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November 3, 2013

ESTHER 7-10

Esther Series

Welcome. I am glad you guys are here today. We're going to finish the book of Esther today before next week we start the gospel of John. You can start opening your Bible now to Esther 7. Before we do, I want to pray for the offering and then I want to share a couple announcements with you this morning. Let's take a moment and come before the Lord again as we continue to worship Him.

[PRAYER] Father, we are delighted to be here today in your presence. We know that you're always with us and that we never escape your presence. But there's a special sense in which we experience your presence here when we worship together corporately, when we come together and enjoy relationships with you. So thank you for the opportunity we have to just come into your presence in that special way. Lord, I ask today that you'd bless the offering that's taken. We know that some give online or give during the week, but we come now corporately just to ask for your blessing on the funds that are provided here for Calvary. Be honored in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now open your Bibles to Esther 7. Let's try to pick up the story where we left off because today we're going to finish the book in Esther. If you haven't been with us up to this point, you're going to want to know what's going on in the story because it's a rather dramatic story.

In Esther 1-6 we have all these things happening in what God is doing. In the end of chapter 6, where we left off last week, we find that Mordecai is now in this position of honor. The king had a debt to him that he had forgotten about.

The king couldn't sleep, says, "Hey read to me the chronicles of my kingdom." They're read and he says, "Hey, what about this Mordecai guy that saved my life? Did we ever honor him?" "No we didn't do that," they said. "Well we need to do that. How can we honor him? Who's out there in the courtyard?" They said, "Haman's out there."

Haman's the villain in our story. Haman was planning to come in to see the king because he wanted to ask the king or tell the king that he was going to kill Mordecai on this huge pole, this gallows or spike or whatever it is, and they were going to kill him on that. So he comes in and that's what he wants to talk to the king about. But the king says, "Have Haman come in. I want to ask him a question."

“Haman,” he says, “what should the king do for the man he wants to honor?” Haman, being the egotistical guy that he was, thought he was speaking of him. So he says, “Well, I know what you can do, king. You can get your horse and put one of your robes that you’ve worn on this person and have someone from the kingdom that you trust lead him around and say, ‘This is how the king honors somebody.’”

The king says, “Great. Good idea, Haman. You lead Mordecai around.” What a shock this must have been for Haman. He’s saying, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” So Haman has to spend the rest of the afternoon leading Mordecai around in the town on horseback. Wow. What a terrible thing.

At the end of chapter 6 we read that he goes home and it’s just grief on his head. I mean, he had just had a bad day at work. He tells his wife about it and his friends and it’s been a terrible day.

But that’s not the end of the story. Because now in chapter 7 the chauffeur arrives to take him to the banquet that Esther had prepared. Esther prepared a banquet for Haman and the king and said, “Would you come back to my house the next day?”

That’s where we pick up the story in Esther 7:1. *So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet, and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the 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.”*

Last week Rose DeLisi came up to me afterwards and said about this half the kingdom thing, “Isn’t it interesting that Esther could’ve said, ‘Yes. Okay. I’ll take half the kingdom,’ and then tried to use that wealth or power or whatever it might be to solve the problem?” But she doesn’t do that. Instead she chooses this other route to come before the king and petition him and ask him a question.

You have to remember Esther does not know about the events of the day. She doesn’t know that Mordecai would be led around in that day. She didn’t know that the day before when she said to the king, “I’m not going to tell you the request today. Come back tomorrow.” She didn’t know that in the course of this day that these things would be happening.

Sometimes I think we come to God and we say, “God, I want you to solve the problem right now.” And God wants to take a little bit more time. We don’t like it that He wants to take a little more time. But it’s in the midst of the time that God takes to solve the problem that He demonstrates His grace and His providence and how He’s working behind the scenes. I would just encourage you to trust God in the waiting times and allow Him to work in the midst of that.

Verse 3: *Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition.*

This must have been a shock for the king. What do you mean your life? So first she comes and asks for a personal request. My own life is at stake. *And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely*

been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.”

What happens here in the story is Esther’s very wise in her presentation to the king. She first says to him, “King, I know you’re busy. I know you’ve got a lot to do. I know you want to get on to business as usual, but I have a request.” So in her wise appeal she starts by acknowledging the king’s need, the king’s concern, where the king is at at that point. We’ll come back to that point in a minute. I just want you to see that here she says to him, “Hey, I wouldn’t bother you if it weren’t so serious.” That’s what she’s saying.

Verse 5: King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?” Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!” There are only three of them in the room. There’s Esther, the king, and Haman. This guy’s the bad guy.

This is bad news number two for Haman. I almost feel sorry for this guy. If he wasn’t such an evil guy I’d feel sorry for him. Bad things are going to happen to him one after another.

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

The king is shocked by this news. I mean, Haman’s a friend of his. He’s shocked by this news and he’s just so upset by this that he says I got to get out of here for a minute. He goes into the palace garden to settle down for just a moment to gather his wits. You know how it is when you’re in a rage. Your emotion just controls you and you need a little bit of time to settle down. So he goes out there and he’s settling down to try to figure this out.

I remember my dad would say to me, “You’re in trouble. You need to sit down there. I’m going to go figure out what consequence. I’ll be back in a minute.” It was like this waiting time where I’m going, “Oh no. I am in real big trouble.” There’s this waiting moment where I’m waiting for my dad to return with whatever the consequence is going to be.

That’s exactly what’s happening in this particular story. So Haman thinks the best option is to beg for his life from Queen Esther.

Verse 8: Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. Bad news number three. This was not a good idea for him to do this. *The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?”*

Now in all fairness to Haman, I don’t believe Haman had any evil intentions here at the moment. But what happened did not look good. When he comes in it does not look good. The reality here – and I try to teach young people this – the reality is that Haman does not get the benefit of the doubt.

If you've done the right thing, you've never stolen anything, then the money comes up missing, they're going to say, "Oh it couldn't have been him because he never steals anything." But if you have the habit of stealing, you've been stealing things, and Dad finds out some money's gone, he's saying, "Oh no. I wonder if he did it." So you lose this benefit of the doubt.

Haman's already proved himself to be a bad guy. So he doesn't get the benefit of the doubt. The king comes in, sees this compromised position, and as it flashes in front of him he just jumps to a conclusion because Haman does not get the benefit of the doubt.

As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." Bad news number four for Haman. The king said, "Impale him on it!" So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

My goodness what a story. This is drama at its best. Who needs TV when you can read the Bible? This is exciting.

That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman's estate.

Great news. Rewards all around. Everything's going great. But we still have a problem. We still have a problem because the king's edict was still out there that had gone to the 127 provinces from India all the way to Cush (which is Africa) all the way over to almost to Greece but not quite there. All this huge empire the word had gone out – kill all the Jews and anybody who kills a Jew gets to have whatever possessions he has. If he has a large screen TV, you get it. If he has a car, you get it. You kill him, you get all of his stuff. That's the idea.

So verse 3: *Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him.*

Remember he had to extend that in order to receive her because it wasn't proper for her just to go into the king's presence. But she does it again, even against the law. She does that and he receives her as an exception to this rule that would cause her to be executed.

Verse 5: *"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"*

I want you to see the appeal that she makes because I teach young people how to make a wise appeal and the wise appeal has three parts to it. If you understand the wise appeal you can use it

in this kind of a situation. You can appeal to your mom, you can appeal to your dad, you can appeal to a teacher, you can appeal to any authority using the wise appeal. Esther is demonstrating this here.

The first thing you do in the wise appeal is you acknowledge the authority's concern, you acknowledge the authority's position. "I understand you don't want me to have a snack right now because I often don't eat my dinner and we're eating in thirty minutes."

The second part of the wise appeal says "I have a problem with that because" and then you share your problem. Just like she does. "I have a problem with that because I didn't have lunch today at school and I'm really hungry." So you share your part. But you've done it by acknowledging the parents' concern, then the second part becomes really easier to tolerate on the part of the parent. This is a respectful way for us as parents to receive an appeal from a child.

The third part of the wise appeal though is very important. You present a solution, not just the problem. So you acknowledge the concern, you share the problem, and then you bring the solution. "So could I please have half an apple and I'll eat my dinner in thirty minutes when we eat." What you're doing is you're bringing the solution.

I'll tell you, authorities like it when people bring appeals with solutions instead of just complaining. Sometimes people complain. This isn't just for young people. This is for all of us. As you have to make an appeal at work or with a manager of some kind or any kind of situation, if you employ the same ideas that Esther did here, the wise appeal, the same thing that Daniel used in Daniel 1, the same thing that Nehemiah did when he went before the king, when you make a wise appeal like that, it's not a magic formula but it is a greater chance that you're going to get a positive reception because of the way that it's done. That's why it's called a wise appeal.

I just love what Esther does. A great example of that.

Verse 7: King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

He liked her idea. And often authorities will respond when you give a thorough wise appeal. Authorities respond in a positive way.

Verse 9: At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. This is internet for them. They had high speed internet especially bred for the king.

Verse 11: *The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies.*

Do you see that? *And to plunder the property of their enemies.* I just want you to see that because they're not going to do that part of it. They are going to kill the people who are trying to attack them. As I continue reading here you're going to see it three times – and they didn't plunder their property. Why didn't they do it? It seems to be a statement of their integrity that they had the right to do it but they didn't take their right. In the same way that we have rights sometimes that we don't take for the sake of ministry or for the sake of some other reason. So just keep that in mind as we go through that they don't take advantage of that. They sacrifice that right they have for some reasons we don't know, but I suspect it's some form of integrity.

Verse 12: *The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa.*

There are several lessons we learn from this story that I just want to point out to you as we're going through. This is a whole book of the Bible. We have so many stories learned in this book and let me just point some of them out to you.

One story or one lesson is that God is at work whether we know it or not. It may not appear that God is working in your life at the moment, but you have to realize God is often working behind the scenes and you don't get to see what He's doing. God is at work.

Secondly, even if you think that no one notices, God notices when you're doing the right thing, when you're being righteous. In the same way we see that Mordecai when he reported the attempt to assassinate the king he got no reward. It appeared that who cares? I do the right thing and nobody seems to care. God is watching. God rewards him later on in the story. Not to say that you'll always get rewarded, but you just need to know God is watching your faithfulness.

Third thing, if you think you're great you better be careful. That was Haman's demise. He just thought he was so great, created this whole scheme, and he was entrapped by it. Which leads me to another point. If you're plotting evil against someone, be careful because you might get caught in the same trap. Malice is a dangerous thing. Malice is planning evil. So if you lay on your bed and you find, "I'm going to get that person back," be careful. You may get caught in the same trap.

The reality is lastly, I just want to say, our job is to be faithful and leave the rest to the Lord. Esther couldn't control the whole situation, but Esther could do the right thing and come in and take a chance, go before the king and make the request. But she couldn't control the outcome. Mordecai could do the right thing and take a stand and not bow down when Haman said,

“Everyone has to bow down to me.” He could report to the queen the thing that was about to happen and that the king would be killed. That’s all he could do. He had to trust in the Lord for the rest. We have to remember that we have to do that as well. Leave the rest to the Lord.

Verse 15. Let’s continue on. I’d like to finish this book today, so let’s keep going. *When Mordecai left the king’s presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor.* I like that word honor there.

In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

I’m going to read that again and I want to talk about evangelism here and how it happened. Isn’t this an interesting thing? It says *many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.* It’s a really interesting contrast because you have to remember back earlier in the story Mordecai told Esther, “Don’t tell anybody you’re a Jew.” And you’re thinking, “Wow. Is he a coward?” No. He’s being wise in that situation.

I know that some of you are in job situations where you can’t say, “I’m a Christian,” and in fact to do so would be foolish. It would jeopardize your job, it would ruin reputations, it would damage things. There’s sometimes when you can’t go into a situation and say, “I’m a Christian.”

But do you see what happened in the situation? It was the integrity of these people that pointed to the fact that they were different. And other people said, “I want what they have.” Sometimes your integrity is the best source of evangelism. People will eventually find out that you’re a Christian because the way you conduct yourself, the way you live life is strategic. That’s exactly what’s happening in this passage.

Let’s go on. *On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, 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.*

The whole idea here in the book of Esther is this: *the tables were turned.* That’s the theme. You think something’s going on and everything turns around.

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. And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.

Verse 5: *The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and*

destroyed five hundred men. They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha. So his name ends in Hammedatha and the other guys' names, a lot of them, end in 'atha.' They rhyme. Aspatha, Hammedatha. I don't know if they chose them that way or whatever, but that's the reality of those ten guys. They're *the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.*

So the edict was going to take place on the eleventh month, thirteenth day and that's when it happens. People are getting ready, "I'm going to go kill the Jews," and the Jews are defending themselves. Of course we see in the story that God is blessing the Jews and the Jews get the upper hand. The tables were turned.

Verse 11: *The number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day.* That's the capital. That's where Esther lives, that's where Mordecai lives, that's where the king lives. This is the capital city. *The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted."*

Verse 13: *"If it pleases the king," Esther answered, "give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also, and let Haman's ten sons be impaled on poles."*

This is going to be a staunch reminder that you don't kill the Jews. You would think people have learned from that in history. Esther asks for another day of protection. That's what she's doing in this particular story. This is D-Day for them. Not D-Day as in destruction, but deliverance that God is going to deliver them.

Verse 14: *So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman. The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.* There's that statement again.

Verse 16: *Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder. This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.*

Verse 18: *The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.*

The days here are important. They're explaining this in part because we're going to read it in just a moment. There's a festival called Porum that's going to take place every year and this helps determine the date of it.

Verse 19 there's the explanation. *That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.*

Verse 20: *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.*

Isn't that interesting? Part of the celebration that they're going to have annually is to give gifts to the poor. It doesn't seem to be directly tied into the story, but here's the reality. The reality is that some people are poor not for any reason of their own cause. Sometimes what happens is that because God's hand of blessing is on you, the tables are turned and you see the blessing, you end up with some wealth or you end up with some grace of some kind.

That doesn't happen to everyone, so God has called us all to be looking out for those who are underprivileged, looking out for the poor, looking out for those in need so that we who've been given something by God's grace (we only get it by God's grace) are thinking about those who don't have it. Not saying, "I'm here because of what I've done. Because I made this decision and that decision this is who I am and I've got all this. Therefore I'm going to be stingy with it because I deserve it." No. We have something and therefore we have a responsibility to see that God has given us grace in order to pass on to other people. We have this mindset about thinking of the poor.

There's this turning around, the turning of the tables is the whole theme here. If you have something you want to recognize that God has given you that something so you can share it with others. That's what's happening here in this particular feast.

The feast of Purim happens every year. It's celebrated today in Jewish homes. Often they'll get together and they'll celebrate it as a group, as a Jewish community. Most Jewish events take place in community. It's just part of the Jewish tradition. We get together and we celebrate.

Just like any of the holidays that we have, there are certain characteristics about Purim. It was a combination of Thanksgiving and Halloween and Christmas. It was a combination of all three of those things as you look at this.

First of all, they're very thankful for what God has done. They dress up in costumes. When they gather together sometimes it's the children who dress up in costumes, sometimes it's the adults who dress up in costumes and they'll do a play. They'll read the book of Esther and as they read the book of Esther any time the name Haman is mentioned they boo. Everybody calls out and they hiss and all kinds of noise makers go off at that point because Haman's name is said.

They have masks. The masks have one side that's a happy face and the other side's a sad face. So they start off with Queen Esther. She's alone, she's an orphan girl, she's adopted by her

cousin Mordecai and the face turns around because now she becomes queen and so now she has a happy face. Haman's face is happy to start out with the mask and then they turn it around he's sad because he's going to get killed. So it goes right through the whole story. The Jews are sad because the edict goes out, then the mask turns around and they're happy because now God has rescued them throughout the whole story.

Then in the midst of the Porum festival they eat hamantash cookies. These are triangular shaped cookies. Hamantash stands for "Haman's hat." So hamantash cookies. When they eat them they eat them with vigor. They eat them because they're devouring their enemies.

It's really a fun holiday that they have. And they give gifts to the poor. That's why I say it's a combination of Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas all together. All of that takes place on this particular event called Porum that they celebrate every year. It's a real fun event for the Jewish people. It is the last event of the year celebrated in the twelfth month of the Jewish year.

Let's go on to keep reading in the passage. Verse 23: *So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the pur (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be impaled on poles. (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word pur.)*

Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, the Jews took it on themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews—nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants.

There's just real value in this holiday. It's just a reminder God is in control, that He rescues His people.

There's value to all of our holidays. I hope that you, especially some of you young families, start traditions in your home. Around that celebration of Christmas or Thanksgiving or whatever it is, you have a tradition. That tradition is a way for you to pass on the grace of God to your children so that they understand more about who God is. They recognize His power or His grace or that we thank Him or that we serve Him or the birth of Christ. Whatever it is, there's value in that.

There's value in communion. We come together remembering regularly. We're remembering Christ's death. It's one of those regular things we do because we never want to forget. The busyness of our lives causes us to forget the grace of God regularly. We need regular reminders. Holidays are part of that.

There were several feasts that were set up for the Jewish people. We have several holidays in our western culture and every time we come to those we want to focus on what the Lord has done and pass on that faith to others and remind ourselves that we serve a living God. We serve a God who's in control. We serve a God who sacrificed His Son so that we could have a personal relationship with Him.

Let's go on. Verse 29: *So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of Xerxes' kingdom—words of goodwill and assurance—to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. Esther's decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.*

King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores. And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? 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.

It's amazing to see how God is working in the midst of this situation. It reminds me of a story of my son Josh when he was just a preschooler. He's my oldest son now (he's always been my oldest son), but when he was a preschooler I remember we were in a car that had electric windows. This was kind of Josh's first experience with electric windows because our car didn't normally have them. He's over there in the passenger seat because in those days preschoolers didn't have to ride in the back, they could ride over there. So he's over in this seat playing with the window and it's going up and he's having a lot of fun.

I decide I'm going to play a trick on him because I'm in the driver's seat and I have the master controls and he doesn't know that. So I put on the lock on them and all of a sudden they're not working. He's trying to make them work and he says, "Dad, the window's broken."

I said, "No. It's not broken. You just have to say the magic words."

He says, "Please."

I said, "That's not the magic words."

He said, "Well, what's the magic words?"

I say, "You have to say window up!"

He says, "Window up!"

I said, "No. It's not what you say; it's how you say it. You have to say it a particular way. Would you like me to demonstrate it for you?"

He says, "Yes."

So I have my left hand on the controls and I say, "Window up!" There goes the window. His eyes get big. I say, "Window down," and I make the window go down. His eyes are big.

I said, "You want to try that?"

He says, “Yeah I want to try that.” So he says, “Window up!” And I make the window go up. He stops. And he looks over. “Dad, what are you doing?” So I showed him what I was doing.

But the reality is God has His hand on the controls of your life. I just want you to know that. You think sometimes you can control the window up and the window down. You think that some magical things happen sometimes to make the window go up and down, but I want you to know God is the one who’s in control. God is the one who controls every one of our lives. He controls our world. He controls the things that are going on right now.

So never think that God has left you. Never think that God has abandoned you. Or never think that you’ve ever done anything so bad that God will not work in your life. God loves you and God has given us His word to help us as a reminder that He’s done that. When He does we’re just reminded so much of the blessings that God has given to us.

I think it’s a beautiful picture. The story of Esther is an amazing one just to remind us again that God is in control.

If you’re here today and you’ve never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, whether a young person or you’re an adult, I want you to know that Jesus Christ died for you. If you were to stand before God and God were to say, “What is it that would allow you to be able to come into heaven?” what would your answer be? Would you know for certain that God will welcome you into heaven? The answer is not “my good outweighs the bad.” That is not the right answer. The right answer is “I’ve asked Jesus Christ to come into my life. And by asking Jesus Christ to be my Savior I present that to you.” And God says, “Welcome, my son or my daughter, into my kingdom.” That’s what gets us into heaven.

But it’s much more than that. Right now when you have Jesus Christ living in your life, God gives you spiritual glasses to see that amazing things that He has going on. I would encourage you, if you’ve never asked Jesus Christ to come into your life you want to do that today. You want to ask Him to come in, to control you, to say, “God, I recognize that I’m a sinner. I need a Savior. I want you to come into my life. I want you to be my personal Lord and Savior today.”

Let’s pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I just thank you for what you’ve done for us. I thank you that we can trust in you, a God in control. I thank you that you love us, you care about us, and we ask that you would be honored in our hearts. Lord, I pray for that person that may be here this morning who has not made that commitment yet to you. I pray that right now that you would speak to that person. Draw them to yourself. That they would come before you and say, “Lord, I need you. I recognize that I’m a sinner. I want you to come into my life. I want to trust you as my personal Lord and Savior.” Lord, as we worship you we ask that you would speak to our hearts. Convict us. Cause us to trust you more in every area of our life. If there’s an area of our life we haven’t given over to you, point it out now. We’ll give it to you. We’ll trust you. Lord, we bless you. We thank you for what you’ve done. As we think through our whole lives, we think through everything that’s going on, we recognize that it’s because of your grace that we have what we have today and we’re so grateful for those blessings. In Jesus’ name, amen.