the king's officials came out obviously very mad at the king.
- (b) So mad, that they talked about how to assassinate the king in the presence of Mordecai.
- (c) They paid no attention to this peasant sitting at the gate.
- (d) Who is he that he could tell the king and besides, they probably assumed that he hated the king as well.
- (e) They would be doing a public service.
- 4) **With this information, Mordecai would pass it on to the king through Esther.**
- (a) This would not only deepen the king's affection and trust for Esther;
- (b) But, it would also increase her influence with the King in the future.
- 5) **One of the toughest jobs I had was when I was the training officer for the Bangor Fire Department.**
- (a) I was hired as an outsider because no one wanted the job.
- (b) They did not want to do any more training than they absolutely had to and did not think they needed it.
- (c) There were a great number of this 110-man department that were out to see me fail.
- (d) In fact, some were conspiring to see me fail.
- 6) **What they did not know is that God was on my side.**
- (a) I had submitted my life to God and told God I would do my best for HIM!
- (b) Over the few years I served as their training officer I was put to the test many times.
- (c) I had to trust God every day for guidance just to go into work.
- 7) **Time and time again, I would see a trap that had been set for me and either somehow, I was warned and was therefore ready for it;**
- (a) Or, God just saw to it that it backfired on the individuals working for my downfall.
- (b) This was a great time of testing in my life; but it was also one of the most rewarding times in my life where I learned a lot about trusting God on a daily basis.

TS: **So, in summing up our lesson for today, what have we learned so far?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **If you are His child, God cares for you!**

- 1) He is directing your life and your place in life.
- 2) If we want to maximize our effectiveness for God and grow in our relationship with God then we need to be willing to submit our will for His will.
- 3) God knows what is best; what we need to grow to bring glory to Him . . . but it begins with our submitting to Him!

B) **Esther was a woman of opportunity because she trusted her Uncle and God to take care of her.**

- 1) When we walk with God there is an inner beauty that comes from God.
- 2) A glow, if you will, as we reflect His presence in our lives.
- 3) I hope you have God's presence in your life; if not, why not ask God right now?
- 4) Maybe you have been fighting God for control; if so, just give it over to him and let Him direct your path.
- 5) I pray you will take advantage of the opportunity you have to walk on a daily basis with God.

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**