

Heroes 3

A few years after James became king, a number of the Separatists living in the village of Scrooby, England, made up their minds to form a church of their own. They met for worship every week in the home of William Brewster, one of the members. The King was displeased. "Since these men do not obey me," he declared, "they must be punished." And they were... some thrown into prison, and some hanged. But the Separatists believed their cause was just, and decided to leave their country and go to Holland where they could worship God as they pleased. First, they went to Amsterdam, then settled in Leydon. They were still unhappy. They didn't want their English children using Dutch ways and words. They wanted a new country where they could have religious freedom, and still train their children to be English in language, manners, and habits. Now King James was not willing for them to live anywhere under his rule, but finally agreed to not disturb them in America, if they gave him no trouble. So they borrowed money, and sailed from Holland to England, hired a small ship called the Mayflower, and sailed from London. After 64 days at sea, they anchored off the New England coast. Because of their wanderings, they called themselves Pilgrims. And it's important to remember that men first crossed the Atlantic not to find soil for their plows, but to secure liberty for their souls.

Hero qualities:

Courage- defy king, move to strange lands, risk lives

Purpose- only one- freedom to worship

Perseverance- in spite of persecution, imprisonment, and execution

Sacrifice- I would imagine that by the time the pilgrims landed in New England their only wealth that remained was that of their rich faith. The pilgrims were not only highly instrumental in establishing our nation. They were also were key to providing a spiritual foundation on which our nation would be built.

As we discussed last week, the great hero of the faith Daniel lived and made a tremendous impact for the kingdom of the one true God Jehova even though he was a slave. And he did this twice, first as a Jewish slave of the Babylonian Empire then again as slave risen to great leadership and influence under the realm of the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel lived out his entire life, though almost entirely as a slave, influencing kings and their kingdoms for the glory of God. He was a super hero!

Later on, still during the time of the Medo-Persian Empire and the captivity of Israel, another Jewish slave, another young person began the journey of great strength, courage, and faith in the heathen nation in which the Jews were still captive. The Medo-Persian king's name was Ahasuerus.

He had thrown a big party for all his officials, staff, military leaders and nobles. He wanted to show off his beautiful wife, Vasti, but she refused to come out, so the king decided to dump her. He and his advisors were concerned that what the queen did would start a women's lib movement throughout the kingdom.

So, King Ahasuerus' attendants decided to hold a beauty contest and the winner would become the new queen. The most beautiful young virgins throughout the land were brought before the king including the niece of a Jewish captive name Mordecai. Her name was Esther. The king chose Esther and made her the new queen. He did not know that she was one of the Jewish slaves. You could almost say that "they lived happily ever after." It would be great material for a movie. They did make a movie!

One day uncle Mordecai overheard a plot to assassinate the king, reported it to Esther, who reported it to the king. Investigation revealed the report accurate and the perpetrators were hanged. Case closed and forgotten.

Some time passed and King Ahasuerus chose to honor one of his officials name Haman and promote him to a position above all the other officials. The king ordered that everyone bow and pay homage to Haman, but Mordecai the Jew refused. Of course Mordecai, like Daniel, refused to bow and pay homage to anyone but Jehova God. Haman got really mad at Mordecai but instead of taking his anger out just on Mordecai, he decided to exterminate all the Jews. He persuaded the king to pass a law that all Jews were to be killed. Messengers were sent throughout the land with the law. Remember, Esther the queen was a Jew although King Ahasuerus was not aware of that fact.

Mordecai, upon hearing of the law, immediately put sackcloth and ashes, began to weep and fast and he did this in a very public place. Soon all Jewish people throughout Medo-Persia began to mourn, fast, and put on sackcloth.

Esther sent a servant to find out what was going on. Mordecai replied by informing Esther of Haman's plot to kill all the Jews. He then suggested that Esther go before the king to plead for the King's intervention on behalf of her people. She responded back that it was against the law, punishable by death, to approach the king without being summoned. Mordecai replied back....

14 Who knows, perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.” ¹⁵ Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ “Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night and day. I and my female servants will also fast in the same way. After that, I will go to the king even if it is against the law. If I perish, I perish.” ¹⁷ So Mordecai went and did everything Esther had ordered him. **Esth** 4:13-17 (HCSB)

After three days of fasting, Esther prepared herself to approach the king. He extended the golden scepter to her allowing her to approach. He was not only open to her approaching but he even offered anything she wanted even as much as half of the kingdom. But she just only asked for permission to have a feast and to invite Haman to join them. The king agreed, Haman was invited, and the banquet was set for the next day.

Haman was pretty cocky as he thought of his power, position, wealth, and now to be invited to banquet with just the king and queen. Surely they must have intended to honor him again.

Then, right after that, Haman passed Mordecai at the gate who of course refused again to bow. He got really angry, and with the advice of his wife and friends, built a 75' gallows to

hang Mordecai on the next day. Haman was fired up. He had the gallows built.

That night the king couldn't sleep so he had a servant read from the record of daily events. The account of Mordecai foiling the plot to assassinate the king was read.

³ The king inquired, "What honor and special recognition have been given to Mordecai for this [act]?" Esth 6:2-3 (HCSB)

Nothing had been done. So the king called for Haman. The king said he wanted to honor someone. Haman surely thought that it was himself whom the king wanted to honor. The king wanted the man clothed in clothing he had worn, put on a horse he had ridden, and a crown he had worn placed on the man's head. And he was to be paraded around town by the king's most noble official and shout

"This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor." Esth 6:11 (HCSB)

The man to be honored was Mordecai and Haman was the one to lead him around town. You can imagine the humiliation and anger welling up in Haman but he quickly realized he was doomed.

The king and Haman came to Esther's banquet. Once again the king offered Esther anything she wanted up to half of the kingdom. Her only request, "spare my life and my people." The king asked, "who would devise such a scheme?" She answered, "the evil Haman." The king became very angry and went out to the garden. Haman fell down begging for mercy on to the couch where Queen Esther was lying. The king came back in, seeing

Haman on the couch with his Queen, became even more angry. Guards were called in and Haman was hanged on his own gallows he had built for Mordecai. The king's anger subsided.

That same day, the king gave Haman's entire estate to Esther. He gave the signet ring that he had given to Haman to Mordecai, placed royal garments, a purple robe and crown on him.

Esther pleaded with the king to reverse the death sentence on the Jews placed on them by the wicked Haman. The king agreed and gave authority for Mordecai to write the new law and also added freedoms and protections for the Jews that they had not seen in their captivity. There was a great celebration among the Jews. Other ethnic groups began to fear the Jews because of the special privileges granted them.

Mordecai became very influential and powerful in the Medo-Persian Empire eventually becoming 2nd in command to the king. He continued to protect and preserve the Jews scattered throughout the kingdom of Medo-Persia.

Esther- hero factors

Courage Vashti refused to come before the king when called for. Esther went before the king without being summoned, an even more dangerous thing to do.

Patience/perseverance Unlike Daniel who spent almost his entire life being used by God, Esther's main purpose in her entire life centered around one action- going before the king to plead for her people the Jews. She rescued the nation of Israel

from annihilation with her courage and humbly, wisely spoken words.

Wisdom Instead of running to the king whining about what Haman had done, she wisely crafted a plan that would expose Haman's evil plot allowing the king to make a righteous judgment without being nagged or coerced.

Great Christian heroes: (you and me)(obedient, available)

Courage If being a hero was easy, everyone would be a hero. Heroism usually comes with a great deal of risk- of reputation, wealth, humiliation, even health and life. If you are going to be a hero to someone, you will likely have to step out of what is comfortable to you and take some risk. Especially the older we get, the more courage it will likely take to make a difference in someone's life.

God instruction to Joshua- "Be strong and courageous."

Perseverance You may consider yourself more like Esther, who much of her life didn't seem to have much potential or opportunity to do anything significant for God, until that one moment in time that she had the opportunity to speak for her God and her people.

You and I must persevere in obedience and availability to God for we don't know at what time and place we will have the opportunity to speak for our God and some person or group of people.

9 So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. **Gal 6:9** (HCSB)

You probably don't know what time or place where someone might say to you- "you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

Wisdom We must not only speak up at the right time with great courage. We must do so with God-given wisdom, saying the right things with the right attitude of humility and gentleness. It is quite possible to say exactly the right thing but at the wrong time or the wrong attitude. Opportunity blown!

6 Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person. **Col 4:6** (HCSB)