

Remembering Before We Respond

The Apostle Paul reminds the Church that on the night Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Then He took the cup and said, "As often as you drink it, do this in remembrance of Me," (1 Cor. 11:24-25). Before the cross was fully understood, before the Resurrection was fully grasped, Jesus called His people to remember. We often think of remembering as thinking of "the good old days." We look back sentimentally, and think about how things were.

Remembrance, Biblically speaking, isn't nostalgia. Biblical remembrance is an act of faith that shapes how we're living right now. When we remember what God has done, we gain courage – and encouragement – for what God is going to do in the future. That's exactly what we see in the Book of Esther. God's name is never mentioned in it.

There have been times in Church history, when Esther's book was contentious because of this fact. Many pastors won't preach a whole lot out of it, except that famous line Mordecai says to Esther in the early part of the book, "Who knows? Perhaps you've come to your position for such a time as this," (Esth. 4:14). Throughout Esther's book, we see God's hand everywhere. Her story calls us to remember God's faithfulness in the middle of fear, confusion, and crisis – and to trust that the same God who was faithful then is still faithful today. **Read Esther 4:1-2, 9-16, 9:20-22.**

Remembering God When Crisis Breaks Out

Our Old Testament lesson this morning opens with heartbreak. Mordecai learns of Haman's decree to wipe out the Jewish people. He tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth and ashes, and cries out with a loud and bitter cry. The city of Susa is confused. Fear spreads like wildfire.

This is where most of us live today. We're surrounded by news that overwhelms us, problems that feel too big, and crises that seem relentless. The people of God are not immune to tears, fasting, or questions. Faith doesn't deny pain. Faith brings pain into the presence of God.

Mordecai's response teaches us something important. Before strategy, before solutions, before speeches – there is lament. He refuses to pretend things are fine. And he also refuses to believe that the decree of an earthly king is the final word. In Max Lucado's book, which this sermon series has been based on, he has many truths we need to hear.

Here's one of them. "Your problem is not that your problem is so big but that your view of God is too small."¹ When crisis hits, it shrinks our perspective. It magnifies the threat and minimizes the Lord. Remembering God's faithfulness restores our proper vision.

1 Max Lucado, *You Were Made For This Moment: Courage for Today and Hope for Tomorrow*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2021), page 156.

Remembering Leads to Courageous Obedience

When Esther hears of Mordecai's mourning, she initially responds with caution. She knows the law: anyone who approaches the king uninvited risks death, "unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. [But] Thirty days have passed since [I] was called to go to the king," (Esth. 4:11). Esther's fear is real. The danger is legitimate.

Mordecai sends back words that echo through history. "Relief and deliverance will arise from another place. But who knows whether you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:14). Mordecai remembers God's covenant faithfulness. He knows that God has not preserved His people for hundreds of years to abandon them now. Esther, in turn, moves from fear to faith. We talked about that a few weeks ago. She calls for fasting, aligns herself with her people, and declares, "If I perish, I perish," (verse 16).

This is an example of surrendered obedience. Esther recasts the struggle. She realizes that this moment isn't only a threat – it's a calling. As believers, we have to keep this in mind. We have to start recasting our struggles for what they are – opportunities for God to do again what He does best. You might wonder what that is, so I'll tell you.

He flips stories on their heads, and resurrects life out of death. What looks like the end may be the setup. What feels like defeat may be the doorway to deliverance. A lot of times God works His greatest victories in moments when obedience feels costly. Look at Jesus – the greatest victory of all time was pulled off when He gave His own life in obedience on the cross to redeem us!

Remembering God's Faithfulness Changes the Story

Esther 9 begins with another powerful reversal recorded in Scripture:

On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. 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. The 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, (Esth. 9:1-2).

The gallows Haman had built for Mordecai become the instrument of his own downfall. The people marked for destruction are preserved. Mourning turns into joy. Fear turns into feasting. This isn't accidental. This is the faithfulness of God working behind the scenes, overturning evil and keeping His promises.

Perhaps today's confusion and crisis – whether that's the stuff we see on the news, or things going on in our personal lives – will be tomorrow's conquest. The same God who turned the cross – an instrument of shame – into a symbol of salvation is the God who turns chaos into testimony. By the end of Esther, "Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up

for the welfare of all the Jews,” (Esth. 10:3). See friends, Esther’s story ends not only with survival – but also with flourishing.

Remembering God Through Celebration and Testimony

In our lesson today we read:

Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor, (Esth. 9:20-22).

When Mordecai recorded these events, he wasn’t just documenting history. He was also establishing a rhythm of remembrance. This is the birth of the Jewish celebration of Purim. Purim is a yearly festival commanded so that God’s people who never forget how close they came to destruction – and how completely God turned the story around.

The word Purim comes from the pur – the lot – that Haman cast to determine the day of the Jews’ destruction. What was meant to decide their death became the symbol of their deliverance. Purim is a celebration of divine reversal – the God of Great Turnarounds! It remembers the day when sorrow was turned into joy, mourning into celebration, and fear into victory.

The Jewish people celebrate by reading the Book of Esther aloud, sharing food, giving gifts to the poor, and rejoicing together. Every year, they retell the story – not so they can relive the trauma, but so they can testify to God’s faithfulness. What amazes me about all of it is this: Purim celebrates a God who was never named in the story, and yet He was never absent from it! That’s important for us to take note of. Many of us are living in seasons where God feels silent. We don’t hear His voice clearly. We don’t see His hand obviously. Purim reminds us that silence does not mean absence. And delay doesn’t mean defeat.

This is why remembrance matters. Without it, fear rewrites the story. With it, faith reframes the moment. Purim declares that the darkest plot doesn’t get the final word – Almighty God does. Just as Israel was commanded to remember, so are we. The Lord’s Supper is our Purim moment.

One aspect of the Sacrament of Communion is holy remembrance. We remember the night Jesus was betrayed. We remember the cross. We remember the empty tomb. In the remembering, we proclaim that death doesn’t win. Evil will not prevail. The story has been flipped forever. Purim teaches us to stop fixating on the threat and start trusting the God who reverses outcomes. As Max Lucado says, “Meditate less on the mess and more on the Master. Less on the problems and more

on His power.”² The same God who reversed the decree in Persia is the same God who rolled the stone away in Jerusalem – and He IS still faithful today!

Remembering God in Our Chaos

We’re living in uncertain times. The world is unsteady. Anxiety is common. Division is deep. Many followers of Jesus Christ feel the weight of responsibility, fear, and fatigue. But Scripture reminds us that the world is in desperate need of a people of God who will stay steady in the chaos.

Steadiness doesn’t come from having strong opinions or clever arguments. It’s not about being on the “winning,” or “right” side of things. It comes from a deep memory of God’s faithfulness. A people who remember will not panic easily. A people who remember will pray boldly. A people who remember will act courageously.

And when the weight feels unbearable to us, that is an invitation. Next time you feel the weight of the world, talk to the One who made it. Prayer isn’t a last resort – it should be our first response. Esther fasted and prayed for three days before she ever set foot in the throne room. We must do the same.

The Book of Esther teaches us that God is faithful even when He seems hidden. He is sovereign even when circumstances seem out of control. He is present even when His name is not spoken. So remember. Remember the cross. And the empty tomb. Remember the reversals God has already accomplished in your life. And trust! The same God is still writing the story!

Prayer: Faithful God, Thank You for being the same yesterday, today, and forever. When we’re fearful, remind us of Your power. When we’re weary, remind us of Your presence. When we’re confused, remind us of Your faithfulness. Help us to remember what You have done so that we may trust You for what You are still doing, and will do. In Jesus’ name. Amen.