

Providence in V'Nahafoch Hu- Esther 9:1-19 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

“The reverse occurred.” This phrase in Esther 9:1 reminds us of the basic theme of this great story. Esther and Mordecai are Jews living in the capital city of the mightiest kingdom on earth at the time, the Persian Empire. The problem for the Jews in this story is no mere territorial skirmish, they receive a death for their entire race from the two men who have the capability to carry it out, and all the enemies of the Jews are enlisted to make it happen. “But when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain mastery over them, *the reverse occurred*: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them.” The phrase here in this text literally means it was all turned upside down. In their celebration of Purim the Jews speak of “V’Nahofoch Hu”, the Hebrew coming from this term and representing the entire story. You can find fun Purim songs or Esther story re-enactments that use V’Nahofoch Hu in the celebration. It all got turned upside down, they are declaring. When all seemed hopeless and God’s promises were about to fail, V’Nahofoch Hu.

Esther is about God’s people living in Persia. On one level they are citizens of the Persian Empire. Yet, that Empire shows itself to be evil and actually an enemy of God’s people. But they are also Jews, part of God’s family, citizens of God’s Kingdom. Esther in the end is about the clash of these kingdoms and the book helps us see how to trust in God’s providence while living in a different kingdom.

This is one of the great challenges for those of us who follow Jesus. Fourth century theologian Augustine wrote his famous book, *The City of God*, during the era of Rome’s collapse. For close to 500 years Rome was the world’s strongest empire. It had defeated and replaced the Greek Empire which had defeated the Persians. But its fall seemed immanent and Christians were at a loss for what to do. Part of the reason Augustine’s work was so important was because they, like we in our culture often do, had closely associated the Kingdom of God with the kingdom of Rome. They had gotten too comfortable with Rome and its collapse seemed like the end. Augustine wrote of two cities, the city of man represented by Rome and the city of God represented by Jerusalem. His big point is that those who follow Jesus are actually citizens of both cities. Yet our ultimate allegiance and eventually home is the heavenly city. We live as representatives, ambassadors for that Kingdom in the kingdoms of this world demonstrating the values and character of our King while seeking the welfare of our human kingdom. The church must take care not to drift into either of two dangers when seeking to live as citizens of the Heavenly City while living in the earthly. First, we can become like those of Augustine’s time, too closely identifying these two cities. We get comfortable in and give our lives to defend the earthly city. Hear me here, America is a wonderful country in many ways, yet, it is a kingdom of this world, often demonstrating with actions, edicts, and values that it really stands opposed to God’s Kingdom. So we run toward a great danger when we fail to realize this and put our hope in the kingdom of the world rather than fully representing the Kingdom of our Christ. But the other error is to move toward separatism, pulling away and distancing ourselves from the city of man. Jesus uses the metaphor of salt and light to illustrate our relationship to the culture. Jeremiah reminds those living in Babylon that they are to live their lives in Babylon praying for and working toward the prosperity and good of Babylon, which will also be for their good.

Esther and Mordecai are Jews living in Susa. They are not perfect, in fact it could be argued from Scripture that they should not even be there. But they are exiles and

eventually they stand in Susa representing their people, the Jews, the Old Testament people of God. In the Old Testament the mission of God was wrapped around protecting the descendants of Abraham (the Jews) and moving the story toward Jesus. The enemies of the Jews were a threat to this, so God uses Esther and Mordecai to save His people. God's mission now is the advance of the Gospel to the nations. We are His people. Our enemies are no longer other people, or even the kingdoms they create. Our enemies are spiritual, our mission is Gospel, and our method is to live faithfully in the cities of men as representatives of the City of God. This is how God turns the world upside down.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Exodus 25	Exodus 26	Exodus 27	Exodus 28	Exodus 29	Exodus 30	Exodus 31

Reading from this past week: Esther 9:1-19

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Romans 3:19-28

Family Worship

Song - *God the Uncreated One*

<https://youtu.be/rswH9CSyWHk>

Gospel Project

Story: God made a covenant with Abraham.

Big Picture Question: Who is in control of everything?

Answer: God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. Nothing is outside of God's good plan.

Scripture: Genesis 12

New City Catechism

Question #43: What are the sacraments and ordinances?

Answer: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Verse: Romans 6:4, Luke 22:19-20

Scripture

Esther 9:1-19

- How do Esther and Mordecai represent God's people and Kingdom in Persia?
- What stories can you tell as a family that show you God's providence?
- How is Jesus the ultimate story of V'Nahafoch Hu, God's great reversal?

Prayer

*Ask God to help you trust Him and represent His Kingdom in our culture well.

*Pray for our collection of shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child.