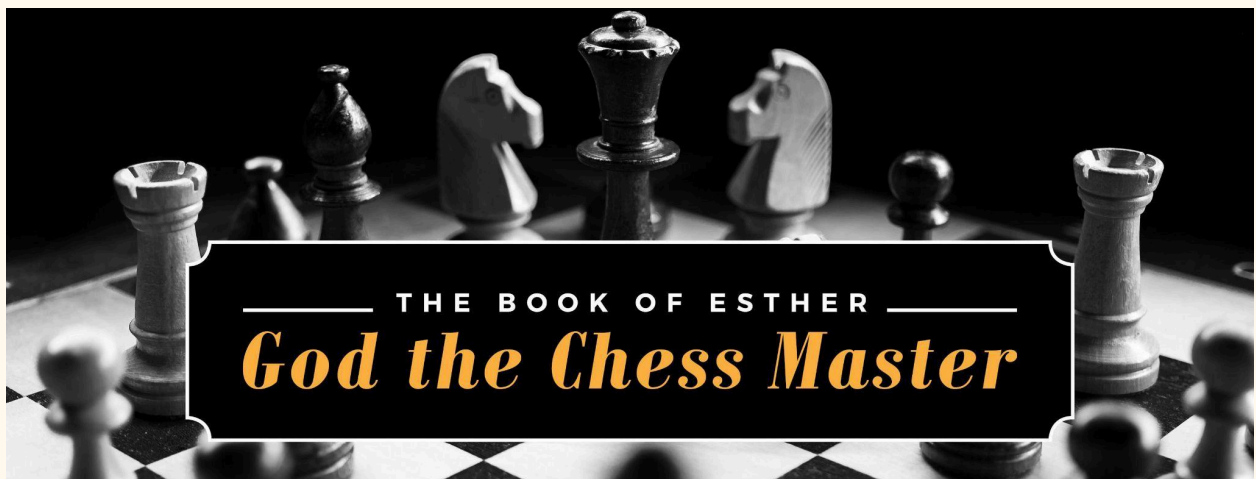

Ignite

"Heavenly Father, thank You for the amazing book of Esther and the wonderful way we see God's plans and purposes being quietly carried out through everyday circumstances, in order to forward Your sovereign will for the redemption of the world and the return of Christ to set up His eternal kingdom on earth. Thank You that there is nothing that can prevent Your eternal purposes from being fulfilled. We pray that we may die to our own desires and live for Your greater glory, and that by Your grace You would use us in the place in which we have been planted. This we ask in Jesus' name, AMEN."





SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

The Book of Esther : God the Chess Master

Checkmate!

Senior Pastor Chris Kam

Esther 9:20-23

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. So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them.

Introduction

Sometimes it is very tempting to take the easier way out, especially when you see others moving ahead of you in terms of position, power and money. Worse still when the people around you tell you that you are stupid and lacking the will to do what it takes to get ahead, despite all your efforts to do things the right way. Take heart that you are not the first to be scrutinized in this way. Moreover, be encouraged that the efforts to remain on the righteous path is ultimately not in vain.

The nation of Israel and Judah committed many wrongs resulting in the exile to the Babylonians and Persians. Yet because some chose to live righteously and set apart for God, they rose up to positions of power and made it possible for the Jews to return to their land. Some chose to return to the land they were exiled from, but others chose to live among Gentiles as they have grown accustomed to life there. More importantly the Jews no longer lived as their Gentile neighbours do, but lived as distinguished people who do not worship idols of wood and stone. They may be physically away from Jerusalem, but God's presence remains in their hearts.

Today we are reminded that we are still within His divine narrative. Revelations 21-22 can be summed up as "God wins! Jesus wins! We win!" Take it as encouragement to live well and live right.

Big Idea: God is present and at work in your life, even if you don't realise it.

1. Salvation is Secured *Esther 8:1-17*

In Esther 3, Haman wrote an edict in King Xerxes's name and seal to all of the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews. After Haman's execution, King Xerxes gave Mordecai a chance to write another edict to neutralize Haman's edict (The edict written by Haman cannot be cancelled as no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked under the law.)

The king's edict written by Mordecai granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men who might attack them and to plunder the property of their enemies. The Jews received the edict with joy and gladness. Many of the common people of other races and nationalities across the provinces recognized that the God of Jews were protecting them, and chose to become Jews themselves.

2. Salvation is Fulfilled *Esther 9:1-18*

On the designated day of annihilation, the Jews congregated to protect themselves from those who hated them enough to act on edict from Haman's hand. The Jews were able to kill their enemies while protecting themselves, their families and their property.

3. Salvation is Celebrated *Esther 9:19-32*

Mordecai and Queen Esther designated a two-day holiday to commemorate the salvation from genocide. The holiday was to be celebrated by observing the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the

poor. Even today, the Jews celebrate with feasts, costumes and a special cookie called *hamantaschen* (Haman's ears).

There are 3 lessons here. We can see Christ in this story.

1. Our Calling: Living as God's Holy People *Esther 3:8*

We are to live distinctly, being Christ's representatives and being a taste of Heaven to those on earth. Looking to Mordecai who was finally rewarded and given the chance to pen an edict to save his people, we are to live knowing that there is power in living humbly. We are to become a symbol of hope. Our focus of celebration is on good works to others and not publicity.

2. Our Vindication: Living in the light of Christ's Return *Esther 4:14, Psalm 37:1-4, Hebrews 4:13*

The Jews were granted the right to protect themselves and plunder their enemies, however they chose to only retaliate against those who attacked them and not plunder. In a similar manner, even as we see many injustices in the world around us today, we are to continue to do good and not be tempted by the ways of the world. Indeed, life could be much easier by unrighteous means, but at the end of the day we still need to give an account of our lives to God. When life has us in a darker place, we have the hope in Christ to persevere and walk right with God, and continue to stand out in the face of the world.

3. Our King: Living by Christ's Command *Hebrews 1:1-2, Matthew 5:16*

We are to be a testimony of Christ to the world around us. When we live as the Word guides us, others may see God through us and glorify Him and recognise Him as the one who has our backs.

Conclusion

Even as a dispossessed people, God used those who choose to live righteously wherever they are. He raised captured people who lived distinctively from the pagan world into prominent places. The captured "nobodies," Daniel and Mordecai became second-in-command in Babylonian and Persian empires, and Esther became Queen to the Persians. Far from home, they are wonderfully used and became God's influence where they were.

Millenia have passed but God remains the same. You are placed where God wants you to be. Be encouraged and continue to live righteously. Be sensitive to what God

may be saying to you. Know that you are not where you are by chance like a roll of dice, but as a well-placed chess piece by the Master Chess Player Himself.



SERMON REFLECTION

Going through the sermon series, I wondered as well where my place was in the fabric of God's story. It was not as though I was in a place of suffering or strife; rather I was in a relatively comfortable place right now despite the chaos of the current pandemic.

I had been out of work by choice to start a family and had been meaning to return to the workforce when the pandemic first hit. The roles available since then were either not what I was looking for or it was not a good fit. As time went on, my husband and I decided to move forward with the family plan and try for a second child since the issue on job prospects and the pandemic did not seem like it would end any time soon.

As much as I love spending time at home with my first-born, at times it feels as though I am a chess piece who has stepped off the board. I have this anxiety in me because I know for a fact that the job market is not kind to those of us who step away for extended periods of time for any reason. The reality I face now is either to attempt to go back to the same industry with a high chance that my experience and knowledge will not get its due recognition, or to forge a new path in a different space. I also have to reconsider the ways I have been contributing to church and society in general, since the means of time and money I had previously has diminished.

Pondering on this sermon series, I am reminded again that the seasons do not dictate my worth, rather it is a time of preparation. To what exactly I cannot say for sure, but it is important to take it as it is. Just as I had gone through previous seasons of deep trial and of great joy, I am to take this precious time to bond with my children before figuring out what's next.

Despite the anxiety about the future at times, I have peace that I am where I am meant to be. I am not a piece outside His chessboard.

Contributed by Adeliyn



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Activity/Questions

- Activities during Purim include exchanging gifts of food and drink, donating charity to the poor, eating a celebratory meal, and recitation of the Book of Esther. Other customs include wearing masks and costumes and eating *hamantaschen* (a triangular pastry, usually with sweet fillings like fruit jam, custard or chocolate paste)

Celebrate Purim as CG. Suggested activities:

- CG members to send meals to each other via e-Selera, GrabFood Foodpanda or other similar platforms
- Send CG members triangular shaped food (such as samosas, danish pastries, onigiri etc.)
- Send a sum of money as a CG in support of a charity of CG's choice

- What is your favorite piece in chess? Why? If you do not play chess, Why?
- Has everyone registered to take the Covid-19 vaccine? What are your thoughts about taking the vaccine?
- How have you been making the most out of the pandemic i.e. learned a new skill, spent more time with loved ones, etc.?

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- What is your takeaway from the Esther series?
- Where do you think your journey is right now?
 - Do you feel stuck in one place?
 - Do you feel you are in motion?
 - Do you feel checkmated by the enemy?
 - Do you feel God has checkmated the situation for you?

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

Our Calling: Living as God's Holy People

- God has called us to be holy. Do you think the world sees the church as a community of distinctive people? In what ways are we different?
- Do people around see you as distinctive and different, carrying Christlike values? In what ways do you stand out?

Our Vindication: Living in the light of Christ's Return

- Do you get frustrated and even annoyed when those who are corrupt seem to be doing better materially and getting their way through their dubious ways? How do you deal with this when you are trying to do what is right? In light of Psalm 37:1-4, how does the Lord comfort you?

Our King: Living by Christ's Command

- Esther and Mordecai were common folks who were elevated to become a queen and a prime minister. Neither Esther nor Mordecai were particularly special, talented nor qualified - and yet, "God calls the willing, not the able". Where / what is God calling you to, and are you willing to go?

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

- If you have been challenged to answer this: “As a Christian, how do you rate yourself as a person of integrity?” How do you think you would fare?
 - Situation: “We have always done things this way” but you feel conflicted as it is not reflecting biblical values, what would you do?
 - Is “normal” acceptable? Is following the crowd the right way?
 - There are some situations you encounter that are seemingly grey areas. How do you navigate these kinds of situations?
 - Haman wanted to wipe out the Jews and made the king write an edict. King then saves Jews and asks Mordecai to overwrite Haman's edict. If you were Mordecai, what would you write in the edict?
 - Overcoming injustice and corruption in this country: How have you made a difference during this tough time?
-



PRAYER



Photo by Timothy Eberly on Unsplash

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Nepal - Covid-19 Update

Nepal is in its 2nd week of lockdown. As of 11th May 2021, there are > 9000+ new cases daily vs 100 daily cases a month ago. About 45% of all those tested are Covid-19 positive and that is only tip of the iceberg for a nation of ~30 million people.

Nepal's fragile and under-resourced public health system is strained beyond capacity. Critical patients do not have access to hospital beds nor oxygen supply. It could get worse than India.

Pray for:

- International community to send help to Nepal especially medical supplies and life-saving oxygen equipment to help deal with this pandemic, supplies are more critical than funding.
- Wisdom on the government and leaders to make the right decision in the interest of the people.
- Strength and protection for the front-line health workers who are overworked and overstretched.
- Those battling with Covid-19 to have speedy, rapid recoveries in Nepal, India & across the globe.
- Christians and organizations to continue to be the hands and feet of Jesus in these times of need to the poor communities especially daily wage workers, refugees, migrant workers in our midst.

Malaysia - Curbing of the Pandemic

Pray that MCO 3.0 will effectively curb the spreading of the Covid-19 virus.

Pray for:

- Government and policy makers - wisdom to craft, communicate and implement good strategies and plans to control the pandemic
- Enforcement officers - implement the SOPs effectively and justly
- Front liners - protection and strength to cope with high number of cases
- Business owners - adhere to SOP closely, responsible for workers, wisdom to manage operations within limitations
- All the rakyat to be responsible and cooperative - stay at home

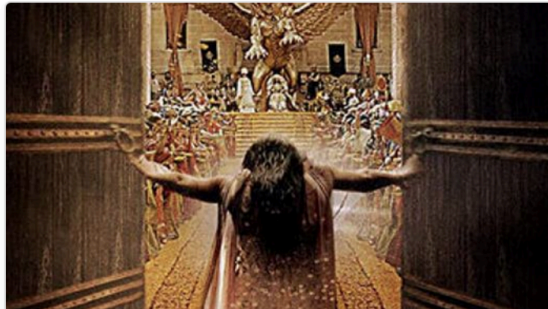


OTHER RESOURCES

*Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!*

FEATURED

In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



One Night with the King

120 minutes

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Bible

Movie



Why We Keep the Sabbath

11 minutes

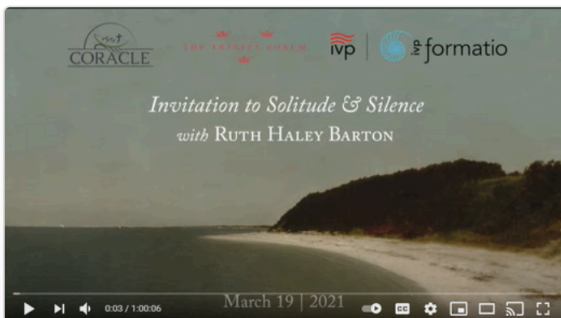
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Sabbath keeping is about freedom.

Marva Dawn

Prayer & Spirituality

Video Clip



Invitation to Solitude and Silence, with Ruth ...

60 minutes

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Our attention, Barton believes, has become a commodity ...

Ruth Haley Barton

Prayer & Spirituality

Video Clip Podcast



Overview: Esther

9 minutes

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

An overview video on the book of Esther, which breaks do...

Tim Mackie

Bible

Video Clip



OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

