

Meeting at the Well

Every so often in Scripture, God meets people at ordinary places and turns those moments into holy ground. In John 4, Jesus sits down by a well in Samaria – tired, thirsty, and alone. It is midday, the heat of the day, and a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Their conversation begins with something simple, “Will you give Me a drink?” (Jn. 4:7). Yet within a few verses, that ordinary request becomes an invitation to transformation. Jesus speaks of “living water,” (verse 10), water that quenches a deeper thirst and wells up to eternal life.

That meeting at the well is a moment of decision. The woman must decide whether she will cling to what she already knows – her jar, her routine, her past – or whether she will receive the living water Jesus alone offers. She must decide whether to remain defined by her history or step into a new future shaped by grace.

Scripture is full of these moments. Sometimes they are quiet and personal – like a conversation at a well. Other times they are public, costly, and dangerous. Today we’re thinking about one of those moments. A moment of decision faced by two faithful people, who to this point in their stories, were flying under the radar – Mordecai and Esther.

Their story, found in *Esther 2:19-4:14*, show us how God calls ordinary people to courageous faith. And when we place their story alongside Paul’s words in *Ephesians 6:13-17*, we see that these moments of decision are spiritual battles that require us to be clothed in the armor of God. **Read Ephesians 6:13-17.**

Standing Firm on the Day of Evil

The Apostle Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus, urging believers to be ready for the spiritual struggle that comes with following Christ. He says, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand,” (Eph. 6:13). Paul doesn’t promise that believers will avoid hardship. Instead, he promises that God provides what we need to stand firm when the hardship comes.

The armor Paul describes – the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit aren’t decorations. It’s all protective gear, with the exception of the sword. What does he say the sword is? It’s the word of God. The Bible. They’re necessities for moments of decision. Living as a person of faith in a faithless world requires courage and acts of resistance. We have to be armed with the truth – the word of God – so we aren’t tossed about on our human whims.

A moment of decision is often what Paul calls “the day of evil.” It’s not necessarily a day filled with obvious evil, but a day when fear, compromise, or silence would be easier than faithfulness. It’s a day when we must choose whether to act in trust or retreat in self-preservation. Mordecai and Esther faced such a day.

Esther’s New Life and Hidden Identity

By the time we encounter Esther in Chapter 2 of her book, her life has already changed dramatically. She is a young Jewish woman living in exile, raised by her cousin Mordecai after the death of her parents. Through circumstances beyond her control, she is taken into the king’s palace and eventually becomes Queen of Persia. Yet even in this new position, Esther lives cautiously.

She has to. She’s acutely aware that she’s a trophy wife. Everyone in Persia knows what happened to Vashti, the Persian Queen before her. Mordecai instructs her not to reveal her Jewish identity, and she obeys. Esther adapts to her environment, learns the palace customs, receives beauty treatments, and lives under royal authority. At this stage of the story, Esther survives by blending in.

So does Mordecai. He occupies a quiet, but faithful role. “During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes,” (Esther 2:21). Mordecai reports it to Queen Esther, who then tells the king, giving Mordecai credit. “And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king,” (Est. 2:23).

At this point, Mordecai and Esther are faithful, but largely hidden. Janice talked last week about them being “Cozy in the Culture.” They surely were. They were doing good quietly. They were content to live within the system. They trust God, but they’ve not yet been called to risk anything. That moment is coming.

Haman’s Threat and Mordecai’s Decision

Enter Haman, a powerful official – basically the vice-king of Persia – who demands honor and obedience. When Mordecai refuses to bow, the conflict escalates quickly. Haman’s pride turns personal offense into genocidal rage. He plots not only to punish Mordecai, but to destroy everyone like him. Everyone who is a Jew.

When Mordecai learns of the decree, his response is immediate and visible. He tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth and ashes, and cries out loudly in the city. This is more than grief. It is protest. It is prayer. And it’s a public witness – a very public display by a high-ranking official – of his faith in God.

Here we see a change in Mordecai. Earlier, he worked quietly behind the scenes. Now, he refuses to remain silent. Mordecai understands that this threat cannot be managed discreetly. This is a moment of decision. The time to determine to resist temptation is before it strikes, and Mordecai has already settled in his heart Whom he would serve.

In terms of Ephesians 6, Mordecai is standing firm with belt of truth fastened around his waist. He will not bow to a lie – even when the cost is high. His faithfulness exposes injustice. His faithfulness also makes him a target.

Esther – Moving From Safety to Calling

When Esther hears of Mordecai's distress her first response is concern but also caution. She sends him clothes to wear, to replace his sackcloth. She tries to manage the situation without fully entering into it. Oftentimes, this is what the Church does – especially here in America. We try to put a band aid over social ills, rather than really getting into the root cause and advocating for systemic change that benefits all people.

So Mordecai sends word explaining Haman's plot and urging Esther to go to the king. Esther's response reveals the depth of her fear. Approaching the king without being summoned is punishable by death. Esther reminds Mordecai that even she – the Queen – is not exempt from this law.

This is the heart of the moment of decision. Esther has to choose between safety and faithfulness. She must decide whether her position exists for her protection alone, or for God's greater purpose. Paul's words echo here. "Take the helmet of salvation," (Eph. 6:17).

Salvation isn't just about future hope, friends. It's about trusting that our lives are held by the strong, nail-pierced hands of God even when our obedience to Him is dangerous. Esther has to decide whether or not she believes that truth.

For Such a Time as This

Mordecai's response to Esther is one of the most powerful calls to courage in the whole Bible. He says:

Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? (Est. 4:12-14).

Mordecai's words reflect deep faith. He trusts that God will deliver the people one way or another. But he also understands that Esther has been placed where she is for a reason. This moment changes both of them.

Mordecai moves from protector to prophet, speaking truth even when it may cost him everything – including his life. Esther moves from hidden Queen to courageous servant of God. Courage is contagious, and Mordecai's faith awakens Esther's. This is what it means to take up the shield of faith. Faith doesn't deny danger. It trusts God in the face of it. Esther must lift that shield now.

Putting on the Armor – Esther's Transformation

Although Esther 4:14 ends before she acts, we know what follows. Esther calls for fasting and prayer. She prepares herself spiritually before stepping into the king's presence. Her courage is not reckless. It's grounded in dependence on God.

In Ephesians 6, Paul tells us to take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," (verse 17b). Esther doesn't quote Scripture aloud. God isn't even mentioned at all in the book that bears Esther's name. But her actions align with God's covenant promises. She trusts the God who brought Israel out of Egypt and sustained them in exile.

Esther's life changes because she chooses obedience over fear. She moves from passive survival to active faith. She no longer hides her identity. She embraces her calling. What about us? Church, this is your moment. You were made to stand up like Mordecai, to speak up like Esther.

Living Water and Courageous Faith

As we get ready to wrap up, think for a moment about the woman at the well. That woman, like Esther, begins the story cautious and guarded. But after encountering Jesus, she leaves her water jug behind and runs to tell others about Him. She too, steps into a new identity.

Living Water – having the Spirit inside of us – produces courage. When we're filled with what Christ offers, we're no longer defined by fear. We're equipped for moments of decision. The armor of God isn't some theoretical idea. It's what enables ordinary people – queens and gatekeepers, women at wells, and believers today – to stand firm when the moment comes.

There are a lot of things today that require us to have courageous faith. People who don't know Jesus yet are counting on us – the Church – to be visible representatives of Jesus Christ in the world today. When they look at us, do they see people who are cautious and guarded, or do they see people who are bold witnesses for Who they say they believe in and belong to? And Jesus is counting on us, too. To be His hands and feet. To draw people who don't yet know Him into a relationship with Him based on how we show His presence in us through our way of living.

Our Moments of Decision

Recently there's been a lot of violence – killing – going on between ordinary people and ICE agents. I know you've seen it on the news. It's mind-boggling. What happens when ICE comes to Ohio? I've read a little about Renee Good – the lady shot in Minneapolis on January 7. And also Jonathan Ross, the ICE agent who shot her. He said she was trying to run him over with her car, so he shot her. Interesting fact – both of them claimed to be Christians. It's too bad they didn't start by talking about what they had in common – Jesus Christ. Instead, they chose to focus on their different political views.

We may never face a royal decree or a king's throne. But we all face moments when silence would be easier than faithfulness. Moments when speaking truth, showing compassion, or standing for justice feels risky. In those moments, God asks us the same question implied in Mordecai's words, "Who knows? Perhaps you are here for such a time as this!"

Will we take up the armor of God? Will we trust in the living water Christ offers? Will we stand firm? The question isn't, "Will God prevail?" The question is, "Will we be part of His team?"

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for the examples of Mordecai and Esther, for their courage, their faith, and their willingness to change when You called. Clothe us with Your armor, that we may stand firm in the moments of decision You place before us. Fill us with the living water of Christ, that fear may not have the final word. We offer ourselves to You, trusting Your purpose and Your power. Amen.