

Providence in the Roll of the Dice - Esther 9:20-10:3
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Who doesn't love a good holiday that includes a party. Most holidays have at least some connection to an event that happened in the past. Think about our celebration on the 4th of July. Yes, we have fireworks and barbecues, but underneath all this is the story of a group of men gathering Philadelphia casting off the oppressive rule of the British government and declaring independence for the new nation. This event and the birth of the United States is the reason we celebrate a holiday on that date and the signing of the Declaration of Independence shapes our celebration. But the holiday is also an opportunity to retell the story and teach love for our country to children. Our core Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter are the same, they are shaped by events in God's story from the past that gives purpose and shape to the celebration, but they also become an opportunity to retell the story and pass it on to future generations.

Our Jewish friends and neighbors celebrate the Festival of Purim on the 14th and 15th of Adar to this day. This is the last month in the Jewish calendar, generally in late February or March. It is a celebration full of joy and feasting, and includes sharing food with neighbors and the poor, and even dressing up like our kids do on Halloween. At the center of this celebration, though, is the retelling of the story of Esther. The story of deliverance from a horrible genocidal plot against the Jews is a reminder of God's covenantal love and protection for His people. So, each year they gather, they read and retell the story. As the story is told they cheer for Mordecai, and also boo and hiss when the evil Haman's name is mentioned as kids spin groggers (noise makers) to drown out his name. They remember the story and pass it on to their children. And since this story is in the Scriptures as part of the grand narrative of God in Scripture, the story of Esther is our story as well.

It is somewhat bizarre that we are beginning at the end, but one of the core reasons the book is in the Canon of Scripture is that it explains Purim to the Jewish people. So we begin this week with an overview of the book and story. Esther is the story of all of God's Old Testament people, the Jews. Yet the story focuses in on two Jewish people who are just living out their lives in the capitol of the ancient Persian Empire. Mordecai is a simple servant under the rule of King Ahasuerus, and Esther is his orphaned niece whom he has raised. They encounter and interact with the two key Gentile characters in the story, the king and Haman, the king's right hand man. (NOTE - for more information on the background of the book of Esther find our study guide on the Genesis Blog or Koinonia). Through what seems to be a random series of events these two people are in a place of influence around the king giving them the opportunity to expose an evil plot by Haman to exterminate the Jews and therefore rescue God's covenant people from certain persecution and death. Yet, one character is suspiciously missing from the pages of the story. God's name is never mentioned, He is never shown as acting in a specific way, and the religious worship and customs of the Jewish people are never mentioned. When compared to the rest of the historical books this is definitely an oddity. Is God absent and uninvolved? Some have even argued that Esther is a secular book having nothing to do with God.

But this opinion misses the whole point of Esther and its place in the Scripture. Even though God is not mentioned, this does not mean God is not involved. In fact, the story of Esther is designed to make us CSI investigators searching for God's presence in a place where it seems as if He is not there. The random events, reversals of fortune, and coincidences are actually fingerprints and DNA evidence revealing the core truth for this amazing story. Esther is all about the providence of God, His often unseen governance over all things in the world and our lives. God is sovereignly orchestrating the events of the story in order to rescue His people and keep His promises. He is not a territorial god whose

power only works in Jerusalem. He is the True and Living God governing all of history, but also involved in the events of our lives accomplishing His will, displaying His glory, and working for the good of His people. We need this story, because the evidence of God is on display, yet, God is invisible. And when life is difficult we can quickly start believing that God is gone or non-existent. Yet, He is there and He is not silent. Our trust in the providence of God is vital as we live in the fallen world. Life is hard, evil seems to win, yet, we know that in the end God is great, He is sovereign, and He will keep His promises. This is the goal of Esther, yet often in the celebration of Purim, our Jewish friends miss the big picture point. So we will spend a couple months studying this great book to find Christ and see the glorious providence of God.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 16	Psalm 17	Psalm 18	Psalm 19	Psalm 20	Psalm 21	Psalm 22

Reading from this past week: Esther 9:20-10:3

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Esther 1:1-22

Family Worship

Song - *Cornerstone*

<https://youtu.be/a3HH-1Zbs>

Gospel Project

Story: Letters to the Seven Churches

Story Point: Jesus told churches to not give up.

Big Picture Question: What is the hope of the church?

Answer: The church looks forward to Jesus' return when He will make all things new.

Scripture: Revelation 2-3

New City Catechism

Question #33: Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?

Answer: No, everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ.

Verse: Galatians 2:16

Scripture

Esther 9:20-10:3

- What is your favorite holiday? What story does the holiday remember?
- As a family, tell the story of Esther together. Or better yet, go find the Veggie Tales story of Esther (its on YouTube).
- What is God's providence? Why is this an important belief for us to have and remember?

Prayer

*Pray that you would truly trust in the sovereign providence of God, even when you cannot see Him working.

*Pray for Faith Community Bible Church with campuses in North City and Jennings, and for pastor Michael Byrd.