

02-19-2012

The Story

A Matter of Faith

Pt 3: Faithful Princess

As we continue our series called "The Story," which is our 31 week trek through the Bible, the nation of Israel is still in Babylon. However, Babylon has been absorbed into the Persian Empire. Xerxes is the King in Persia.

A few of the Jews have been allowed to return to Israel, but most are still captives. Among those who are in Persia is a young lady who's name is Esther. There is an entire book in the Old Testament about Esther. It's an incredible story. Eventually, Esther actually becomes the Queen!

These are the major characters in the story of Esther:

Xerxes is the King of Persia.

He's pretty much a jerk. He drank too much. He didn't treat his first wife with much respect. He was easily influenced by those around him. Those influences aren't always good. But in the end of the story, he does the right thing.

Esther becomes the Queen of Persia.

Her ascent to the throne was a very rough road. She was forced into the King's harem, forced into a beauty contest, had to hide her Jewish nationality. But eventually she becomes Queen and uses her influence for tremendous good.

Mordecai is the older cousin of Esther.

He is the co-hero of the story, along with Esther. He is older than Esther and actually raises her as his own daughter, after her parents die. He looks out for her throughout the story and works with her to help avoid a crises for the Jewish population there in captivity.

Haman is the villain in the story.

He is a nasty guy. He dislikes Mordecai and the feeling is mutual. He is an egotist who plots to destroy all of the Jews in Persia. Kind of a Hitler type of guy long before there was a Hitler.

As we read this story of Esther, there are some lessons that we can learn and apply to our own lives.

As the story begins, through a series of events, Esther marries King Xerxes and thus becomes the Queen. At about that same time Haman is promoted by the King and becomes the highest ranking of all the nobles in the King's court. As such, everyone is to bow down, to kneel before him whenever he passes by.

Esther 3:1-2

1 After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman, elevating him and giving him a

seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.

2 All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

The first lesson we learn, we learn from Mordecai:

1. Never compromise your faith.

Mordecai would not kneel down and pay homage to Haman because to do so was an act of worship. Mordecai was not about to worship anyone except the one true God. Mordecai certainly would not worship any human being, especially Haman.

In previous sermons in this series we've discussed the fact that we are not to worship any false God's or idols. That same truth applies to the fact that we are not to worship any human being as well.

God is the only one deserving of your worship!

2 Kings 17:35 When the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: "Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them."

Don't worship false gods. Don't even bow down to them.

Mordecai would not bow down to Haman.

Don't worship idols. That includes human beings.

Remember, that was the issue that Daniel had to fight. (We talked about Daniel two weeks ago)

Daniel 6:12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man EXCEPT TO YOU, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands — in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

Daniel was told that the king was the only one he was allowed to worship. He refused to worship the king. He would only worship the one true God. And you know what happened to him:

Daniel 6:16 "So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den."

You know the story, you know how it ends. Daniel miraculously survived the lions' den.

Our first point this morning is that, like Mordecai and Daniel, you never compromise your faith.

This is not a big problem right now in America but it can very quickly become a big problem. It is manifest in big ways and in small ways. Consider this story from the news this past week:

February 15, 2012 (Last Wednesday)

A Colorado high school student says he quit the school choir after an Islamic song containing the lyric "there is no truth except Allah" made it into the repertoire.

Another verse in the song states "Allah is the only eternal and immortal."

James Harper, a senior at Grand Junction High School in Grand Junction, Colorado, put his objection to singing "Zikr," in an email to Mesa County School District 51 officials.

When the school stood by choir director Marcia Wieland's selection, Harper said, he quit.

"I don't want to come across as a bigot or a racist, but I really don't feel it is appropriate for students in a public high school to be singing an Islamic worship song," Harper told KREX-TV.

"This is worshiping another God, and even worshiping another prophet ... I think there would be a lot of outrage if we made a Muslim choir say Jesus Christ is the only truth."

School District spokesman Jeff Kirtland defended the decision to include the song.

This young man, James Harper, was not willing to compromise his faith. In any way, shape or form. Not in song, not bowing down, not in worship.

What would you have done?

If you were James Harper, Daniel, Mordecai...what would you have done?

Luke 4:8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Never compromise your faith!

The second lesson we learn we also learn from Mordecai.

2. God's plan will always prevail!

In spite of the situation. In spite of the circumstances.

In spite of what any man says or does.

In spite of what any government does.

In spite of the laws of the land or the latest politically correct popular opinion.

God's plan will always prevail.

Isaiah 14:24 The Lord Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand."

God promises with an oath, His plan will always prevail.

Proverbs 19:21 “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord 's purpose that prevails.”

Now, here's the addendum to this point:
YOU can be a part of that plan, or you can refuse to participate in that plan, but one way or the other, God's plan will prevail.

Esther faced that very decision. The evil man Haman had issued a decree that would cause all of the Jews in Persia to be attacked and killed. Esther, as Queen, was in a position to do something about it.

Look at what Mordecai said to her:

Esther 4:14 “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place...”

God could work through Esther, but if she wasn't interested, God will raise up someone else and accomplish His plan through them.

Esther could be right in the middle of God's plan. Or, she could be on the outside looking in.

Esther chose to be an instrument of the Lord!

God's plan will always prevail. We can be right in the thick of things, we can be a vital part of that plan, we can be in the middle of the action.....or we can be a spectator. God will always find a willing servant to accomplish his plans.

We see this same choice given to Isaiah the prophet:

Isaiah 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

That's the way God works! He invites individuals to be a part of carrying out His plan.

The disciples of Jesus were given the same choice:

John 6:66-69

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Many were walking away. Jesus gave the disciples a choice. They could be right in the middle of the action or they could be on the outside looking in.

They chose to stick with Jesus. And Jesus did phenomenal things through their lives.

God's plan always prevails and YOU can be a vital part of His plan. He uses people like you and me to make that happen.

Let me tell you about a couple named Robyn & Gerry Richter. They run an organization called ABC Ministries. ABC stands for Abandoned Babies For Christ. In 2008 I met Robyn & Gerry. They are just a normal, unassuming, humble, very average looking couple.

In 2008 three members of our congregation: Pam Nabers, Gordon Pittsenbarger and I, went with a mission team from Christ's Church of the Valley to visit a little community called Bulembu. It's in the country of Swaziland, Africa. Swaziland has the highest HIV infection rate of any country in the world. 43% of their population is HIV positive. Consequently, there are many, many babies who are AIDS orphans.

Robyn & Gerry and their children moved to Bulembu in 1992 with the idea of helping out at the Christian School there in Bulembu. However, through a series of events people started bringing them these infants who were abandoned, many of whom were AIDS orphans. When we were there in 2008, they had 35 babies and infants living in their home and a home next to them.

The community and the government were simply overwhelmed by this crises! Because of that, babies were being abandoned, they were being left to die.

But God had a plan to save these babies. And a very normal, average, humble, God loving, compassionate couple, Robyn & Gerry Richter, are now saving the lives of these babies!

God's plan will always prevail - and here is a couple who was willing to be a part of that plan!
Robyn & Gerry Richter are a vital part of that plan.

Are you part of God's plan.

Do you want to do something significant with your life?

Do you want to do something that has eternal consequences?

Like Isaiah, you just need to say, "Here am I Lord, send me."

Like Esther, you need to make yourself available to Him.

You just need to say "Here am I Lord, let's do it!"

1 Thessalonians 5:24 "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

God's plan will always prevail. You can be a critical part of the implementation of that plan.

That's the main lesson we learn from Esther.

3. YOU can make a difference.

Esther was an orphan, a foreigner in a foreign land, she was a racial minority and yet she saved the lives of thousands.

If you saw the movie Schindler's List, Esther is like Oskar Schindler on steroids!

Thousands owed her their life. Mordecai, her older cousin, got it. He understood the workings of the Lord. He put it to her with this statement:

Esther 4:14 "...And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

Because of the position she was in, she was able to save thousands of lives!

Esther 7:2-3

2The king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

3 Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life — this is my petition. And spare my people — this is my request.

Esther 8:11 "The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children."

Through the providence of God, Esther played a critical role in saving the lives of thousands.

This orphan. This foreigner. This minority. She submitted to God and thousands were saved!

With God on your side: You CAN make a difference!

Who knows but that you have come to your current position for such a time as this?

You are the only you who will ever exist. God has created you to be you, no one else can be you. There is a reason for that. God has a plan for you. You have a God given niche that no one else can fill. God will use you to do something significant in life IF you are willing to yield your life to Him!

God created you on purpose, for a purpose.

Let me challenge you today to do more than merely exist! There are a lot of exciting things that God is doing in the world and in the life of our church and I encourage you to jump into the action allow the Lord to do something significant through you!

Let me give you a couple of quick examples from some of our members:
Annie Scavarda - Feeds the homeless at a park in Tempe twice a month. Bread of Life ministry.

Roger & Pam Bates - The fourth Friday of every month get a team from our church together and serve in a food line at Paz de Cristo

Buddy Kaufman - Every week Buddy and a couple of our members join others in our community to work at the Extended Hands Food Bank right here in Fountain Hills

Last weekend 17 of our church members were in Rocky Point, Mexico building a home for an impoverished family.

Just ordinary people, changing people's lives! YOU can make a difference!

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through him who gives me strength."

Why are these and other church members doing these kind of things?
It's a God thing!

Psalm 103:8 "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love."

God is a compassionate God. He has a plan to extend that compassion.
You can be right in the middle of the action or you can be a spectator.
But either way, His plan will always prevail!

Are you a part of God's plan?

Are you walking with the Lord?

Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?