

## Living Under God's Hand

Esther 4:1-17



## Building Our Lives

- From Nehemiah – building the walls of Jerusalem, a spiritual rebuilding
- Today – the story of Esther – her radical action of surrender

## Feasting & Fasting

- Many banquets are enjoyed throughout the story
- The practice of fasting & prayer is highlighted in chapter 4

## God's Providential Care

- The overall arc of Esther
- God's unseen hand slowly working through the coincidences of our lives

## Nehemiah, Ezra & Esther

- 400s B.C. in Persia
- City of Susa
- Days of the Persian Empire
- Celebrated today in Judaism in the Festival of Purim



## Esther: The Story



- Esther, a Jew, is a queen to the king of Persia
- Mordecai, Esther's cousin, discovers a plot of genocide against the Jewish nation
- Mordecai convinces Esther to appeal to the king on behalf of the Jewish people

## A Reversal of Fortunes

- Haman is the antagonist who plots the massacre of the Jews
- Mordecai is the protagonist who rises to the benefit of Israel



## Fasting & Prayer

Esther 4:14b-16



Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.' Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, 'Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa,

and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.'

Esther 4:14b-16

### Three Day Fast

- A strong fast – demonstrates the serious intention of Esther and the entire community
- Not a casual attitude but a full commitment to seek God's face
- Echoes the fast of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:4)

### A Spiritual Practice

- A practice which feeds the spirit in us
- Food reinforces the body; fasting reinforces our spirit
- Jesus assumes we fast in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:16-18)

- Fasting can include other areas of our lives
- Fasting from tv, screen time,
- Any area which can get out of control

### Trusting in the Providential Care of God



### Life is Not Random

- God's guiding hand leads us forward
- God's purposeful hand even in challenging circumstances (consider Joseph)

### **A Mystery: Human Initiative & Divine Engagement**

- God cares for his people but Mordecai & Esther must act
- There is a partnership between us and God
- A trust in God's providential care

### **A Message of Hope**

- Help will come for Israel by God's hand - "relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews" (v14)
- Ultimately the deliverance for Israel comes through Messiah Jesus

### **Esther's Action: Surrender**



### **Full Commitment**

- "If I perish, I perish" (v16)
- Fully giving of ourselves to God
- An action of courage and determination

### **Solidarity With the People**

- Not giving up to fatalism or resignation
- An action of compassion and purpose

### **A Call for Us**

- Collectively something bigger happens as we all do our part
- A communal action

- Deny our age of self-indulgence and immediate gratification
- A call to slow down –reflect on our lives
- Act in compassion with others
- Step beyond our own comfort & convenience