

13.2.22 pm

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 February 2022

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 00] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service tonight. We're going to begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 146, the first three stanzas of the Psalm in Gaelic.
- I'll read the first five verses in English, but I believe it's different numerically in Gaelic. Praise God the Lord, praise O my soul, I'll praise God while I live, while I have being to my God in songs I'll praises give.
- Trust not in princes nor man's son in whom there is no stay. His breath departs to earth, he turns, today his thoughts decay. O happy is that man and blessed whom Jacob's God doth aid, whose hope upon the Lord doth rest and on his God is stayed.
- So the first three stanzas of Psalm 146 we sing in Gaelic. Remain seated to sing and after that Angus Alec will lead us in prayer in Gaelic. What is this name of God?
- Geo moreabytes of ra internationals here search an fiju eini in CEkach göimage gero Wisconsin educators v Oh Oh Oh
- [2 : 09] Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Carolina.
- Left. ■■■■ ■■■■ ■ je■■■ ha al je yeah took the money which is ok Uncle Caroline Ah
- Oh, my God, my God, my God, there are no bad things about it. I am Bruce Oh, my God, thanks for giving up scriptures in love for you.
- ...
- ..
- [5 : 50] ...
- ...
-
-
-
- [7 : 25]
-
-
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- [9 : 19] Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Amen. In a mysterious way his wonders to perform, he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm, deep in unfathomable minds of never-failing skill.

He treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will. A truth that we see through the book of Esther. And we'll sing this hymn to God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[11 : 21] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Steps in the sea And rides upon the storm He may not father Of a might Of never-bearing skill He treasures up His bright design And works His sovereign will He fearful sins Fresh Irish day The clouds He so much tread Are being with mercy And shall bring In blessings on your head But draw the Lord

By feeble sense But trust Him for His ways Behind the crowning providence He hides our smiling fears His worklessness will ripen fast Unfolding every hour The path may have a bitter taste But sweet will be a frown My unbelief is sure to bear God's scant is work in vain God is His own interpreter

And He will make it play If you could turn now please In your Bibles To Esther chapter 2 Esther chapter 2 And we return to this story We see in chapter 1 A king Who seems invincible Massively powerful The most powerful man In the world He's showboating all his power In the first chapter He's throwing a party To end all parties But as the chapter comes to an end The queen, his wife Essentially humiliates him He wants her to parade

In front of all these drunken men So he can show them How beautiful she is And she refuses to do so And we're delighted to see her Take that stand But it infuriates the king It puts all the civil servants on edge They're frightened That their wives may follow her lead And there'll be anarchy And so a law is passed Whereby Vashti, the old queen, is out And there's now an empty throne And as chapter 2 begins This beauty contest Is brought into effect Where the king goes on the hunt For the most beautiful woman In his area, in his empire He can take to be his queen So that's the context That's the story so far And we'll read from chapter 2 And at verse 1 Later when the anger of King Xerxes

[15 : 46] Had subsided That's the anger after His wife doesn't do what he tells him And also the anger That he feels Because he went forth in war And was defeated When he tried to invade Greece Later when the anger of King Xerxes Had subsided He remembered Vashti And what she had said and 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 girls Into the harem At the citadel of Susa Let them be placed under the care of Hegai The king's eunuch Who is in charge of the woman And let beauty treatments Be given to them Then the girl who pleases the king Be queen instead of Vashti This advice appealed to the king And he followed it Now there was in the citadel of Susa A Jew of the tribe of Benjamin Named Mordecai

Son of Jer The son of Shimei The son of Kish Who had been carried into exile From Jerusalem By Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon Among those taken captive With Jehoiakim King of Jura Mordecai had a cousin Named Hadassah Whom he had brought up Because she had neither father Nor mother This girl who was also known as Esther Was lovely in form and features And Mordecai had taken her As his own daughter When her father and mother died When the king's order and edict Had been proclaimed Many girls were brought To the citadel of Susa And put under the care of Hegai Esther was also taken To the king's palace And entrusted to Hegai Who had charge of the harem The girl pleased him And won his favour Immediately he provided her With beauty treatments And special food He assigned to her Seven maids Selected from the king's palace And moved her and her maids

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 To and fro near the courtyard Of the harem To find out how Esther was And what was happening to her Before a girl's turn Came to go to the king Xerxes She had to complete Twelve months of beauty treatments Prescribed for the woman Six months with oil of myrrh And six with perfumes and cosmetics And this is how she would go To the king Anything she wanted Was given to her To take with her From the harem To the king's palace In the evening she would go there And in the morning Return to another part of the harem To the care of Shazgaz The king's eunuch Who was in charge Of the concubines She would not return To the king Unless he was pleased With her And summoned her by name When the turn came For Esther The girl Mordecai Had adopted The daughter Of his uncle

Abihel To go to the king She asked for nothing Other than what Haggai the king's eunuch Who was in charge Of the harem suggested And Esther won the favour Of everyone who saw her She was taken to King Xerxes In the royal residence In the tenth month The month of Tebeth In the seventh year Of his reign Now the king was attracted To Esther more than To any of the other women And she won his favour And approval more Than any of the other virgins So he set a royal crown On her head And made her queen Instead of Vashti And the king gave A great banquet To Esther's banquet For all his nobles And officials He proclaimed a holiday Throughout the provinces And distributed gifts With royal liberality When the virgins Were assembled A second time Mordecai was sitting At the king's gate But Esther had kept secret Her family background And nationality Just as Mordecai Had told her to do For she continued To follow Mordecai's instructions As she had done

When he was bringing her up During the time Mordecai was sitting At the king's gate Big Thanna And Teresh Two of the king's officers Who guarded the doorway Became angry And conspired To assassinate King Xerxes But Mordecai But Mordecai found out About the plot And told Queen Esther Who in turn Reported it to the king Giving credit to Mordecai And when the report Was investigated And found to be true The two officials Were hanged On the gallows All this was recorded In the book of the annals In the presence Of the king Amen And may God bless That reading Of his word To us We'll sing again To God's praise A prayer As we come back To his word Come Holy Ghost Our hearts inspire Let us

[21 : 04] Thy name Through us Through Source of the old Prophetic fire Mountain of life And love A holy ghost Born moved by thee The prophet's Lord And spore Unlock the truth Thyself the key Until the sacred good Expand thy way Say bless your love Through your Lord Our nature's light On earth

His order Spent his moon And let them now Be light For through himself We then shall know If thou within us shine And sound with all Thy saints below The depths of love divine Good to see a few boys and girls Here tonight A few missing I went on Ten minutes too late Last week So some of them Are I think Making a stand But good to see a few of you Here tonight And I want to ask you a question

Maybe two or three questions Put your hand up If we ever play chess Anyone ever play chess Mary's shaking her head Don't ask silly questions Oh No Miriam plays chess Do you play chess Yeah You like it Yeah Quite good Quite good What about Connect Four Does anyone play Connect Four Yeah Henry And Emily Yeah Lois Ailey What about Minecraft Henry at the back Alistair Do you know anything about Minecraft Do you play it No I don't really know what I'm talking about When I talk about Minecraft I've never played it But I just I know things happen in it But The thing with Connect Do you play it Emily You do yeah And With Minecraft You have to build things up Do you But can people also smash things down So When you're playing Minecraft Do you have to be thinking about Who might be close by

To see if they Might smash things down Can you see them if they're close by I really don't know Not sure But the thing about I think all these games Whether it's Minecraft Or Connect Four Or chess Is You've always got to be thinking A few steps ahead Don't you With chess And Connect Four You're not just thinking about Your next move But you're thinking about Well If I move that way Then That person I'm against Might move this way And then I'll have to think about Going this way And that way Minecraft You're trying to build stuff up But you're thinking What about if he smashes that stuff down So you're always trying to think Three or four steps ahead We're not great at doing that But in the book of Esther What we see Is that God Is always Able to see And think And plan And work Lots and lots Of steps ahead He's always working Even when it looks like Things are falling apart

Even when it looks like Really bad things are happening Because they were God is still in control Even though we can't see him As we look back the way At the story We can see that Even at the points Where we couldn't see him He was there And even when it looked Like everything was falling apart God was still working So that's one of the things That helps us to Figure out this book of Esther When you're reading things And you're thinking Oh no Don't panic too much Because God's still working And in our lives Whether we're boys and girls Whether we're a bit older We can We can all be a bit worried About different things But one great thing About the God we worship Is that he's always with us He's always working And sometimes

[26 : 08] When we think That he's not working Sometimes when we think That things are really dark And difficult And sometimes when they are There's the comfort of knowing God is still there And we can trust him So let's pray As we come back to this story Lord we thank you For who you are We thank you That you're the God Who sees all things You see the end From the beginning We thank you That you're the God Who is sovereign The one who Is more powerful Than anyone Or anything We thank you That you're the God Who doesn't Just create this world And walk away And leave it But you're always With us You're always working And we thank you That you're the God Who sees everything We thank you That you're the God Who understands What it feels like too When we go through

Happy times And sad times We thank you For Jesus Father we thank you For sending your son Into this world To be Emmanuel God with us And we thank you That Jesus felt Everything that we can feel We thank you That Jesus Knows what it's like When things are difficult Jesus knows What it's like When our hearts are sad When our bodies are sore When our minds are troubled Because Jesus Has experienced Everything and much more Than we can ever experience And we thank you Lord that we can trust you We thank you That we can trust you More than our eyes Can see We can only see things In one place At one time But you're the God Who sees everything Always You're the God Who is outside of time Looking into

This world And moving In this world So help us Lord we pray As we think about This story of Esther To trust you And help us In our own lives To trust you We pray for those Who are going through Difficult times just now And who don't quite know Where to turn Help them Help us Lord To keep on Day by day Turning to you And help us Not to be panicking Not to be fretting Not to be worrying But to be leaning Upon you We pray Lord That you would help us Even as we Think about This world And all the Conflicts that there are In this world We see Russia We see Ukraine We see countries That are Not on good terms With each other And we fear What might happen We thank you That we can speak To you As the one Who is in control Of all things In all places The greatest ruler

The most powerful man In the world Xerxes At the time In the passage That we read Was no Was not more powerful Than you And we thank you That there is no one Today that is more Powerful than you So we thank you That we can pray About these Things About these Situations And ask Lord That you would be Working To bring glory To your name To bring good To your people That you would Restrain The hands of those Who would want To go to violence That you would Bring justice Where there is no Justice Lord that You would be at work So hear our prayers And as we Turn to your word Now we pray Holy Ghost That you would Help us To understand To see And to believe And we pray All these things In Jesus name Amen There was a story Or a film That came out A few years back And I think It's in a

It's on a series Now on one of these Netflix or Amazon Or something And it's called Taken And it's the story Of a teenage girl It's a harrowing story About a teenage girl Who one minute Is living a Normal life She's with her friends She has plans She's on a holiday She's just enjoying Some enjoyment Some time of relaxation One minute She's having a Normal life Everything looks safe Everything looks steady And the next moment She's taken Evil men Get hold of her Capture her She's taken She's taken She is forced Across borders She's held Against her will She's used She's abused In the most awful Storyline And we see In the plot The father Of the girl Is heartbroken And the film And the series Is essentially A story about A father

[31 : 12] Who's looking For his daughter And looking To take her Back to this Place of Safety And as I was Reading Esther 2 It was occurring To me that In some ways The plot Line is not A million miles Away from From these Stories The difference Is this is Fact This is True The story So far Is that Of a king King Xerxes He wants Power He wants Control And he Wants a queen Because he's Disposed of His last queen And so he Goes on the Hunt for A new queen He sends Teams to Scour All the Provinces of His kingdom Defying girls Who were young Who were beautiful And who were Untouched by Any other man And when such Girls were spotted They weren't Asked would you Be interested In applying For the Position of Queen There was no Consent sought There was no

Discussion had No without Any consent By force They were taken These girls That were spotted They were taken And that's our First point Tonight We see Esther And she Is taken And that Takes us To verse Eight Which is As far as We got Last Sunday Night When the King's Order and Edict Had been Proclaimed Many girls Were brought To the Citadel of Susa Where Xerxes Was And were put Under the Care of Hegai And the Commentators Reckon That there Could have Been up to A thousand Girls Who were Identified And brought To this Place where The king Was They were Taken Esther Verse Eight Also was Taken To the King's Palace And entrusted To Hegai Who had Charge of The Harim The girl Pleased Them And won His Favor Immediately Immediately He provided Her With beauty Treatments And special Food He assigned To her

Seven maids Selected from The king's Palace And moved Her and Her maids Into the Best place In the Harim So that's The situation And You know As we read This On first glance We might think Well it doesn't Sound too bad These intense Beauty Treatments Special food Seven maids A special Place in the Palace Doesn't sound like A bad deal But let's Remember That Esther Did not ask For this This was not Her dream This was not Her choice She didn't Apply for This position She was Abducted These men Arrived Spotted her Took hold Of her And she Was ripped Out of the World as She knew It And brought Into this This new Place

This was This was Like a Prestigious Trafficking Operation And Esther Was likely Only in her Teens When this Happened She might Have been As young As 13 14 She might Have been As old As 16 17 She was Young And she Was taken And it's An awful Story And it's Not It's not Fiction This is History This really Happened And we Should remember As we Think about This story That this Kind of Thing Is still Really Happening And not Just in The movies There are Girls that We can Read of In newspapers And hear Reports of From time To time On the News Girls who Are taken Against

Their will Trafficked Across Borders Forced Into The most Horrendous Situations Still today There are Men like Xerxes In positions Of seemingly Untouchable Power Still today There are Girls like Esther Who are Exploited And who Are abused And we Shouldn't Have our Eyes Close to This You know We should Pray into These situations We should Do what We can To help And to Seek to Bring Justice Into These Situations We should Work along Charities Along with Charities Who seek To make A difference In these Situations We shouldn't Be We shouldn't Be those Who see This as A problem Somewhere else Far from Us We should Remember There are Girls like Esther Still today But I

[36 : 19] Think also In terms Of application We should Be thankful For the Fact that We worship The omniscient God Boys and Girls do You know What the Word Omniscient Means I'll teach You a new Word that You can Use in The Playground Tomorrow Anyone know What omniscient Means It means That you Can always See Everywhere And the God that We worship God He is Omniscient He can See Everywhere All the Time In the Book of Esther God's Name Doesn't Doesn't Actually Come up On any Of the Pages We don't See God's Name Once He is Unseen But he Sees Everything In the Book of Esther God's Name Is Absent But he Is not Absent He sees

Everything It's all Recorded The Holy Spirit Takes The Story And Gives It To The Writer And It's Recorded And all These Thousands Of Years Later We're Still Reading About Esther We're Still Reading About Xerxes We're Still Reading About Mordecai And God Was Working In The Midst Of All This He Works Not To Protect Esther From The Storm But He protects Esther In The Storm And God Was Working As We'll See To Turn A Situation That Was Absolutely Awful Something That The Devil Meant For Harm God Was Working Unseen To Turn Around Into Something That Would Be Good And All These Evil Men Xerxes Thinks He's The Boss Of

The World All His Officers Who Go Off And Say That One That One That One That One Grab Them They Thought The Answer To No One But They Would Learn In The Course Of Time God Was Watching In Due Course They Would Face His Justice So The First Point We See Here Is That Esther She Is Taken The Second Point And We've Only Got Three Tonight Is Is Trusting And I've Got A Question Mark At The End Of That Speaking About Esther Speaking About Mordecai Trusting Are They Trusting Some Of

Esther now has been robbed of her teenage years. Just think about it. Think about our own girls in the community here who are 16 years old, 15, 16 years old.

Imagine them. Just one day they're with us, the next day they're gone. Childhoods are gone. Any plans that they had to work or to study or to marry a boy that they loved, gone.

[39 : 54] And Esther is now all of a sudden in the middle of this palace of the most powerful, ruthless man in the world.

That's Esther's situation. And Mordecai has been robbed of a cousin that he loved like a daughter. One he cared for, one he brought up, one he protected, one he taught the things of God to.

Right through her childhood, she was with him. He cared for her. And now Esther is ripped away from him. And she's in the epicenter of a kingdom that was defined by rebellion against God.

This man of God, Mordecai, a Jew, the Jew, finds that his cousin, the daughter he never had, that he loved, she's in the most dangerous place possible.

So what would they do? Would they go into superhero mode and try and fight their way out of the situation using force and using their own cunning?

[41 : 20] Well, that would be unwise because there was absolutely no chance that they could fight their way out from the ghastly situation that they were in.

It would be futile to try in their own strength to escape. So what could they do? Well, the best thing they could do was to trust God.

The God whose name was never heard and the God whose people seemingly were never seen. Look at verse 10. It says, Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so.

Verse 11. Every day, Mordecai walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her. So we have this sense of anxiety and concern that Mordecai has for Esther.

He's pacing back and forth as close as he can possibly get to the place that she's in. He's wanting to see how she is, how she looks, how she seems to be. And that was understandable.

[42 : 41] Even if Mordecai was trusting God in the middle of the storm, it's understandable that he wants to catch a glimpse of Esther. He wants to see that she's doing okay. And I suppose the point there in application is just because we're trusting God doesn't mean that we won't at times be subject to waves of fear and anxiety.

Just because we're trusting God in the middle of a storm doesn't mean that we'll always walk absolutely steady and never have a moment's anxiety.

we all feel these emotions when we're going through a tough time. But every wave of anxiety, every night where we're struggling to sleep and we feel fear rise within us, it's like a signal, it's like an alarm that is sending us to the place of prayer to come to the God who asks us to cast all our anxiety on him because he cares for us.

So we see Mordecai pacing back and forth. We're not told, but I expect he was praying as he paced back and forth.

But one question I think we can ask is, why did Mordecai and Esther not just come clean? Why did they not just say, we're Jews, we're trusting the one true God?

[44 : 12] Why did they hide their faith in God? Does that not indicate the fact that they were actually not trusting? And we don't have an answer to that.

You can go and buy the commentary so you can come and borrow them from me once we've finished this. There's a whole debate about this. Some of the commentators look at Mordecai, they look at Esther, they're very critical of them.

And they say they should never have been in Babylon in the first place. The doors had opened from Babylon for them to return to the place that God would have them be. They should have left Babylon when they had a chance.

But for whatever reason, we're not told, they didn't leave Babylon. They're in Babylon at this strategic time. And some of the other commentators say, well, Esther and Mordecai, they should have been like Daniel.

They should have been brave like Daniel. They should have spoken out against the king. They should have refused to cooperate in all these dark situations. They should have shouted from the rooftops that they were God's people and they would not move one inch.

[45 : 27] But remember, Esther was a girl in a culture where girls had no, they had no status, they had no voice.

Esther had no political position like Daniel had when he got into difficulty. And Esther was young. Just a teenage girl.

So to me, it seems unfair to compare Esther to Daniel. To me, I would be reluctant to criticize her at all.

Yes, she's silent about her nationality and her faith in God, but we are told in Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 7 that there's a time to keep silence.

There's a time to speak. And for Esther and Mordecai, it seems that in their own estimation, this was the time for silence.

[46 : 43] And that didn't mean necessarily that she was not trusting God. Sometimes in the silence, it can be most clearly seen that we're trusting God.

Peter, who was not the most silent of chaps, Peter, the disciple who usually is ready to open his mouth at any possible opportunity.

He speaks in 1 Peter chapter 3 about the need for silence. He's speaking to the wives of unbelieving husbands. And he says to them, and I paraphrase, he says to them, don't be speaking all the time about Jesus.

1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 and 2, Peter says, wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

That was his advice in that situation. You know, in some situations, it's best to be quiet and win people through our lives and not through constant words.

[48 : 16] Sometimes it's better that people see that we trust God rather than hearing us constantly shouting about the fact that we are trusting God.

And maybe that's a message for someone here tonight. Maybe we've spent a lot of time speaking to one particular person about Jesus and maybe they're not responding at all.

maybe actually the more you speak the more they seem to be getting hard and closing down. And if that's the case, perhaps it's time to be quiet for a while.

Perhaps it's time to speak to God about them rather than speaking to them always about God. perhaps it's a season where God is calling us to show them through our lives and not so much through our words that we are trusting in Jesus.

There's a time to keep silence. There's a time to speak. We need wisdom. We need God the Holy Spirit to be guiding us on discerning when that time is.

[49 : 50] so Esther she's taking. Esther she's trusting. You can make up your own minds on that one.

The third point, the final point is Esther and Mordecai they are trying to do good I think. You can put a question mark on the end of that too if you want.

I think they're trying to do good in the situation that they're in. Now when we think about salvation, when we think about the core of what it means to be a Christian, how are we saved?

Well immediately we'll answer, we're saved by grace. grace. We said it this morning, we're not saved by what we do, we're saved by what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

It's not about our works, it's not about our religion, that's not what gets us over the line into heaven, Jesus has done it all. We just have to trust him. We're saved by grace.

[50 : 57] It says that in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9, for it's by grace you've been saved through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

We're saved by grace. But sometimes we put a full stop at the end of verse 9 and we forget to lead on to verse 10.

So what is it saying in Ephesians 2 verse 10? Well it says, for we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You know sometimes we can be so fixated on grace, we overlook the requirement that God has on us, if we are Christians, to do good works.

We forget the truth of the fact that how we live here in this world actually matters. we forget sometimes that God has, he has tasks, he has jobs, he has as it says in Ephesians 2 verse 10, good works that he has prepared in advance for us to do.

[52 : 17] And both Esther and Mordecai have good works that God has prepared in advance for them to do, both in the short term and in the long term.

So what do we see in our lives? Well let's just look at the last section here briefly as we close. Well Esther I think remains steady, fairly steady in a difficult situation.

That's the good works that Esther is doing. And Mordecai he steps up in a crisis. As we'll see at the end of the chapter.

So Esther, she remains steady in what is a difficult situation. If you scan with me through the verses you can see the plot line. I haven't got time to kind of be too forensic about this but you can see the extreme cosmetic pampering in verse 12.

She's taken in to the palace and she's told there's got to be an absolute makeover done in New Esther. Six months of beauty treatments for the woman a year of treatment.

[53 : 28] Six months with oil of myrrh which I believe is not particularly pleasant and six months with perfumes and cosmetics. So Esther, that's what she's subjected to.

She doesn't protest. She takes it. She remains steady. And then in verse 13 to 15 we read about the details of how she is introduced to the king.

verse 13 and 14 she's given the preparation for what's to happen when she goes in to meet the king. And then in verse 15 it says when the turn came for Esther, the girl Mordecai had adopted the daughter of his uncle Abihel to go to the king.

She asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the Harim, suggested. And it says Esther won the favour of everyone who saw her.

So there's a year's preparation to go in to meet the king. And then she goes in to this place to meet the king. And you can read a lot into these verses.

[54 : 33] The truth is not actually very much as expressly said. So we don't know what happened that night when she was introduced to the king.

All we know is that she made a real impression on him. he could remember her by name. And then as we read on into verses 16 and 17, we see that Esther, the king Xerxes, actually falls for her.

She was taken to king Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And it says the king was attracted, verse 17, to Esther more than any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more than anyone else and she becomes queen.

So what was it that Esther was doing to win the favour of everyone who sees her? Because you can track back to the chapter, and I think it's three times that phrase is used.

She wins the favour of everyone who sees her. So how does she do that? Well, again, some of the commentators say, well, she had amazing looks, she had a lovely figure, verse 7, and she used that to manipulate the king and everyone else.

[55 : 57] That's how morally compromised she was. That's what those who are critical of Esther say. And others say, well, she was trusting God. And that quiet faith in God that seemed to keep her steadier than anyone else, caused her to win the favour of everyone.

Same as Joseph in Egypt. Wherever he goes, he doesn't escape trouble, but people are drawn to him, they trust him.

And Esther, it seems, wins the favour of everyone who sees her, and I think, personally, is because she was trusting God. And you can make up your own minds.

The truth is, we're not told what's going on. The writer of this book doesn't make any judgments about the conduct of Esther or Mordecai.

The text here is silent on whether she was compromised and far from God, or whether she was conflicted, and seeking to trust God in a very difficult place and a very difficult time.

[57 : 20] We're not told, so we probably shouldn't spend too much time making our own judgments. Malcolm McLean says this, Esther followed the advice of Mordecai and did not reveal her Jewishness.

We're not told why he did this. Perhaps we can say that he adopted a common sense view of life. Keep quiet about your connections, Esther, and both you and them will be safe.

Or perhaps Mordecai deduced that since Esther could do some good if she became queen, she should not do anything that would hinder that possibility. Pretend that you are not a Jew seems to have been the advice.

Then McLean says we cannot point the finger at Mordecai or Esther because we do similar things all the time. Often we use common sense to hide the fact that we belong to another kingdom.

So Malcolm, and we can hear him saying it, is saying before you point the finger at Esther and Mordecai, let's take a look in the mirror.

[58 : 32] I think, I hope, that even in the moral ambiguity of the situation she was being held captive in, she was trusting God and trying to live in a way that pleased God and the limitations that she faced day by day.

Matthew Henry says those who suggest that Esther committed sin to come at this dignity do not consider the customs of those times and countries.

It's his view. Esther, I think, is trying to do good, trying to remain steady with God's help in a difficult situation.

And what we see finally here is Mordecai, he steps up. He's in a crisis. crisis. He's in a crisis because his cousin that he loved like a daughter has been taken from him and he is in the civil service.

He has a job for Xerxes and he encounters a conversation from verse 18 and following where he overhears something that is a crisis.

[60 : 06] and Mordecai in that situation, he steps up. So what's the crisis? Well, the crisis is a plot to assassinate the king.

And verse 18 to verse 23, you can read about it. The king gave a banquet, Esther's banquet for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a royal holiday throughout the provinces, distributed gifts with royal liberality.

When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. He's in the right place. But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality, just as Mordecai had told her to do so, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

During the time when Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, big Thanna and Teresh, they sound like a couple of thugs, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway became 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, she takes no credit for herself, she gives all the credit to Mordecai.

And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged in a gallows. and all this was recorded in the book of the Annals in the presence of the king.

- [61 : 38] So Mordecai, he overhears this plot. He has the opportunity to do the right thing and report this.
- And he does it. If the investigation had not been successful, I don't think he'd have stood much of a chance if Big Thana and Teresh decided to pursue him.
- So he took a risk. But he does this good work. And it's a good work that will be used in the providence of God for the good of his people and for the glory of his name.
- And we can't exactly see how that's all going to work out yet. We can't see how important it is that Mordecai's name is recorded in the book of the Annals.
- It seems like an unnecessary detail to us at this point. We can't see how it's possibly a good thing for Esther to now be the wife of such an unworthy king.
- [62 : 43] It all seems so wrong to us. It all seems to be spiraling out of control. But God is working.
- God is not stained with the sin of all us. But in the midst of this mess, he's working. And the story of Esther is an example as we finish of how God's ways are higher than our ways.
- And his thoughts and his moves and his strategies are higher than anything we can think. Even though they, at this point, could not yet see the danger to God's people, even though the bad Haman has not yet walked on stage, God can see the danger.
- And God is moving his people into the right positions so that they can be used in his plan of salvation.
- There's two blocks of theology in the book of Esther. Dominic Smart makes this comment and he says, these are blocks of theology that we have to keep in our mind all the way through.
- [64 : 15] Point number one, God is sovereign. Point number two, what we do and how we live really matters. We're taught that in this book.
- We can see as the plot develops that God is sovereign, he is always at work, even when, and especially when we can't see him. And yet we also see, as we look at Esther and as we look at Mordecai, that how we live, what we say, what we do, it really matters.
- So this is our God. The one who is spotlighted in the book of Esther actually isn't Esther or Mordecai.
- It's the one whose name is not mentioned. It's God. this is our God. This is what he does.
- This is how he works. And the cross is the supreme example of that. As Jesus faces the injustice of cruel men who are acting sinfully.
- [65 : 39] As Jesus suffers and dies, everything looks dark. And everything looks hopeless. Everything looks lost.
- But in the darkness of Calvary, God was working out our salvation. salvation. So what do we do with all this on a Monday morning at half past ten?
- What do we do as we reflect on this story and face whatever details hit us in the course of next week? How do we respond to this God? Well, simply this, we trust him with everything.
- even the things we can't understand. And we obey him. We seek to do good.
- Even when we can't see how it could possibly make a difference. And we follow him. Even when we can't see the way ahead.
- [66 : 53] And we'll sing of that now as we close. Mission Praise 1000 and the Lord's My Shepherd I'll not want And then the chorus I will trust in you alone.

The Lord's My Shepherd I'll not want He makes me lie in pastures green He leads me by the still, still waters His goodness restores my soul And I will trust in you alone And I will trust in you alone For your endless mercy follows me Your goodness will lead me home He guides my ways in righteousness And he unites my head with heart

And my cup it overflows with joy I've rest on his pure delight And I will trust in you alone And I will trust in you alone How your endless mercy follows me Your goodness will lead me home And though I walk the darkest path I will not fear the evil one For you are with me and you're all that's now And the comfort I need to know And I will trust in you alone

And I will trust in you alone For your endless mercy follows me Your goodness will lead me home And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit Be with us all now and forevermore Amen Amen