

5.6.22 pm

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Date: 05 June 2022

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 01] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. We're going to begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise from Psalm 116.

Psalm 116 and the first three stanzas of the Psalm in Gaelic. Psalm 116 verses 1 to verse 4 as they're marked. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear.

I while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear. Of death the cords and sorrows did. About me compass rang, the pains of hell took hold of me. I grief and trouble find.

Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thy my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray. These three verses of Psalm 116 in Gaelic.

We remain seated to sing in Gaelic. And then after we've sung, Donald will come and lead us in prayer in Gaelic, please. Thank you.

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Thank you.

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[4 : 49] Thank you.

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[7 : 19] Thank you.

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[9 : 49] Thank you.

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[12 : 19] Thank you.

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[14 : 49] Thank you.

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[24 : 49] Thank you.

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[27 : 19] Thank you.

I haven't got time to go back over the plot line, but as we've traveled through this book, we saw this girl, Esther. She was just a 15, 16-year-old girl who's taken from obscurity, and she's put in a palace for such a time as this.

We see her cousin who loved her like a father, who loses one that he loved like a daughter, and she's ripped away from him and put in the palace where he has no access to her, and he doesn't know what's going on with her.

And then we see the rise of this evil Haman, who is against Mordecai, who is against the Jews, who is against God himself, and he seems to be untouchable for so long.

But we've come to a point now in the story where Haman, evil, vile Haman, has been killed. So the threat to Mordecai and the threat to Esther that came through Haman has now gone.

[28 : 53] But still, there is this edict where God's enemies and the enemies of God's people have a legal right to attack them and seek to destroy, kill, annihilate them.

And so for a long time, this date has been looming. And now, Esther 9, verse 1, the date has come. So, first point is D-Day. And I know when we think about D-Day, we immediately go back to 1944, Second World War, the Normandy landings.

And D-Day was a day of great significance. It was a day of joy for the Allies because it was clear that victory was close, and yet it was a day that signified the end of Nazi control.

And the same applies here in this edict. On the 13th day of the 12th month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out, verse 1.

[29 : 59] On this day, the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them. But now, the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those he hated them.

So that's the headline we could say. That's in the bold print. That's the summary of what was going on as this chapter begins. For so long, it looked like God's people were finished.

It looked like their cause was lost. It looked like they were going to be wiped off the face of the earth.

But the tables were turned, we're told. And those who looked like they were to be overpowered, all of a sudden, have found themselves in a position of power where they were not only able to defend themselves, but they were able to overcome.

And the question is, how so? How was this made possible? And the answer is because God was at work. The great reversal that we see, the tables being turned, was affected because God was at work.

[31 : 22] And he was with his people. And so what seemed for so long to be impossible, now it was possible. It was inevitable. It was unstoppable.

Because God was at work. And that's a pattern that we can trace all the way through the Bible. Take just a few characters. Think about Joseph.

Joseph, God's man. He's captured. He's imprisoned. It looks like he's finished. But God was with him.

And God took him out of the depths of this prison where he looks to be absolutely hopeless and he puts him in the position of prime minister. No explanation other than God was with him.

Or think of Gideon. He's taken to a place where he's gone from, is it, 32,000 to 300 men of an army. And he's facing this massive enemy.

[32 : 31] The commentators talk about, I think it's 135,000 men against 300. The odds are ridiculous. He must surely be finished, everybody said.

But God was with him. And God gave him the victory. Tables were turned. Or think of the cross. Imagine on that day, on Calvary's hill, seeing all that happened. Imagine watching as Jesus is arrested, as this unjust trial progresses, as he is charged, as he is manhandled, as the nails are driven through his hands and feet.

Imagine looking in on that scene as Jesus suffers and hangs on the cross. Imagine listening from a close distance hearing Jesus cry out, it is finished.

And breathe as last. On that day, in that moment, from an onlooker's point of view, it looked like Jesus was overpowered.

[33 : 57] It looked like the cause was lost. It looked like Satan had finished Jesus.

It looked like he was overcome, but all was not as it seemed. And just as Jesus had taught, on the third day, the tables were turned.

and Jesus rose. And it was crystal clear that he was not finished. But sin and Satan and death and hell were finished for all who believed in Jesus.

so often we see in Scripture these D-days. Great reversals. The tables being turned.

And as we look in on this, as we read this chapter, remember this was their God. But this is our God.

[35 : 12] God and he does not change. And he has not lost any of his ancient power. God was able, God still is able, to do more than we can ask or think or imagine.

So I don't know what D-days might be on your horizon. There might be situations, there might be people. that trouble you.

You see no way through. You see what, in human terms, appears to be a lost cause. Sometimes we look at these things with human eyes and we want to give up.

But let's remember, as we encounter these D-days, that our God is able to do more than we can ask or think or imagine.

So trust him and worship him. So first point is D-day. The second point is we see here the deliverance of God's people.

[36 : 28] And we see that in verses 2 through to verse 4. The Jews assembled in their cities, verse 2, in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those seeking their destruction.

No one could stand against them because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, the king's administrators, helped the Jews because fear of Mordecai had seized them.

Mordecai was prominent in the palace. Remember, he's gone from being this low level, unknown civil servant to prominent in the palace.

his reputation spread throughout the provinces and he became more and more powerful. And so, even as we look at these few verses, we can see that on this day that Haman expected God's people to be destroyed, they were saved.

It's crystal clear to anyone looking in that they were delivered, they were saved. So, just think a little more for a moment about their deliverance. What was it that they did to secure this deliverance, this salvation?

[37 : 46] You know, was it their great number that enabled them to be delivered? Well, clearly not because like Gideon, they were massively outnumbered in this empire.

So, was it their military might? Was it that they were strong and powerful and armed to the teeth? Is that what made it possible for them?

And is that what actually achieved this victory for them? Was it their military might? Well, no, it wasn't because they didn't have horses, they didn't have chariots, they didn't have tanks, they didn't

have guns, they didn't have smart missiles, they had nothing.

So, how was it that God's people were delivered? How did this turnaround come about?

What was the cause who was behind it? And the answer is God. God was behind us.

[38 : 51] The deliverance came from God. And remember, we don't find the name of God once in the book of Esther.

Nowhere is his name mentioned, nowhere is prayer mentioned, nowhere is Bible reading mentioned. There is no recognizable religious ritual, there is no visible miraculous intervention on the part of God in the book of Esther.

but what we see is that God is constantly active in providence. The ordinary and the extraordinary events of life, God is in the midst of them.

And you could track back through all the previous chapters and see time and time again, God is working. He's not named in the book, but we cannot but see him.

The reason verse 2 that no one could stand against the Jews was because God was standing with them. And the reason, verse 2, that all the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them, and the reason, verse 3, that the fear of Mordecai had seized them, was because they could see the power of God at work in and through Mordecai and in and through all of God's people, as these other nations looked in, they could just see they were not on their own, the Jewish people.

[40 : 33] God was with them. So their deliverance was not because of what they did. It was because of what God did.

It wasn't through their works. it was through God's work. And there is a picture, as we apply this, of our salvation.

How can you and I be delivered from death? And all of us are going to face death one day, but how can we pass through it? How can we be delivered from the cords of death?

How can we be delivered from the devil, who is much stronger than we and our human strength are? How can we be delivered from the sin that so easily entangles us? How can we be delivered from hell?

Well, the answer is not through our strength, and not through our might, not through our power, not through our good works, not through our religion, not through our reputation, not through our intelligence.

[41 : 44] there is nothing that you and I can do to save ourselves. Nothing. Salvation is all the Lord.

He is the one who delivers us, and he delivers us when we call out to him. And it's that simple. so let me ask all of us, young ones in particular, I know we go to sleep for a long time in these services, but just tune in for a second.

Have you asked the Lord to save you? Have you asked him to deliver you? Because whether we're three or whether we're 93, we're all struggling with sin.

We're all eventually going to come to the last day of our time in this world. And after this world, there is a world that never ends. We can either go to be with God in heaven, or we can go to be apart from him in hell.

God and the only way that we can be saved is if we call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. He went to the cross to die for us.

[43 : 11] He took the punishment of our sin away. But he wants us to trust him. And he'll only save those who ask him to save them.

So have you young ones, middle-aged ones, older ones, have we asked the Lord to deliver us?

We sang this in the psalm. We do this through prayer. I love the Lord, verse Psalm 116, I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear.

I, while I live, not when we come to the point of death, because that's too late. I, while I live, will call on him who bows to me his ear. Think about that, the God of heaven bowing his ear to those who pray for my seat just now.

Of death the cords and sorrows did about me compass round, they're all around me. The pains of hell took hold of me. We feel that worry sometimes.

[44 : 21] I grief and trouble find. So what did I do? The psalmist says, upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, deliver thou my soul.

O Lord, I do thee humbly pray. God, merciful and righteous is, gracious is our Lord. God saves the meek.

I was brought low. He did me help afford. You know, on that day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the day that they feared, God saved them. it was a day when they knew the joy of their deliverance. The Jews could look back to that day, and they still do.

But we look back to Calvary, don't we? We look back to the cross. That's where our deliverance was secured, and we did nothing to secure it.

[45 : 40] Jonathan Edwards said, you contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary. So the deliverance of God's people.

Are we delivered? Are we saved? And finally, the destruction of God's enemies. Verse 5, you see this destruction as we go down from verse 5 to the end of where we read.

The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. Now, you read that line, they did what they pleased to those who hated them, you think, what does that mean?

Does that mean war crimes? Well, no, it doesn't mean war crimes. One commentator says, this clause does not imply that the Jews act sadistically towards those who hate them, but rather that the Jews have no difficulty in dispatching quickly their enemies.

And that makes sense because we know God was with them. So as they faced enemies, they did what they pleased. It was easy for them to overpower their enemies because God was with them. them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men and then they killed these 10 sons of Hamadatha, whom I struggled to read the first time, I'm not going to read the second time.

[47 : 08] So we see Haman, Haman is gone, evil Haman who we saw for so many weeks, who seemed so powerful, he's gone and now Haman's sons are gone too, his name is gone.

You know, if we were to rewind Esther 5, we can see Haman on a day when he's full of his own self importance and he's boasting about his vast wealth, he's boasting about his many sons, he's boasting about how important and how honoured he is, and now Haman has nothing.

he is gone, and everything that he boasted about is gone. Jesus said in Mark 8 36, what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?

And for a short time, Haman had gained the whole world. For a short time, as he raged against God, he had his hands on everything he could ever have dreamed on, money, and power and success and fame.

But now he's lost everything. Verse 11, the number of those slain in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day.

[48 : 36] The king said to Queen Esther, the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men. And the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa, what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces?

And so Xerxes, when he picks up the newspaper and he reads about this mass killing, he's in no way disturbed by this, he's actually very entertained by all this violence and bloodshed.

So he says to Esther, you have any more wishes? Ask me whatever you want. I'll give it to you. You've done a good thing today. Just ask me whatever you want.

What is your petition? Verse 12, it will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted. prophet. And Esther replies in verse 13, if it pleases the king, give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this edict, this day's edict tomorrow also, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on gallows. So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman. This is kind of gruesome stuff.

[49 : 48] You know, we've come through this book, and you kind of hope maybe that it's going to come to a happy, peaceful ending. But there's quite a lot of blood and gore and grit in the climax of this book.

And the question I think we would ask when we hear Esther's petition to extend one day's killing to two days, why does she do this? Why does she ask for this?

And the reason that she asks for this is because Esther is being used to administer God's judgment. She is an agent on this day that God is using to judge his enemies.

God's judgment is never bad tempered. It's never impulsive. You know the way we fly off the handle and we lash out at people.

God doesn't do that. His wrath, his judgment is calm, it is settled, it is controlled. And if we stand back from this scene and look at Haman's people who are called the Amalekites, for generations, hundreds of years, they have been attacking God's people and they have been raging against God.

[51 : 24] You can go tonight to Deuteronomy 25 and you can read in that section where God speaks to his people and he says remember what the Amalekites did.

Remember when you were coming out of Egypt, when you were weary and worn out, they met you on the journey and attacked all who were lagging behind. And that's what they did.

God's people were traveling out of Egypt, the Amalekites, they attacked them and those who were lagging behind, the women, the children, those who were suffering with various ailments, they wiped them out.

No mercy, bloodshed. They have no fear of God. God reminds them of that in Deuteronomy 25. Deuteronomy was written about 1400 years before Christ. Esther was written about 400 years before Christ.

[52 : 29] For a thousand years, God has looked on these enemies and he has given them time to repent of all that they had done, all the rebellion against his people and against him.

He had given a thousand years for them to repent, but they would not repent. They kept on attacking, they kept on rebelling, they had no fear of God. And so after all this time, God's showing them such great patience.

the day for judgment had come. And Esther was being used to blot out the name of Amalek.

So yes, this is gruesome, but it's the picture of a God who justly judges those who rebel against him.

It's the picture of a God who cares for his people and protects his people from those who rage against them. Because he loves them.

[53 : 45] And in relation to the hanging, we see the ten sons of Haman hanged. And in that context, hanging was a picture of the curse of God.

so those who looked in on Haman's ten sons could see on this day that they had met God's judgment.

So yes, this is hard to read. It's hard to preach. But when we read this, and when we think about the judgment, and when we think about the hanging, we can't help but think about Jesus, surely.

God's son, God's only son, who was hanged on the tree to take the curse of our sin upon himself, to take the judgment of God in a far greater measure than we see in this chapter, it fell upon Jesus.

So that we would not be destroyed because of our sin, but rather we would be delivered from our sin and saved by the blood of Jesus.

[55 : 14] And we'll leave it there tonight. Heavenly Father, we pray that you would help us to understand, that you would help us to heed your word.

We thank you that although we are sinners and although we are rebels against you by nature and by practice, you have made it possible for judgment to be withheld, mercy to be shown, grace to be shown, because of all that Jesus has done on our behalf.

We thank you that he took the wrath that we deserve. We thank you that he went to the cross. He took the curse of our sin into his body so that we could be saved if we believe in him.

So enable each of us, we pray, to believe, to call upon the name of the Lord so that we will not be destroyed, but that we will be delivered from our sin and saved eternally.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. 495 in mission praise to close. Oh for a heart to praise my God.

[56 : 23] And then I'm going to ask Jim Sim to close the service in prayer. And I'm going to scoot during the final praise. Oh for a heart to praise my God.

YF, those who are going to the tent mission, please just follow me out just and we head in a second. O what a heart to praise my God, a heart from sin set free, a heart that always fills thy blood so freely shed for me.

A heart resigns the peace of me, my great Redeemer's Lord, where only Christ is there to speak, where Jesus reigns an old.

Above the Lord, he wants thy heart, believing to and glean, which neither life nor death can part from him that dwells within.

a heart in every thought renewed and full of love divine, perfect and right and good and good and holy Lord of thine.

[58 : 46] thy nature gracious heart impart come quickly from above Christ thy new name upon my heart thy new blessing of love God is God to you to you to you take us from this place Lord to you to you help us that you might walk each one of us with you and be ready for that day when you will

come to this place again or until the day we will come to you.

Bless the preaching of your work today Lord wherever it has gone and wherever the road goes on
but in time for any much fruit for us today in Jesus name Amen Amen