



JESUS IS A BETTER SERVANT

Part 7 of Esther

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Esther 6:1–13 | October 28, 2012

GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

Well, happy birthday, Mars Hill. This is our sixteenth year. We celebrate this month. Yeah, it is a really, really wonderful season for me. Sixteen years ago, Grace, our first church member and my wife, and I were really excited to see Mars Hill Church get started, and Jesus has been nothing but good to us ever since.

And so we're in Esther 6:1–13, and I'll start with a story. Yesterday was Alexie's ninth birthday. We've got five kids: three boys, two girls, and yesterday Alexie turned nine. So, I snuggled up with her, took a nap. That was awesome. What did she want to do afterward? Go roller skating. So, it went better than expected, hence I'm here and alive to give this report. I have not been roller skating since the '80s—the early '80s.

And so we went roller skating, and I was pretty terrified. She got roller skates for her birthday and there were 1.5 million children at the roller skating rink. No more, no less, that's an actual head count; 1.5 million children. It was absolute insanity. Kids flying around, and older men with feathered hair going very fast, and so—I don't make any judgment, just an observation. And so I thought, "I better get out on the roller rink to make sure that my six-year-old and my nine-year-old don't die, and if they fall down, I'm behind them, kind of blocking, make sure they don't get run over by the feathered-haired men who were unmarried." And again, not a judgment, just an observation.

And so we're skating around, and then at one point, they stop, they turn the lights on, they shut everything down. We're missing a child. And if you're a parent, have you had that moment where you lost your kid? There's a dad, you could see it in his face, absolutely panicked. I mean, he is literally shaking. He's on the phone with the police, he's yelling for his daughter, so they've shut the whole rink down. She's been gone for maybe half an hour.

You parents had that moment where just for a second you misplaced a child? Every minute feels like a year, right? Panic sets in. All of a sudden, your mind starts going to, "What could be happening to my child?" Have you been there? You parents, you grandparents, you babysitters, you big brothers and sisters.

You could tell who the father was by the look on his face, and this guy went through every inch of the skate rink, he looked in every bathroom, he went out and looked in every car in the parking lot. There was no way he was going to stop until he found his child. Now, I'm happy to report they did find the girl. Apparently her mom picked her up and didn't tell dad. I don't know what happened there. Pray for them. I'm sure this is an interesting day for them. Okay?

Now, let me transition to the story of Esther. The Bible says that God has a covenant people. When the Bible uses the language of "covenant," it means that God's a Father and he is determined to adopt children in, men and women, as his family. And it says this over, and over, and over in the Old Testament. He says, "I will be your God, you will be my people." There's not really a democratic vote on that. Dad decides.

And what we see in Esther is how God pursues his covenant people. It doesn't matter if the kids are far away, it doesn't matter if the kids have gotten themselves in trouble, it doesn't matter if someone else is plotting evil against them and dragging them off into danger. God is a Father who really loves his kids and he will hunt every single one of them down to love them, serve them, save them, protect them, because those are his children.

Now, what we see in Esther is God's Father heart for his covenant children in Persia. So, these are not the most obedient kids. The obedient kids are up in Israel. These are the disobedient kids. These are the kids that have wandered away. These are kids that aren't with the rest of the family. These are the kids who are in grave danger. And two of them are named Esther and her adoptive father, Mordecai.

And as we pick up the story today, we see that his covenant children, in general, are in grave danger. A godless man named Haman has put out a death sentence that he is going to destroy, he is going to kill all of God's people. He is going to kill all of the covenant children of God. And you're going to see today that the clock is ticking for all of God's people, and there's a separate clock that has a much shorter time frame. He's also going to kill Mordecai. So, they're in danger, and what's the Father going to do? Is Dad going to show up and protect the kids?

DON'T QUESTION THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, ASSUME IT

So, we start in Esther 6:1. My first big idea, Esther 6:1–3, is don't question the providence of God, assume it. Don't question the providence of God, that God is sovereign, and good, and he knows the future, and he's at work. Assume it.

"On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. And it was found out how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. And the king said, 'What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?' The king's young men who attended him said, 'Nothing has been done.'"

Sometimes God works through his visible hand of miracles, sometimes God works through his invisible hand of providence. That's one of the great themes of this book. I've said it before, but if you're new, let me repeat it. God's name is never uttered, an angel doesn't show up, a prophet doesn't speak, a miracle doesn't happen, and the question then is, well, how is God at work in the story of Esther? And it's through providence. And we don't see the invisible hand of God, but we see the effects of the invisible hand of God.

The other day—you know, fall has come, and the weather is changing, and there was a bit of a storm here in Seattle, and the wind was howling. So, you open the blinds and look out the window, you can't see the wind, but you could see its effects. You could see trees bowing, you could see leaves scattering. You could see the effects of the wind.

So it is with the providence of God. There are times that we open the Word of God and we don't see a burning bush, we don't see an angel, we don't see a prophet. We see the effects of God's presence, and so we assume it's God's providence. "Oh, that happened. God was behind that. That occurred. That was the invisible hand of God."

And so as we examine the story of Esther, you'll see God's work through the effects that they bring, and so here, it's providence. There's a king. His name is Ahasuerus, or Xerxes is what his name is in Greek, and he is the one who has given permission for his right-hand man, Haman, to kill all of God's covenant people, and he has a sleepless night.

Have you ever had a sleepless night? What could be less obvious than a sleepless night? He's the king, of course he has a sleepless night. He's got a lot of responsibility, hundreds of women that he's married. There are a few things for him to be stressed about. Right? He rules over a massive empire. I don't know about what you get stressed out about. He has a lot to be stressed out about. He can't sleep. But this is the providence of God.

So, the king can't sleep. He's awake, and what he says is, "Bring to me all of the sort of legal accounting of my kingdom." I don't know if it's because he was trying to catch up on work or he was looking for the most boring thing to put him back to sleep. Right? Some of these ancient records are incredibly boring, and he is having read to him a bit of the history of his reign.

And he realizes four or five years prior an assassination attempt was put together by two men who were part of his cabinet, and a man named Mordecai overheard that conversation, brought the information to the king, saved the king's life. So, the king asks, "What did we ever do for that guy?"

Now, it looks like coincidence, right? Coincidence is the non-Christian's word for providence. Coincidence is the non-Christian's word for providence. "Well, that was a coincidence." We say, "No, that was the Lord." So here, at just the right time, because you'll see in a moment, this man Mordecai, who saved his life, is about to be killed. "What did we ever do for that guy?" "Nothing."

It was customary, if you saved the king's life, you got something. Herodotus, the Greek historian, he says that there was an assassination attempt that was put out on Xerxes' brother, and when a man reported the assassination attempt and spared the brother's life, he got to become a governor. So, if you get to become a governor for saving the king's brother's life, you should get something for saving the king's life.

And all of a sudden, we see what looks like a conscience in Xerxes. We've not seen this yet. All of a sudden, his conscience appears. "I should have done something for that man. We didn't do anything." And this sets in motion a series of events that save his life.

Here's my big idea: don't question the providence of God. Assume it. Now, there'll be times emotionally, quite frankly, you'll—"God, where are you? What are you doing? I don't understand." In those moments, you need to think biblically. "God, I know you're here. I know you're up to something. Help me to see it." See, faith is trusting the presence and providence of God before we see it.

So, I would even say to you, this week, take some time, journal, pray, think, look back on your life. Assume the providence of God and reinterpret the data. I could look back on my life. Just briefly, I'll tell you, in high school—I was in public high school. I decided to take a Bible as Lit class because I heard it was an easy A. Not the most spiritual motivation, amen? So, I took the class. Sitting in front of me was a young woman whom I knew a little bit, and she was best friends with a gal named Grace, grew up across the street from her.

Well, I started talking to this gal, and she introduces me to this gal named Grace. This gal, who I met in high school, she's still a friend and a member at Mars Hill. So, then I meet this gal named Grace. Yeah, the one I married, and she gives me my first Bible, becomes my girlfriend. I get saved reading the Bible, she becomes my wife. All of that, providence of God. Who sat next to me in a class I took for an easy A ended up being a Christian, who introduced me to my wife, who introduced me to Jesus and bought me my first Bible. You can say, "Wow, that's an amazing coincidence, slash providence." God's at work in the details, and you see his presence through the effects of his presence.

So, don't question the providence of God. Assume it. God is at work in your life. God is working everything out for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. God is sovereign, and is in control, and God is good, and he is present.

GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE

Number two, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Esther 6:4–12. So, now it's morning, the king's been up all night, and he asks, "Who is in the court?" Because this king never makes a decision. He's a bit of a weak leader. He always has to seek others' input.

"And the king said, 'Who is in the court?' Now Haman had just entered the court." The guy who wants to kill all of God's people, the guy who has been given the legal right to kill all of God's covenant people, the guy who also is going to murder Mordecai, the guy who saved the king's life. Do you see the amazing providence of God?

"Now Haman had just entered the court of the king's palace to speak to him about—" what? "Having Mordecai hanged on the gallows he had prepared for him." This is basically a huge pole they were going to crucify or impale him on, seventy-five feet high. In that day, it's huge. The whole situation was Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. Haman was very upset by that because he felt it was publicly dishonoring and his identity/dolatory was honor. "How dare you not bow down to me? I'm the right hand to the king."

So then, he gets permission to not only kill Mordecai, but all of God's covenant people, and he wants to do it in a public and shameful way. He wants to crucify him. This is the precursor to crucifixion. Seventy-five feet in the air, he wants to hang Mordecai, showing everyone, "That's what happens if you don't honor me."

Now, he's had this construction project going. It's now completed. He has this ready for the crucifixion of Mordecai. We're still a few months out from the deadline for him to have

legal permission to kill all of God's covenant people, but he wants an exception for one guy, Mordecai.

"And the king's young men told him, 'Haman is there, standing in the court.'" So, Haman's not going to just enter into the king's presence because you could be killed for that, so he's hoping for a meeting. He's first in line. "And the king said, 'Let him come in.' So Haman came in, and the king said to him, 'What should be done to the man the king delights to honor?' And Haman said to himself—" Right? It's in his heart, his motive. Some of you say, "I never said that." Oh, you were thinking it and God heard it. It was very, very loud in the ears of the Lord.

"And Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?'" "Haman, I'm so glad you're here. There's someone I want to honor more than anyone else." Haman thinks, "I know who that is." Do you see the providence?

"And Haman said to the king, 'For the man whom the king delights to honor—" "Hypothetically, this person you would like to honor, perhaps I know what would be good for him."

"Haman said to the king, 'For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought.'" Not just royal robes, "which the king has worn." "You know, king, you've got a very nice robe. Maybe this person you want to honor could wear the robe, parade around like you."

"And the horse that the king has ridden, on whose head a royal crown is set." "You know, King, that's a really nice horse. I bet you the person you want to honor would love to not only wear the robe, but ride the horse. Be high and exalted where everyone could see them. In fact, this would make the beginnings of a very good parade for one person. Right? We're not going to have floats down the street. We're going to have a parade, and here comes one person. That's all." Do you see a potential bit of arrogance in this man? "What would you like?" "A parade, for me."

"And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him—" Let's just cheer him, "'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'" Yeah. "Hypothetically, I think that would be a good idea for this potential person that you speak of."

"Then the king said to Haman, 'Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said.'" Can you imagine what he's thinking? "Oh, what a day." "And do so to Mordecai the Jew." He was just going to ask if he could crucify this guy, and now he's got to organize his parade.

See, God's funny. God's in heaven just like—he's telling all the angels, "Don't want to miss, don't want to miss, don't want to miss, don't want to miss." All the angels are like, "Oh, that's good right there. That's good." God's funny. Right? Now, you don't think he's funny if you're Persian, right? But if you're one of his covenant people, this is hilarious. This is one of the most ironic chapters in the whole Bible. This is unbelievable.

"Who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned." Okay. I mean, you can probably see the look on Haman's face like, "Are you sure about this?" "Oh, yeah, yeah. That's a great plan. The eunuch wrote it down. We have a list. Don't miss anything. Crown, robe, horse, parade, cheering. Great. You do that." "D'oh!" Right? What a bad day. Who's organizing Mordecai's parade? Haman, who also built his seventy-five-foot impaling rod. Right? Who's going to lead the parade? Who's got to get the horse and, "Yay Mordecai!" Who's got to do that? Haman. Haman. It's awesome. Okay?

"So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai." Can you just see that? "Yeah, we have this robe, and there you go. Alright. Up on the horse. Here's a crown. Yay, Mordecai." Parade, everybody's in the street, kids are screaming, "Yay Mordecai!" Can you just—can you see Haman leading the parade? He's the cheerleader for Mordecai. He has to, "Here's the one whom the king delights to honor." That's what he has to say. Oh, love it.

"So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him—" He woke up, he's like, "I'm going to crucify him. I'm leading his parade. This is not plan B for me." "'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'" Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate."

PRIDE VS. HUMILITY

Here's what I want to do: I want to look at pride and humility. Some of you say, "You're not qualified." Neither are you. Okay? So, neither of us is qualified to talk about this, but as the senior hypocrite, I will assume this opportunity. Okay? And what we see here is that God opposes the proud and he gives grace to the humble. Now, Haman is a case study in pride, and Mordecai is a bit of a case study in humility.

And so let me say this: I love you. I'm your pastor. I love you. I've been here sixteen years and my heart is filled with love for you. It genuinely is. And I want you to know that the worst decisions I've ever made, the times my anger has gotten the best of me, the things I regret, pride was under those things. Pride was under those things, and pride never helped anything. Okay? Never helped anything. Some of you say, "Yeah, pride in general is bad, but occasionally—" No. Pride never helped anyone. Pride never improved anything. Now, we can call it self-esteem, we can call it self-love, we can call it self-help, we can call it self-actualization. It's still pride.

So, let me talk about pride, and let me see Haman as not someone totally unlike us. Okay? We make fun of Haman, and if we do, we should also make fun of ourselves. The truth is, as we read the story, how many of us, given the opportunity, would respond similarly, if not exactly like Haman? "I could be rich and powerful, do whatever I want. Somebody dishonors me and I can kill them, I would do that. If I could have a holiday named after me and a parade in my honor, I'd show up." As we read the story, we have to see that Haman is much like us, so that we learn from his example—negative example.

Let me tell you some things about pride and humility. Number one, humility means to know your place. The root word for humility literally means to know your place. The problem with Haman is he doesn't know his place. He doesn't know his place. He's the guy who always wants to go up one more level in the organization, not because he's the best guy for the job, but because there's more glory there. So, he's gotten himself to be the right hand to the king, number two in the whole of the Persian Empire. You know what he wants? More glory.

Are you like that? You don't know your place or you won't accept your place. Being in an organization's not okay; you have to be at the top. Seeing others succeed, that isn't enough for you; you have to be the one who succeeds. That's Haman's problem. He doesn't know his place. What he's asking for is amazing. "I want to wear the king's robes, I want to ride

the king's horse." The only thing he didn't ask for was the king's wife. Other than that, he wants to be as high, as exalted, as rich, as powerful as he possibly can be.

Number two, everyone is proud, just in different ways. You're proud and they're proud, and you see their pride because it's different than yours, and they see your pride because it's different than theirs. We're all proud in different ways. Some of us want money, some of us want comfort, some of us want power, some of us want an audience, some of us want access to authority and leadership. We're all proud in different ways, and when we judge and condemn other people for their pride, we need to also ask, "And how am I blind to my own?" We're all proud in different ways.

Number three, humility is more of a direction than a destination. None of you can say, "I used to be proud. Glad that's over." Right? You're like, "That's proud." C. J. Mahaney's got a little book called, *Humility*, and he says, "No one can ever say they're humble. All they could say is that they're a proud person pursuing humility by the grace of God." So, all we could say as Christians is not, "I've arrived at the destination of humility," but, "By the grace of God, I want to venture in the direction of humility." Are you even trying?

Number four, pride is about my glory, but humility is about God's glory. Pride is about my glory. Humility's about God's glory. Jonathan Edwards says it rightly, America's greatest theologian. He says, "Once the question of glory is settled, everything is settled." When you decide who gets the glory, that makes 99 percent of the decisions in your life. "Will I do this or do that? Well, what will bring most glory to God? Well, then I'll do that." That question of who gets the glory, it clarifies everything. If Haman would ask that—if Haman asks the question, "What will give me the most glory?" that leads to a very different conclusion than, "What would bring God the most glory?" Amen?

You're fighting with your spouse. You say, "What should I do?" Whatever brings God most glory. You're disobeying your parents, what should you do? Whatever brings God most glory. You're disagreeing with leadership, how should you conduct yourself? In whatever way it brings most glory to God. You have aspirations, you say, "Should I pursue this or not? Well, what would bring most glory to God, not only in what I do, but why I do it, and how I do it, and when I do it," and all of the decisions get run through that question: Where's the glory going?

Number five, pride turns in on me, but humility turns out to God and others. Martin Luther used to rightly say that sin is the self bending in on the self. "It's all about me." That's why we say it's all about Jesus. Humility turns our affections and our directions toward God's glory and others' good. Like, what's best for God? What will help them? See, pride, it turns in on me. Humility directs us back out to God and others, what Jesus says, to love God and to love neighbor.

And number six, pride births death and humility births life. Augustine, the great church father, said that pride is a mother who is pregnant with all other sins. All sin comes out of pride. All sin is birthed out of pride, and all virtue, and all holiness, and all glory to God is birthed out of humility. Is your heart pregnant with pride or is it pregnant with humility? What will it give birth to?

QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIDE

I'll ask you some questions. You can think about these, pray about these, talk about these with your family and Community Group. Do you crave attention, honor, recognition, or reward? Do you crave it? Do you long for it? Haman did, right? He'd already been made number two in the kingdom. The decree had been made, "Everybody bow down to him." That's not enough. One guy doesn't bow down, so he's going to crucify him on a gallows he built really high to make an example of him, and then he wants to follow it up riding the king's horse, wearing the king's robe, with a parade and holiday in his own honor.

Some of you say, "That's unbelievable." We're the same, with less opportunities. The only difference, sometimes, between Haman and us is the opportunities that are set before us, not what we truly desire.

Do you crave attention, honor, recognition, reward, and get angry when overlooked? "I can't believe I didn't get that raise. I can't believe I didn't get the promotion. I can't believe they didn't say thanks. I can't believe they didn't pay me back. I can't believe that they didn't see what I had done and honored or recognized me in some way. I'm very angry about that." Who gets the glory?

Number two: do you become jealous or critical of people who succeed? Proud people become jealous of those who succeed. They can't do what the Bible says and rejoice for those who rejoice. "They got married?" "Well, it's amazing anybody would marry them." "They got pregnant? Pray for that kid." "They got a raise?" "Yeah, apparently they totally fooled the boss." "They got promoted? Yeah, can you believe that?" "They didn't do this "and they did do that, and all of a sudden, "I'm going to criticize them and make a case that they didn't deserve it, unlike me."

Number three: do you always have to win? Do you always have to win?

Number four: do you lack ambition for fear of failing? There's a dark side to pride. Sometimes people think, "Pride just makes you a winner." No, sometimes pride also makes you a coward. You're like, "I'm not going to try that, because what if I fail? That will reflect poorly on me, so I won't try. I'm not going to start that ministry. I'm not going to start that business. I'm not going to pursue that relationship. I'm not going to take that risk. Why? Because there's a possibility of failure, and I can't fail because that would damage my glory and make me look bad. Because I'm a winner, and so I'm not even going to try." For some of you, the pride causes you to try and do more than you can do. For others of you, it causes you to be a coward and to not do all you can do. Pride's tricky.

Number five: do you have a pattern of lying about or hiding your failures? Were you the kid, if you got a bad grade, you threw that paper away, but if you got an A, you showed it to mom? Do you hide your failures? Do you lie about your failures? "No, it wasn't this, it was that. "Oh, you misheard. Let me give you more detail."

Number six: do you have a hard time fully acknowledging you were wrong? Proud people, at most, partially repent. Did you do that? "Well, okay, kind of. Let me explain it. It's complicated. There are a lot of variables. I'm going to talk for a long time until you get exhausted, and then I walk away. Okay? Go." Now, you don't just say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong. I did it. I didn't do it." You may only confess what you got caught for, not the whole truth. You may try and partially confess to just make it go away. You have a hard time just coming clean. You say, "Well, it hurts my glory." But it glorifies God. Again, it's all back to the question of who gets the glory.

Number seven: do you have a lot of conflicts with other people? Are you having a conflict with me right now? "Who's this guy think he is? This guy. I didn't say it." You're very loud in God's ears, alright? "He's worse than me. I Googled him. He's a horrible person." Do you have a lot of conflict with people? "Yeah, they're an idiot, and they're stupid, and they're

lazy, and they never do their job, and they're just sensitive."

Here's what I've seen: very few conflicts between the humble and the humble. Right? It's not like there's a long list of wars that started between the humble and the humble. Now, the proud and the proud? There's a good fight. Are you a person that has a lot of conflict? If so, then maybe you're proud. Maybe you're proud.

Number eight: do you honestly feel you are superior to most people? This sort of pride leads to contempt. "They are stupid, they are ugly, they are lazy, they are foolish, they are disorganized. They're not like me, and it's too bad for them." Some of you laugh, your spouse didn't. Okay? They're like, "That is not funny." But it's this smugness, this superiority.

And number nine—is this the last one? Perhaps it is. Do you tend more toward an attitude of entitlement or thankfulness? Humble people tend to be more thankful. "Thanks, Lord. Thank you for that. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for that gift you gave me. Thank you for that prayer you prayed for me."

Proud people have a sense of entitlement. "Hey! That's mine! That's mine! That's my money. That's my job. That's my position. That's my desk. That's my office. That's my lane on the freeway. Hey! That's mine!" Do you have a sense of entitlement or a sense of thankfulness? See, the truth is we deserve hell. Everything else is a gift. That's a lot of gifts. We're all proud, just in different ways. Amen?

PROUD LIKE HAMAN

Now, if you're not scared yet, let me show you some verses. Okay? Pride and humility. Proverbs 16:5. "Everyone who is arrogant in heart—" Some of you say, "Well, I hide it well." Not from the Lord. You can be arrogant in heart and appear humble to others. "Man looks at the outward," Jesus says, "God knows the heart." "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished."

You're going to see this with Haman. Some of you, your lives are like Haman. You're like, "It's going great." I mean, he was rich, powerful, famous, and then one day everything changed. Some of you, it all falls apart in a moment, and you will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before," what? "Destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." If you raise yourself up, God will take you down. I don't want to give away the story, come back next week, but something happens to Haman that absolutely illustrates this painfully.

Twice it's said in the New Testament quoting another proverb. First Peter 5:5, Jesus' lead disciple, and James 4:6, Jesus' own brother: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another." Every morning, we get up and we dress ourselves, right? And a lot of the time, it's in pride. "How will this present me to others? What sort of image will I project?" God is here, saying through the Holy Spirit, "When we dress ourselves every morning, we also have to spiritually clothe ourselves in humility." "God, help me to grow in humility today. Send the Holy Spirit to grow me in humility. Show me my sin. Let me ask questions about what glorifies you, not me." Friends, when you wake up every morning, don't just clothe yourselves physically, clothe yourselves spiritually with humility. That's something you've got to do, we've got to do, I've got to do every day.

"For 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" See, Haman is proud. God is going to oppose him. Mordecai is humble and God is going to help him.

Now, I'll say this: this is really convicting for me, personally. I'm in a position of influence and leadership, and I know that my heart inclines toward pride, so pray for me and pray for your senior leaders that we would clothe ourselves in humility. This is a haunting reality. I look at Haman and I realize, "Man, I could be like him in an instant," and at times, I have been. And by God's grace, I don't want to be. Haman's pride is tragic.

Here's what kills me about Haman: he wants to be like his king. Wrong king. We all want to be like our king, but he's got the wrong king. See, his king is proud, not humble. His king uses people, doesn't love people. His king loves the glory and doesn't love to glorify God. Who's your king? Who do you esteem the most? Who do you want to be like? Who do you look up to? If his name isn't Jesus, wrong king. Wrong king. So, he is the case study for pride.

HUMBLE LIKE MORDECAI

Now, Mordecai. Mordecai's not been a great dad. He's not been a great believer. He's not been public with his faith. There's a lot that we could criticize in the character of Mordecai, but here's what we do see: humility. I'll explain it to you.

He overhears an assassination attempt for his king. King is of a different religion, different race, different people group. He could have just let it go, but you know what? This is also a book about how to be a missionary in a non-Christian culture. We're all supposed to, by the grace of God, be like Mordecai. We live in a non-Christian culture. Oftentimes, our leaders, our presidents, our governors, our elected officials, our bosses, our professors, they're pagans. Right? They don't love and serve the God of the Bible.

Here's what Mordecai does: he loves and serves his pagan king, and he seeks the well-being of the whole culture, not just himself or God's people. That's the heart of a missionary. It's the same heart we're to have, whether you're in business, or finance, or education, or real estate. Whatever your place in God's world is, it needs to be you bringing life and representing the well-being of all people, not just God's people.

And he's humble in that. He brings the information to the king's execution and saves his life, and he receives nothing. He doesn't rant, he doesn't protest, he doesn't declare war. For four or five years, he gets up and he goes to work. When it says that he's at the city gate, that was a place that he had an office. That was his position, working in some low-level entry desk job for the government. Think of a guy in a cubicle who saved the king's life and got nothing, and what did he do?

He remained a humble servant, doing his job for four or five years, and all of sudden, he gets a really weird day. Right? Mordecai is at work, and who shows up? Haman. You've got to figure—"Call security." Like, "This is a bad day. I heard he's got the seventy-five-foot impaling cross done. Why are you here, Haman?" "For your parade. Okay? I hope the robe fits and the horse doesn't buck you off, and I'll cheer your praises." So, he gets the parade.

What does it say he does after his parade? It says he goes back to his job. That had to be weird. Can you imagine his coworkers in the cubicle? "How was the parade?" "Eh, it was alright." "What now?" "I don't know. I'm going back to work." Like, you know? He goes back to work. He doesn't ask for anything. He's got this posture of a humble servant, like, you're supposed to save the king's life, you're supposed to go to work, shut your mouth, do your job, and even if you get a parade, shut up, go back to work, do your job. Some of you

are wondering, “How can I make a difference for God?” Shut up and do your job. Just something to pray about. It wasn’t as warmly received as I was hoping. Okay.

GRIEVING ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING WITHOUT REPENTING

Lastly. When I say lastly, I really don’t mean that. What I mean is I’m afraid you won’t be paying attention, so please stick with me, okay? Grieving accomplishes nothing without repenting. Now, here’s the question. What’s Haman going to do? Let’s say you’re Haman. What do you do?

Chapter 6, verse 12. “But Haman hurried to his house.” He ran home, “Mourning with his head covered.” This is public mourning. “And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him.”

Here’s what’s weird: he’s got a better marriage than King Xerxes. Esther previously said that she hadn’t even seen her husband in thirty days, and they live in the same palace. It’s possible to be a really proud, ruthless, horrible man who’s got a decent marriage. He goes and talks to his wife, the one thing that the king doesn’t do.

Do you see where, perhaps, even in his own heart, he’d say, “Well, I’m not a ruthless, horrible man. I’m a good family man. You know? I’m good to my wife. I’m good to my friends?” This is how proud people justify their inconsistency. He seems to have a decent marriage and he does have some friends, and he’s going to be a mass murderer. So is the human heart.

“Then his wise men,” put that in quotes. Larry, Curly, and Mo, “and his wife Zeresh said to him.” And she has a bit of a prophecy here. She’s not one of God’s people, but she articulates what is to come. “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall—” “Sweetheart, this is the beginning of the end for you. You’re a dead man.”

“Is of the Jewish people.” What kind of people? God’s covenant people. God’s covenant people. Their Dad’s coming. He’s going to find them. He’s going to look after them. He’s going to protect his kids. “You’re a dead man.”

“You will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.” This is the first compassion we’ve seen from Haman, and his only compassion is for himself. Proud people are very compassionate, but it’s for themselves. Humble people are also compassionate for others. He is sorrowful, but not repentant. He’s grieving, but not confessing.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul tells us not to practice “worldly sorrow.” Haman is illustrative of worldly sorrow. Let me tell you what worldly sorrow is. Worldly sorrow grieves the effects of sin and not the offense of sin. Worldly sorrow causes you to feel horrible for what’s going to happen to you, not that you have offended God. It’s still about you. It’s not about him.

So oftentimes, Christians misinterpret worldly sorrow for true repentance. If you were to see Haman—I mean, you can almost get the picture, like him sitting at his table, sitting in a chair, his head is covered, he’s moaning. Right? He’s looking out the window and there’s a seventy-five-foot impaling cross, and his wife says, “You’re a dead man.”

This was going to be the best day of his whole life. Everything he’d worked for his whole life, he was right on the precipice. He was going to murder his enemy, and he was going to have a holiday and a parade in his honor, and it flipped in a day.

Friend, that’s where you’re headed. Some of you are here, and you’re proud, and your life is about your glory. And some of you are in that position presently that Haman was momentarily. It’s really working for you, and for you, you sort of find it comical when a preacher gets up and says, “You know, when your life hits rock bottom, turn to the Lord.” And you say, “I’m not rock bottom.”

At this point, is he healthy or sick? Healthy. Rich or poor? Rich. Famous or unknown? Famous. In power or without power? In power. Are his plans thriving or dying? They’re thriving. And it all turns in an instant. It turns in a day. Is that you? Are you Haman? You feel no sense of urgency because it’s going very well, and it will until it all collapses in an instant.

And for some of you, that might even be your death. It might work until you close your eyes, looking at what you’ve achieved, and then open your eyes to see the wrath of God in the eyes of Jesus Christ. There’s no hope for Haman today. He died, he stood before God, he was judged. There’s hope for you today. You’re alive. You’re still here. It’s not too late.

And for some of you, you’re in that position of Haman where it’s working. For others of you, you’re on the back side where it has failed. Your plan didn’t work. The marriage didn’t succeed. The children aren’t there or aren’t doing well. The company didn’t thrive; it died. Your investments didn’t flourish; they diminished. You didn’t accomplish what you thought you should, or you did only to lose it.

And I don’t care if you’re in the position of Haman before the worst day of his life or the position of Haman on the worst day of his life. If you’re alive, there’s still hope for you, but it’s not in merely grieving, feeling bad, talking to friends, complaining to your spouse, pouring another drink, pouring it out to a therapist, taking your medication to deal with your depression.

I’m telling you, grieving accomplishes nothing without repenting, without acknowledging, “I’ve sinned against God. Pride is my problem. Glory is my addiction.” How many of you, at this point, receiving this stern warning—and I say this often at Mars Hill: Hard words produce soft people, soft words produce hard people. I love you. I want us to be a soft people, and so sometimes I bring you hard words. How many of you, in hearing these hard words, you would like to know how to go from pride to humility to spare yourself and others of the fate that Haman was destroyed by.

And here’s the key. The way you go from pride to humility is not to stop focusing on your pride and start focusing on your humility, because you’re still focusing on yourself. The way out of pride is to look at Jesus’ humility.

Now, there’s a theme and a thread in the Scriptures that run under the story of Esther, and that is back to God’s covenant people. A promise was made way back in Genesis 12 to a man named Abraham. God said, “I’m going to bring forth a people, covenant people, and from them will come a Savior named Jesus Christ.” And so there had been an attempt, generation after generation, to destroy God’s people so that Jesus couldn’t come.

So Haman’s hatred of God’s covenant people and his hatred of Mordecai, it’s really empowered by the demonic. He’s not a victim, but Satan empowers people to their destructive desires, and his hope is to destroy all of God’s people. And if all of God’s people can be destroyed, then Jesus can’t come to save them. And God spares his covenant people, and

history rolls along, and Jesus comes.

JESUS IS A BETTER SERVANT

And Jesus is the better servant. He's a better servant than Mordecai. He's assuredly a better servant than Haman. And I told you previously, we become like our what? Our King. Jesus is our King, and our King comes. Let me read this to you. Philippians 2:3-11, looking at the coming of King Jesus. It says, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him [this Jesus], and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—" He gets the glory, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Haman wanted to be the man whom the king delights to honor, but Jesus alone is the man whom the King delights to honor. Haman wanted to wear the king's robes, but our King Jesus was stripped of his robes. Haman wanted to wear the king's crown, but our King Jesus wore a crown of thorns. Haman never repented of his sin, but Jesus had no sin to repent of.

Haman plotted to kill all of God's people, but Jesus planned to die for all of God's people. Haman wanted his king to honor him publicly, but our King Jesus was willingly stripped and shamed publicly. Haman would not forgive one man for one thing, but our King Jesus will forgive anyone for anything. Haman planned to crucify his enemy, but Jesus planned to be crucified in the place of his enemies.

Haman raised himself up and was taken down from glory to death, but Jesus humbled himself and was raised up from death to glory. Haman longed for a parade to his glory, but we long for the second coming of Jesus Christ and the parade for his glory. Haman became proud like his King Xerxes, but by God's grace, we can become humble like our King Jesus.

Lord Jesus, the Bible is clear that everyone will bend their knee. God, whether we bow it in this life for salvation or we bow it in the life to come for damnation, it says that every knee will bow, every head will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He gets the glory. So, Father God, I ask that you would send the Holy Spirit, starting right now, for those who do not know the Lord Jesus, that they would bend their knee, that they would bow their head, that they would take the opportunity in this life that Haman did not take. An opportunity to repent and not just grieve. God, for those of us who are Christian, we confess that our heart's inclination leans toward pride. God, it is ever present in our nature. God, please save us from ourselves and from our pride, and please help us to grow in humility to become like our King Jesus. And Father, I pray for myself and the leaders of our church that, Lord God, you would continually help us to have the mind of Christ, and to pursue the humility of Christ, and to show this church and the cities that we call home the humility of our great King. May we not just be leaders, but servant-leaders who love the people. And God, we know that at any point, we could venture down the path of Haman, and so we ask in Jesus' name for the humility to stick close to him that we might become like him because we've been so well loved by him. Amen.

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.