

St Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Advent Vesper III. December 18, 2013
Esther 4:13,14



He (Mordecai) sent back this answer, “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

If you watched *Jeopardy* the other day – one of the questions was – what President spoke English as a second language? Do you know? De, de, de, de – de, de, de, de – de, de, de, de – de, de, de, de!” “Who is Martin Van Buren?” He’s the 8th President of the United States. Martin Van Buren was the first President – actually born a US citizen. All of the first 7 Presidents were born before the American Revolution – so technically they were born British subjects. President Van Buren’s parents were Dutch – and lived in New York. So Martin grew up speaking Dutch! There were difficult economic times during the presidency of Martin Van Buren – including what was called the *Panic of 1837*. People used to call him President Van Ruin! After 4 years he was out! Did you know any of that? Probably not! Sometimes we think all this government stuff is so important – when in fact what we need to remember is – who is the King of kings and Lord of lords? Who is running this world-for the eternal good of all believers? Our Lord Jesus is always in charge. He always was and he always will be. Today we will look back at the situation in the days of Esther and see:

The LORD Governs Everything For Our Good!

- I. Jesus is the King of kings
- II. Jesus is the Lord of my ♥

The context of our Bible reading is kind of complicated. King Solomon died some 931 years before the Christ-child would be born. After he died Israel was broken into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom – the Kingdom of Judah continued to have kings descended from David. The northern kingdom – the Kingdom of Israel had many different kings – 19 in all – ranging from bad to mostly bad to King Omri who was extra bad to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel who were the worst! They reigned from as little as 1 month to as long as Jehu who reigned for 28 years. In 722 before the Christ child was born the Assyrians attacked and carried off the 10 northern tribes – the nation of Israel. In the year 605 before the birth of the Christ-child Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians attacked. Nebuchadnezzar began a series of deportations. People like Daniel and a priest named Ezekiel were carried off into captivity in the far off land of Babylon. Still the LORD was patient with his weak even wicked people. Finally Zedekiah, King of Judah rebelled against the LORD and against the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem – and in 586 ultimately destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem and carried many more Jews off into captivity in Babylon. Kingdoms and Empires come and go. This ought to serve as a powerful warning to we the people of the United

States of America. For a while it was the Egyptians – then the Assyrians – then the Babylonians – then the Medes and Persians – then the Greeks and then the Romans – and on and on and on. The history reported in Ezra begins in 539 B.C. Cyrus the Persian captured Babylon. Cyrus – moved and directed by the Holy Spirit – sent God’s people back to Israel – to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The first 6 chapters of Ezra talk about this. Right after chapter 6 – insert the account of Esther – a Jewish woman who became the queen of Persia and saved God’s people Israel from the murderous plot of wicked Haman! The LORD used Esther to save the small group of Jews struggling to survive in Jerusalem. It also made it possible for many more exiles to return to Judah about 450 years before the Christ child – under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Esther – chapter 1. The name of the King is Xerxes! King Xerxes is the King of the Medes and Persians – a kingdom that stretched from India to Greece – all the way down to Ethiopia and Egypt. It was huge! Xerxes – history tells us – had what we would call anger management issues. Xerxes’ father Darius – tried to conquer the Greeks but was defeated in the famous battle of Marathon. When the Greeks won – a Greek soldier named **Pheidippides** – ran all the way back from Marathon to Athens to share the good news! The run was – you can guess 26 miles plus 3 football fields – and a little bit more! Darius was defeated. His son Xerxes tried to avenge that terrible defeat. He built a bridge for an invasion – and when the bridge collapsed – Xerxes put to death the designers of the bridge. And then he had the Sea punished – whipping the sea with whips and chains. Pounding sand – and so? The story is told – when the father of 5 sons in the army asked for mercy – that just one of his 5 sons remain home – Xerxes had that 5th son cut in half and put beside the road when the army left. Your 5th son stays home – and so?! God’s Word says King Xerxes **reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials...For a full 180 days – that is 6 months he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.** That’s a lot of pride and showing off – and so?

On the 7th day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the 7 slaves who served him to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at... The Queen was a lady – with some modesty – who did not want to be put on display before the King’s drunken friends – so she said no! Now what? The King asked his advisers – his wise men – who said the king has to do something – before all the wives in the kingdom started to tell their husbands no – about all sorts of things! So what was he to do? He gave the order that Vashti would no longer be queen. He would find a new one. God’s Word says, **Later when King Xerxes’ fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. Then the king’s personal attendants proposed, let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa...** Esther pleased the king and won his favor. **Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king’s palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem. Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what had happened to her.**

Uncle Mordecai uncovered a conspiracy. **Bigthana and Teresh – two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, because angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the**

king, giving credit to Mordecai. When the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king. To make a long story short – there was politics in the palace. A wicked man named Haman won the favor of King Xerxes – and moved up to the point of literally sitting higher than all the other nobles. God’s Word says, **“When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai’s people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.”** Haman said to King Xerxes, **“There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them...** Diabolical in its simplicity – a law passed – sealed with the King’s signet ring – a law of Medes and Persians that once made cannot be changed – even by the King who made it! **When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly... What chance did the Jews have? Uncle Mordecai tells Queen Esther she needs to intervene – on behalf of God’s people. Ester tells Uncle Mordecai, “All the kings’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death – thought – even assumed to be an assassin – they were to be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. That’s when our text came into play: He (Mordecai) sent back this answer, “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”**

Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So far...so good! What would the Queen like? To be able to give a feast in honor of the king – please invite Haman – and so? Oh, Haman couldn’t believe it. Everything was coming up roses – except for that Uncle Mordecai who still refused to show him honor and respect – or at least a little fear? Don’t you know who I am? Haman’s wife **Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of about 75 feet, and ask the king in the morning to have Uncle Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself.”** This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up. That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign to be brought in and read to him. What should they read? It was found recorded that Uncle Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. What honor and recognition has Uncle Mordecai received for this?” **“Nothing has been done for him,”** his attendants answered.

At the banquet Esther exposed the plot to put to death all her people – and if the King’s law was completely carried out – Queen Esther herself would be killed. **King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he – the man who has dared to do such a thing?”** Esther said, **“An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!”** Anger management King Xerxes – out in the garden to get a grip or not. **But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king was returning from the**

palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" They took wicked Haman and impaled him on that 75 foot pole that he had intended for Uncle Mordecai!

Now – how to save the Jews? How about – if the day before all the Jews were supposed to be killed---the Jews had a day to put to death **all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them and they did what they pleased to those who hated them.** Thus our Heavenly Father used Kings and Queens and rulers and powerful people – to protect his people until the fullness of time came – for the Christ child to be born!

Who is the Prime Minister of Canada? Do you know? Stephen Joseph Harper. Who is the Prime Minister of Mexico? Enrique Pena Nieto. The Prime Minister of England: David Cameron. The Premier of China? Li Keqiang since March 15th of this year. The Prime minister of France? Jean-Marc Ayrault. Do you know the names of the leaders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan? Jesus does. Jesus knows the names of all 100 Senators and all 435 members of the House of Representatives – some 53 from the state of California. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Nothing happens in this whole wide world – without his permission! This Christmas time when it is tempting to be all concerned – it is good to remember: "It came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world will be taxes..." From Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Judah to King David to today – all nations are under God's control. He will make all thing work together for our eternal good – until we are safe in Heaven.

To God alone all glory!
Rev. Anthony E. Schultz