**The Book of Esther**

**Wednesday Night Bible Study**

**Wednesday, 23 June 2021**

**Queens Chapel UMC \* 7410 Muirkirk Road \* Beltsville, MD 20705**

**Instructor: Rev. Dr. Will Butler**

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**Theme:** **“A Woman for Such a Time as This”** **(Esther 4:14)**

"…Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

**Esther Chapter 3**

**(Part 2)**

**Esther 3:3-4**

 3 Then the king’s servants who were within the king’s gate said to Mordecai, “Why do you transgress the king’s command?”

 4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai’s words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.

**Amplified**

 3 Then the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate said to Mordecai, “Why are you disregarding the king’s command?”

 4 Now it happened when they had spoken to him day after day and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai’s reason [for his behavior] would stand [as valid]; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

* Mordecai reveals his nationality—a Jew—when he was appointed to his position as judge, no one knew about his Jewish heritage.
* By Mordecai revealing his nationality, he was declaring his religious belief
* Mordecai took a stand for God and his faith

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**Note:**

**Taking a Stand for Christ (Luke 23:50-56)**

**Joseph of Arimathea**

 “The evangelist Billy Sunday used to tell of a professing Christian who got a job in a lumber camp that had the reputation of being very ungodly. A friend, hearing that the man had been hired, said to him, “If those lumberjacks ever find out you’re a Christian, you’re going to be in for a hard time!” The man responded, “I know, but I need the job!”

 The next morning, he left for camp. A year later, he came home for a visit. While in town, he met his friend who asked, “Well, how did it go? Did they give you a hard time because you’re a Christian?” “Oh no, not at all,” the man replied. “They didn’t give me a bit of trouble—they never even found out!” (“Our Daily Bread,” 11/83.)

 While we may chuckle at that story, many of us may wince. It hits too close to home! Living in a world that is hostile to Christianity, it’s easy just to blend in, to laugh at the dirty jokes, never to confront the gossip, and never to speak a word that would identify yourself as a Christian. Besides, it might cost your reputation or even your job! Sometimes even among Christian friends it’s hard to hold to your convictions for fear of what they will think.

 That’s why you should be interested in the story of Joseph of Arimathea, the man who buried Jesus. No one knows where Arimathea was located, but the designation helps distinguish him from other Josephs. He was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the body of 70 men who governed the religious and many of the civic matters in Israel. It was the Sanhedrin that had condemned Jesus to death, although Joseph had not consented to their plan and action. But probably he had not spoken out as vigorously as he should have.

 John 19:38 tells us that he was a secret disciple of Jesus, for fear of the Jews. His fear had caused Joseph not to take a bold stand for Christ, even though in his heart he knew that he should have done so.

 But now, after Jesus was dead, when His followers had gone into hiding, Joseph gathered up his courage (Mark 15:43), went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus so that he could give Him a proper burial. If he had not done so, Jesus’ body probably would have been thrown on a garbage heap and burned, robbing us of some of the major proofs of the resurrection, as we’ll see. So we can thank Joseph for honoring Jesus with a proper burial and for giving us many evidences for our faith.

 Joseph seemingly had nothing to gain and everything to lose by identifying himself with Jesus at this point in time. Jesus was dead and no one was expecting His resurrection. It would have been much easier for Joseph to have thought, “Oh, well! Jesus was a good man and a prophet of God. It’s too bad that these things happened. But life must go on. I’ll have more influence if I don’t rock the boat and keep my seat on the Sanhedrin. I’d better not do anything to upset anyone and jeopardize my position of influence.”

 But in spite of the risks, Joseph came out of hiding and took a strong stand for Jesus by providing Him a proper burial. He gives us an example of what other Scriptures teach by precept:

* **1 Corinthians 16:13**

 “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”

* **Ephesians 6:10-11**

 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

* **Romans 12:2**

 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,

that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

[www.Bible.org](http://www.Bible.org) “From the Series: Luke”

Q = Was there ever a time you had to take a stand because of your Christianity? Share your experience with the class.

Q = What are some ways you can stay true to your values as a Christian?

**Values of Christianity is in conflict with the values of the world**

 Worldly values include **wealth, power, pleasure, revenge, fame, vanity and status.** These are the most important things to people who perceive no power or purpose beyond themselves.

 Worldly values promote **jealousies, resentments and conflicts among people in accordance with the purposes of Satan**

* **John 8:44**

 **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.**

* **Ephesians 2:1-5**

 **1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,**

 **2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,**

 **3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**

 **4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**

 **5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

 The values taught in the Bible are often the opposite of worldly values: kindness and respect for all people instead of power.

 Humility instead of status; honesty and generosity instead of wealth; self-control instead of self-indulgence; forgiveness instead of revenge.

Q = Why is this so difficult for a Christian today?

* **1 John 2:16**

 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.

* **Galatians 5:16-17**

 16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

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**Esther 3:5-6**

 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.

 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.

**Amplified**

 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, he was furious.

 6 But he disdained laying hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were (his nationality); so Haman determined to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who lived throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

* These Scriptures reveals that Haman is an insecure man with a powerful position
* Mordecai is a secure man in a subordinate position
* Haman didn’t treat Mordecai with contempt once he learned about his true nationality, he decided to go after the Jewish people.
* This is Haman’s opportunity to destroy the entire population of Jews

 New York Times Bestselling Author Bishop T. D. Jakes wrote a book entitled *“The Ten Commandments of Working in a Hostile Environment”*

* **1st Commandment:** Know that you are appointed for the job or position you now hold
* **2nd Commandment:** Don’t Expect to be Appreciated
* **3rd Commandment:** Embrace Opportunities for Change
* **4th Commandment:** Do the Job Well While Remembering the Vision
* **5th Commandment:** Don’t let the environment get inside you

What Haman didn’t know…

* The Jews were protected by God’s promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12:2-3**

 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

 3 **I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you;** And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

* **Isaiah 54:17**

 “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn.”

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**Some take-a-way thoughts:**

**1. The fear of God overcomes the fear of man—How?**

**Proverbs 9:10**

 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

* What is the fear of God?

**2. There’s a difference between showing respect for someone’s position and worship—are they the same?**

* What is worship?

**3. Haman was an egotistical man. The sight of Mordecai’s disrespect infuriated him.**

* How would you handle someone like Haman?
* How would you handle someone that willfully disrespected you?

**Read Esther 3:7-15**