

SI: Last week we saw how the Lord worked through Esther’s plans to bring about the downfall of Haman, the enemy of God’s people. And we saw that in the Christian life, God still works through our plans.

But even though Haman was dead,
the edict he had written for the destruction of the Jews still stood—
and the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be revoked.
So in this chapter we see that a second edict is written,
this time by Mordecai, and it provides for the defense of the Jews.

What I want you to notice in this chapter is how everything is reversed.
Jews who were under mourning under the threat of death—
begin to sing and feast and rejoice.
What was once hopeless, becomes so full of hope,
that they have no more fear of the future.

INTRO: This morning I'm going to start by taking you back to your high school English class.

In literature there are two great patterns—the tragedy and the comedy.

What is a tragedy?

A tragedy is when a person starts out low, but through ambition or good luck, he climbs to the top, and then he is brought down to complete ruin—lower than where he started.

From down low, to the top, and then down again to ruin. Macbeth, Hamlet.

What is a comedy? We use the term comedy just to mean something funny.

But technically a comedy is the opposite of a tragedy.

A person starts out high, through pride, enemies, circumstances—he falls down very deep, but then fortune smiles on him, raised up again—higher than he was before.

Often times comedies end with weddings, feasts and dancing. Midsummer Night's From up high, to the bottom, and then up again, higher than before.

Now, with those two great patterns in mind—which best characterizes the Bible?

The Bible is clearly a comedy. In fact, it's God's great comedy.

It's the story of how mankind was created in the image of God, as rulers over his creation. Adam and Eve were God's king and queen. And then through pride, through their desire to be like God, they fell to the very bottom, whole race fell with them into sin and death and decay—the accusation and domination by Satan.

But, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, the human race is restored to glory.

And the glory that is coming in the new earth, will be even greater than it was in the Garden of Eden.

How does the Bible describe the beginnings of that glory? A wedding feast.

What about the book of Esther? Comedy or tragedy?

Might say, it depends on who's perspective. Haman or friend of Haman, tragedy. But clearly, from the point of view of the people we care about—Esther, Mordecai, and the Jews, this is a comedy.

The Jews were living comfortable lives in Persian empire.

These were the Jews who had decided not to return to the promised land.

Many, like Mordecai and Esther, fitting in to Persian culture a little too well.

Then they fell under the curse of Haman's edict—given to murder and plunder.

"In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes."

But then, by the work of Esther and the amazing providence of God,
they were delivered and raised to incredible heights. Look at 8:17

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

First they were trying to be like everybody else,
but after this, everybody wanted to be like them—total reversal.

So the Bible is a comedy, this story is a comedy.

Now, let me ask you another question—What is your life? A tragedy or comedy?
I don't ask that question lightly. Because I know many of you have suffered—
and some of you are suffering very deeply right now.

You may be at a very low point—fallen there by circumstances beyond control,
or by the meanness of another person, or even your own foolishness.

May seem silly to ask you if your life is a tragedy or a comedy. But it's not.

Because if you can know, and really believe that no matter how low you fall
that you will not stay there, but that you are going to be lifted up,
and lifted up even higher and happier than you ever were before you fell—
That will radically change the way you go through the low points—
and it will give you a taste of that future joy right now.

And as a Christian, if your life is not a tragedy, if final outcome will be
light and joy and feasting and celebrating—
then it's wrong for you to look at your life in any other way.

As we look at this passage I want to point out three things that you must do
in order to see your life as it really is—a comedy directed by God.

1. Trust in Jesus Christ alone.
2. Preach the Gospel to yourself.
3. Rejoice in the hope of glory.

MP#1 Trust in Jesus Christ alone

It must have stunned the Jews in Persia
when they learned that the queen herself was a Jew.
And that her cousin, was the new Prime Minister.

Esther had kept her identity hidden for five years, now it was out in the open.
And Mordecai put on a very public appearance,
leaving the king's palace in royal garments.

The big news was not just this new edict, but that the queen was Jew.
And suddenly everybody wanted to be able to say:
“Some of my best friends are Jews.”

The Jews were blessed because of their connection to Esther—
but it was Esther herself who had taken the risk.

She left her place of security,
she put her life on the line to get an audience with the king.

Then, after she had taken all the risks, and raised to greater honor and influence,
her people enjoyed all of the blessings of being connected to her.

All the great people in the Old Testament, foreshadow Jesus Christ.
Every prophet, priest, and king—or in this case queen—
gave the Old Testament church glimmers of the Messiah.

We see Jesus in the life and work of Esther.

He also left his place of glory with the Father to save his people.
And he not only risked his life for us, he actually gave it.

Remember how Paul put it in Philippians 2.

“He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death,
even death on a cross.”

So Jesus was in a high place, and he fell very low by taking our sin and curse
upon himself and dying on the cross—but then what happened?

Like Esther, Jesus was raised to an even higher place.

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every
name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the
earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Jesus' place now is higher than it was before he came to earth.

Not that he is any more divine. Not that his divine glory is any greater.
As God he didn't become more perfect.

But as the Son of Man, gained honor by conquering death and sin by obedience.

Now, perhaps you are in a low place right now.

You've fallen emotionally, relationally, financially.

Wonder if this will define your life—this tragedy, this fall.

Will you always be down here at the bottom? Will you ever be raised?

As a Christian, your life is tied to Jesus.

He left heaven for you. He gave his life for you.

He was forsaken of God and suffered the curse for your sins.

And now he is ascended, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Bible says that believers are blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. In other words, you get to enjoy all of the blessings of being connected to him—just like the Jews and Esther.

If you look to Jesus and trust him alone—and not your schemes and plans for lifting yourself up—but if you trust him—then you will be glad—even in a low place, because you will know you will be raised as he was.

I was once visiting an elderly couple. He had had a stroke and had fallen. They were facing the reality that he needed to be in a nursing home.

She did the talking, he could not talk. Stroke had made him almost mute.

Asked if I could read any Scripture. She said, Yes. John 3 Jesus and Nicodemus.

When I got to John 3:16. And started to read. He began to quote it with me.

Like the verse was planted so deep, overcame his muteness.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but . . .

When got to that point he reached over, grabbed my hand, squeezed it and said—
“Have, have, have eternal life.”

Faith of a man who was in a low spot but saw his life as it really was,
because he knew his fortunes were linked to Jesus Christ.

MP#2 Preach the Gospel to yourself.

The Jews were amazed at this edict that Mordecai wrote, sealed with king's ring. For a number of months, the terrible decree of Haman had been posted throughout the empire. Allowed Jews to be murdered and plundered. Suddenly along comes this counter decree. It provided for the defense of the Jews.

It was published in all the languages and alphabets of all of the peoples and sent to the 127 provinces of Persia, from India to Cush.

Specifically written in the language and script of the Jews.

Everywhere this edict went—God's people read it and rejoiced.

It's easy to draw a line directly from this decree of Esther and Mordecai to the Gospel—there are so many parallels.

Gospel means good news. This decree was good news.

The Gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ and his salvation that is going into all the world, translated and preached many languages. It lifts the hopeless condemnation of sin and the law from our heads—and fills believers with joy.

Number of years ago, Jack Miller summarized the Gospel this way:

The good news is that you are more wicked and sinful than you ever dared to admit, and at the same time you are more loved and accepted in Christ than you ever dared to hope. So the Gospel humbles you and raises you at the same time.

Decrees that you are so sinful that Jesus had to die for you—

and that no matter how hard you try, you can never do enough to earn salvation.

Even your good deeds are filthy rags. Puritans: I need to repent of my repenting.

Even in our sincere religious exercises, still the presence of sin.

Even if you could be perfect from this point on, what about all evil you've done?

If justice prevailed, you would go to hell for your sins.

Jack Miller used to say: Cheer up, you're much worse off than you think you are.

That destroys your pride.

But Gospel also decrees your eternal value. God loves you as a son.

In fact, he sees you and relates to you through his perfect Son Jesus.

So there is nothing you can do to lose his love or make him love you any less.

He loves you as you are in Christ.

That destroys your condemnation.

Why do we have such a hard time in the low points of life?

Why do we have such a hard time believing that the Lord will raise us up?

Because of pride and condemnation.

Pride says: I can't believe I've done this. I'm better than this. Shouldn't happened.

Condemnation says: I am a failure. Of course happened. I deserve it.

But in both cases, the future is dark, seems to be little hope.

Both the proud heart and the self-condemning heart don't believe in grace.

Believe it is up to me to earn God's favor and blessing.

The only difference is that the proud person thinks he can,

and the self-condemning person doubts he can—

but both of them think it is their own work.

Even for Christians this is our default mode of thinking—

especially when the fall you've experienced is a moral fall.

Sometimes it's a little easier if the low point is because of a loss or circumstances beyond your control.

But when you know that it is your own foolishness, own sin

that has brought you down this low—very easy to be proud or self-condemning.

This isn't me. I'm better than this. Or, I'm a failure and all is ruined.

You have to preach the Gospel to yourself.

Before I fell God didn't love me any more, and now he doesn't love me any less.

Even when I was doing my best I was an unprofitable servant.

Even my best works for God were filthy rags.

But it is in Christ alone that I am accepted.

The blessings of God rest on Christ and his work, not on me.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached a sermon on condemnation. Quoted Joel .

"I will restore to you the years that the locust have eaten"

Do you realize that in the hand of God you can do more in five minutes than you could have done in fifty years on your own? Do not listen to the devil. The past is not altogether hopeless, it must not mortgage the present or the future. God delivers you, makes you a new creation; you are a new man in a new world. Leave the past. Never look at it again. It is always the devil that makes you look back. Refuse it, set your face steadfastly towards the future, that glorious future that is before you!"

That brings us to the last thing this passage teaches that you must do
in order to see your life as it really is you must—

MP#3 Rejoice in the hope of glory

The Jews rejoiced.

Verse 16 says it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor.

Verse 17, says that there was joy and gladness, feasting and celebration.

But was this celebration premature? They were still in a dangerous situation.
Remember, the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be revoked.

The date for their destruction was still set. 13th of Adar.

On that date they were still fair game for murder and plunder.

Haman was dead but his edict was still in effect.

There was bound to be some fighting on that day, some Jews probably killed.

But the Jews were so glad at the good news of the king's new edict,
that they were rejoicing as though the final victory had already taken place.
They had a certainty about their future that gave them joy in the present.

In the next chapter, the 13th of Adar comes, Jews win the victory.

And they have a really big feast then.

It becomes an annual celebration that Jewish people still celebrate today. Purim.

But the feast in this chapter is not Purim. It's not the feast after the victory.

In this chapter we see the feast before the feast. The feast anticipating victory.

Throughout the New Testament we find the theme of anticipation.

In Colossians 1 "the hope of glory" and "hope that is stored up for you in heaven"

Titus 2 "the blessed hope"

Romans 5 "the hope of the glory of God"

1 Peter "a living hope"

Hebrews 6 "this hope, an anchor for the soul"

All of these piling up of descriptions of this hope essentially mean the same thing.
Through Jesus Christ you can know for certain that God has plans for your future.

Wonderful plans. Resurrection. New creation.

Even the Bible cannot describe what God has planned.

It only gives us rumors and hints of something wonderful.

Talks about trees of the field singing, mountains dancing.

Harvests that never end. Wine flowing from the mountains.

Lion lying down with the lamb.

The Apostle Paul, one of the greatest Christian minds simply quotes Isaiah:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

That is your real life. That is what God has planned for you.
That’s a defense against the weariness and discouragement that threatens you.

When you become a Christian you are not lifted out of this world.
The Christian life is not life in a magic circle.
You live in this world, wrestling with sin and the effects of sin.
You are cast down at times. Fall very far and hard. Like Jews did.

Perhaps you’ve been through some long years of struggle.
Maybe you’ve been fighting with a particular sin.
Maybe you have a child who has wandered from the faith.
Maybe you have long-term marital strife or financial uncertainty.
Or illness, or the death of a loved one.
But as low as you have been—these things will not define your life.
You have a future that God has planned—the hope of glory.

Jesus says one day you are going to sit down at a feast—wedding supper of Lamb.
That feast will be a celebration of Jesus’ victory, and your victory.
Will look back over all your struggles, all your low points,
and the struggles of all of God’s people through the ages—
and there will be nothing but joy as you see where God has brought you.
But you don’t have to wait. You can start to celebrate that future victory now.
Just like the Jews feasted before their victory in the hope of glory.

If you’ve ever been in a wedding, you know there are two celebrations—two feasts.
There is the wedding reception after the wedding—wedding cake and the punch.
That’s just pure fun. Band, dancing, and celebration.

But there is also the rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding.
That’s also a celebration—but it’s different, isn’t it.
Even though there is lots of laughter at a rehearsal dinner—also solemn moments.
People missing—Groom says, wish my grandfather could have been here.
Sometimes advice given—marriage blessing, but hard times.
It’s a celebration of what is yet to come—wedding the next day.

You are invited to a rehearsal dinner for the wedding supper of the Lamb—
it’s called the Lord’s Supper. Jesus invites you to come.

Wants you to eat and drink and be glad knowing that this is the celebration before the celebration—that he has great things planned, hope of glory. If at a low point, right for you to bring that to this meal—tell Lord where you are—and ask him, through the bread and cup, to fill you with the hope of glory.

CONC: Is your life a comedy or a tragedy?

I hope I've shown you that if you are in Christ, if you have given your life to Jesus and are following him, then your life is a comedy.

No matter how low, you will be raised up.

But if you haven't given your life to Christ, if you haven't repented of your sins, bowed to his Lordship and listened to his call in your heart—then your life will end in tragedy.

You may enjoy some good things in this life, but this is as good as it gets. All God's blessings will be an indictment against you on the day of Judgment and you will here Jesus say: Depart from me, I never knew you.

Wouldn't you rather hear him say: Well done. Enter into your master's happiness! Choose Jesus. Choose life. Choose to follow him and obey him and love him and his life and future will be yours.