

When God is Silent
What am I to do while God is Silent?
Esther 4:1-17

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Text Introduction: Last week we began a series on this wonderful story of Esther. The book of Esther contains the story of God's purposeful intervention in the lives of the Jews who were living under Persian domination. The search for a new queen convenes because the king has selfishly removed the former queen for invalid reasons. Esther, a Jew, is chosen to be queen. Meanwhile, Mordecai, Esther's cousin and guardian, overheard the plans of a scheme to kill the king. Relaying this news to Esther, Mordecai's name is recorded for saving the king. Suddenly, another character, Haman, arrives on the scene as the king's "right-hand-man." Angered at Mordecai's refusal to bow in his presence, Haman devises a plan to exterminate the Jews. Mordecai, learning of this plot convinces Esther that perhaps she has attained such a position as queen to bring salvation to her people, the Jews. At this point in the story two meetings with the king are planned—one requested by Esther and the other by Haman. Esther's request is for the king to intervene for the Jews; Haman's request is for Mordecai's life. On the night before this meeting, the king cannot sleep and reads from the records of the king. The reading reminds the king of Mordecai's intervention to save his life and wonders what has been done to honor him. The result of the king not sleeping ultimately results in several things. First, Mordecai is finally honored (by Haman of all people). Second, upon hearing of the plan to exterminate the Jews, the king orders the hanging of Haman on the gallows he had made for Mordecai. Third, the king gives Mordecai Haman's job. Most importantly, the fourth result is the salvation of the Jews. Whereas the king could not reverse his earlier decree, he allowed the Jews to defend themselves. In defending themselves, they destroyed their enemies. In surveying this whole story last week, we learned that God is always at work even though we do not always see where He is at work. Today, I want to reveal a second lesson:

Though God is sovereign, He works through people to accomplish His purposes. The question of the day is what must I believe if God is going to use me? For that lesson, we turn specifically to chapter 4.

Text: ¹ When Mordecai learned all that had occurred, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, went into the middle of the city, and cried loudly and bitterly. ² He only went as far as the King's Gate, since [the law] prohibited anyone wearing sackcloth from entering the King's Gate. ³ There was great mourning among the Jewish people in every province where the king's command and edict came. They fasted, wept, and lamented, and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

⁴ Esther's female servants and her eunuchs came and reported the news to her, and the queen was overcome with fear. She sent clothes for Mordecai to wear so he could take off his sackcloth, but he did not accept [them]. ⁵ Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to her, and dispatched him to Mordecai to learn what he was doing and why. ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the King's Gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him everything that had happened as well as the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay the royal treasury for the slaughter of the Jews.

⁸ Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa ordering their destruction, so that Hathach might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and instruct her to approach the king, implore his favor, and plead with him personally for her people. ⁹ Hathach came and repeated Mordecai's response to Esther.

¹⁰ Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to tell Mordecai, ¹¹ "All the royal officials and the people of the royal provinces know that one law applies to every man or woman who approaches the king in the inner courtyard and who has not been summoned—[the] death [penalty]. Only if the king extends the golden scepter will that person live. I have not been summoned to appear before the king for the last 30 days." ¹² Esther's response was reported to Mordecai.

¹³ Mordecai told [the messenger] to reply to Esther, "Don't think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews because you are in the king's palace. ¹⁴ If you keep silent at this time, liberation and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's house will be destroyed. 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.

Introduction: In October of 2002, truck driver Ron Lantz, like most of the rest of the country, had heard about the Washington, D.C. snipers—two lunatics who were wreaking havoc in the D.C. area by murdering people in sniper like fashion. In three weeks time, they had killed 10 and critically injured 3 others, and held millions of people in fear. On this particular October evening, only days away from retirement, Ron pulled his rig into a Washington area rest area. Having heard the bulletins about the Chevrolet Caprice, he saw a car that fit the description. What he did next is the stuff of heroes to me. He parked his rig in a fashion so as to block the car in, called 911, and proceeded to wait about 15 minutes for FBI and police to swarm the area and apprehend the two suspects. I love what Lantz said of his involvement, "I'm no hero; I just want people to know that I only did what I should have done."

I would also say that God in His providence placed Ron Lantz as the right man at the right place at the right time to be used as God's instrument. It is what I see in the story of Esther. **Though God is sovereign, He works through people to accomplish His purposes.** The question of the day is what must I believe if God is going to use me?

What must I believe if God is going to use me?

The Principle of the Providence of God

Esther indicates the lesson that God works through mysterious ways to accomplish His purposes. Only when you sit back and overview the story do you really see all the ways that God has been at work. Interestingly, the name of God does not appear in the entire book of Esther, yet His thumbprint is all over the book. In His providence, a Jew becomes queen. God's providence allows Mordecai to be in the right place at the right time to overhear the plot to kill the king. Finally, it is the providence of God that causes the king to not be able to sleep on the night before both Haman and Esther want his ear. Why did all of these unrelated things occur? The answer is simple—in His providence, God is protecting His people.

- ***God is always at work!***
- ***God is at work through me!***

Look at verse 14. Salvation was going to come to the Jews. The question was whether Esther was going to be used in the process.

The Principle of the Possibility of one

We must get over the temptation that one person does not make a difference. God has often used just one. Abraham was one chosen by God to lead a nation. Moses was one. Joshua was one. The prophets stood alone to preach repentance. John the Baptist was one crying in the wilderness, "Make ready for the coming of the Messiah." The disciples stood alone believing one by one in the resurrection. Paul, stood alone, declaring first the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The Principle that the Pain is Worth the Risk.

- ***Eliminate the temptation not to take risks***
- ***Isolate the real convictions of your life***

The Principle of the Power of God

- ***Don't attempt the difficult without the Divine***
- ***Don't Speak up until you have spoken to the Savior***
- ***Don't Act until you have been with the Almighty***

One of the additional parts of the story that I like about Ron Lantz is that just a week before God used him to capture the snipers, Lantz along with 50 other truckers had participated in a prayer meeting specifically gathering to pray that the snipers would be caught. God can use anybody He so desires, but we want to make sure we are available. A friend of mine said it this way recently, "We want to do all that we should do as we ask God to do only what He can do."