

6.2.22 pm

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Date: 06 February 2022

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 0 0] singing Chants, children.
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He did not hear you singing the music,
I want to get you a full name of the song I have not heard, you sing all the songs you how
to lay do words.
I have no teaching, I have no teaching time I have none endued me so I can't be afraid
walach S Island well, a dog camp, How young she life was growing You have heaven and
I lei Your■ toENT Folks love and my sons B Whereruktur, a fledgerm foreign
- [9 : 1 5] I wrote in his■■-born word to t ■■ o bailsa lerae o hijankOD Po Annie behandled o lo I
had for nu loving canal of olden days an
We'll see you next time.
Amen. Let's sing again to God's praise.
The words are on the screen. We don't have them in the hymn book, but it's one we've
sung in the past. O Christ in thee my soul hath found, and found in thee alone, the peace,
the joy I sought so long, the bliss till now, and no, now none but Christ can satisfy.
O Christ in thee my soul hath found, and found in thee alone, the trace of joy I sought so
long, the bliss till now and no, now none but Christ can satisfy, none other name for me.
- [1 2 : 1 6] There's love and life and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in thee.
I sigh for rest and happiness, I yearn for them not thee, but while I pass my Saviour by, his
love and life and lasting joy, there's love and life and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in thee.
I sighed. I sighed, The broken sistersms forgot, but others hathfy had.
He had and found in thee, i stood to drink with me, had and walked me as i willed. will.
Now, now, what Christ unsatisfied, another made for me.
There's love and life and lasting joy Lord Jesus found in me.
- [1 3 : 5 6] The pleasures lost I sound reborn but never wept for me. Till grace the sight led sides
received thy lovingness to see.

Thou done but Christ unsatisfied, another made for me. There's love and life and lasting joy Lord Jesus found in me.

If you could turn with me in your Bibles to Esther chapter 2 please. Esther chapter 2. So we have the Psalms and then before the Psalms we have the book of Job and before that we've got Esther.

Esther chapter 1. We have the picture of a very powerful king who seems to be invincible. He seems to have control over everyone but it seems that he doesn't have control over his wife.

And so there's a clash with the queen and at the end of the chapter the queen is removed from the throne, the position of queen. And there's a vacancy you could see on the throne and we see Esther stepping forward at this point.

[15 : 44] So let's read from chapter 2 and at verse 1. Later when the anger of king Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti, that's his queen, 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 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 let 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 Shammai, 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 Judah.

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.

[17 : 08] 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 also was 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 in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the woman, six months with oil and myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

And this is how she would go in 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.

[18 : 25] 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 Hegai, 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 young virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

And the king gave a great banquet, 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 so.

[19 : 38] 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 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 a gallows.

All this was recorded in the book of the animals in the presence of the king. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

We're going to sing again now to God's praise. And we're going to sing this time from paraphrase to O God of Bethel, by whose hand thy people still are fed, who through this weary pilgrimage hast all our fathers led.

And then look at verse 3 in particular. Through each perplexing path of life, our wandering footsteps guide. Give us each day our daily bread and raiment to fit provide.

[20 : 49] The whole of this short paraphrase to God's praise. O God of Bethel, by whose hand thy people still are fed, To do this weary pilgrimage hast all our fathers led.

Our words, our prayers we now present before thy throne of grace.

God of father's inadm penance to God, the God of ömned VM. Lord of her fathers, he will cause the■ amor. There are not many professing paths that are there yet to fit.

The rich perplexing path of life. Her wandering footsteps guide.

May us each day our daily death, our lame and fifth row high.

[22 : 32] Oh, spread thy loving wings around, till all our wandering seas.

And at our fathers of the old, our souls are high in peace.

Such blessings from thy gracious hand, the humble, patient Lord.

And thou shalt be our chosen God, and hope shall never go.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. If you could turn back with me, please, to Esther chapter 2. Amen. Amen. And just as we go there, let's pray.

[23 : 45] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

us those who were your people having to to to live secretly fearful for their lives and fearful for what a profession would do in terms of their situation at that time and we know that that is a reality still in many places today and we pray for those who live with that threat we thank you for the stability that there is in this country and as we see a a dark and an unpredictable king in xerxes we we thank you that in our land we have had stability over so many decades and we think today especially of of the queen that you've allowed to to be over us for 70 years we thank you for the steadiness of the rule and the authority that she has exercised we thank you for the opportunities that she has taken to point us to christ over the course of many years we thank you for the the poise and for the peace that we have seen within her through many stormy seasons in her life and in her period of power we thank you that we see the evidence of the fruits of your spirit within her and we pray your blessing upon her and we pray for all those that you have allowed to be in authority that they would look to you that they would be humbled enough to look to the god who gives wisdom and who gives strength and healing to those who ask him so lord hear our prayers for our country and help us as we gather around your word to be open to have ears to hear eyes to see hearts that will be responsive to your word we pray for those who can't be here tonight and we ask that you would bless them we pray again for hannah especially tonight as she's in hospital and as they struggle to to uh know best how to treat her we pray for wisdom for those who are entrusted to care for her and we pray that she would get the the treatment that she needs we pray that you would enable those who are caring for her to see the best course of action and if it's here or if it's uh on the mainland we ask lord that you would open up the way and that she would know your presence with her tonight we pray for those who will gather here in the church and in different places afterwards as well for the big yf and we ask lord that as many of the younger people in the island gather virtually and some together and physically we ask that you would speak through your word and that you would draw many of these ones to trust you even in the in their youth we think of esther just as a teenage girl at the point in which we read and yet how she was used by you we pray for those in our congregation and in our community that they would look to you that they would trust you and that you would use them lord for your glory so hear our prayers and help us in this time and we ask this in jesus name amen the book of esther is a book where uh we uh we see a a lot going on uh there's a it's it's kind of almost like a a hollywood blockbuster before cinemas ever were uh invented there's so much going on in the plot line of the book of esther there's power and politics and there's uh scandals and there's manipulation and there's conflict and there's romance there's there's a whole host of things and we know that in the world of politics and in the world of power back then and still today things can change very quickly you know a scandal or a bad decision or a military defeat and we can see that a a leader who seems to

be so invincible uh can uh can end up in a very fragile uh state very quickly uh the moods and the fortunes of those in power uh can swing wildly and that's what we see as esther 2 begins glance back at esther 1 think back a week and we see this king that's where the focus is on this king xerxes and he seems to be untouchable he's king over a vast province uh he is the most powerful man in the world by some way and it seems that he's untouchable and esther 1 he's in a good mood uh he's in high spirits he's throwing parties he's eating he's drinking uh he's being merry he has plans uh not simply to defend his kingdom but to extend his kingdom through through military attacks and he has this beautiful queen queen vasti on his arm that was back then in esther chapter 1 but as esther 2 begins uh we can note the word in verse 1 that it's later it's not then it's later and uh what we see as uh chapter 2 begins is an angry king that's the first point an angry king later when the anger of king xerxes had subsided he remembered vasti and what she had done and what had what he had decreed about her now so we see an angry king and we can ask the question at this precise point uh why is he angry and the reason he's angry is because all the plans that he had at the end of chapter 1 uh didn't come to pass in chapter 1 there's a there's a big party but it's it's a it's a dual thing it's a it's both a party and it's a conference he has all the the most powerful people in the world coming to the the palace because not only does he want to wine them and dine them and show how powerful he is he wants to recruit them into his army because he wants to attack greece and over the next four years because there's about four years to reckon between esther chapter 1 ending and esther chapter 2 beginning over the next four years xerxes and his armies they go out to try to invade greece and uh they they were not successful uh they were defeated uh one commentator says xerxes directed his ill-fated greek campaign and came home uh in humiliation instead of honor so this king who seems invincible now seems not so invincible this king who who seemed to to be able to do whatever he wanted and have this massive swathe of power and now doesn't look so powerful uh he's not honored he's humiliated by these defeats and in the first instance that leaves him angry and then as his anger begins to subside he becomes sad and in his sadness he feels lonely and he remembers vashti uh verse one his old queen and perhaps he looks back four years to that drunken night when he decreed that she be banished from his presence and never be allowed near him again and maybe and now as he looks back on that night he's looking back on that night with regret he's angry he's sad he's lonely

and that's where we find them at the beginning of uh esther chapter 2 and i think if we if we hit pause there because i think that's the best way we can step through this book it's an amazing plot line so just at various points as we follow the plot through we'll just hit pause and think about how this might apply to us and if we hit pause at this point uh we can we can certainly take some lessons from xerxes experience into our experience and even as we think about uh esther chapter 2 alongside uh luke chapter 18 where we were this morning we can see parallels we can see lessons that we can draw from both places because in luke 18 we meet a rich ruler and in esther chapter 2 uh we meet a rich king but we see in both cases that their vast wealth doesn't make them happy they both have a sense that something is missing and i think one point that we can draw from this is that uh in this world the riches and the popularity uh that this world can offer uh yes they can give us short-lived good moods but no lasting joy this world can give us uh what what what xerxes experienced in esther chapter 1 and that is kind of short-lived celebrity um status but no real satisfaction so we ask the question if that's the negative uh we ask the question in terms of the positive if there's no joy and no satisfaction in this world where will we find joy and where will we find uh satisfaction and the answer is in god now none but christ can satisfy no other name for me there's love there's life there's lasting joy lord jesus found in thee there is joy there is satisfaction there is peace that found in the god that king xerxes could not see and found in the god that the rich young ruler walked away from so we see an angry king it's the first thing we see as we step through this chapter the second thing we see as we follow the story through is we see anxious attendance the king has many attendants and we find these attendants in a state of high anxiety as uh the chapter progresses and uh notice that the second the king mentions vasti's name the king's personal attendants the civil servants who who both back then and still today are not noted for their high speed and uh their their vast efficiency they they move they spring into instant action immediately they're on alert immediately that they're wanting to act and so the king's personal attendants verse 2 proposed let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king and we ask the question why do they move so quickly here why is there this kind of state of alarm within the king's attendants and the reason is because they're anxious and we ask the next question why are they anxious and the reason is because they can see that look in the king's eye they hear him talking about vasti vasti seems not to be dead but just to be dethroned and maybe the king has caught a glimpse of vasti in the distance

she's certainly in his mind's eye maybe the king would take her back if he thinks about her and if Vasti came back how would she regard the civil servants who advised the king to be rid of her and obviously we know that she would not regard them well and so when she saw these people who advised the king get rid of that queen likely she would either rid them of their jobs or rid them of their heads so as they see the prospect of queen Vasti coming back into a position of power they are anxious so they come up with this plan to make sure that Vasti doesn't come back and a new queen comes in so in verse 3 we see the story develop here the civil servants say to King Xerxes 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 women and let the beauty treatments be given to them then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vasti and this advice appealed to the king and he followed it so that's their plan which is essentially an ancient beauty contest that's what they say to Xerxes let's have a beauty contest that covers all the area of your province let's find the most beautiful girls and let's take them in it's kind of like the ancient version of these reality TV shows where various women are competing against each other for the hand of the bachelor king and it's degrading to the women the qualities that the civil servants are looking for in these women are not heart qualities they're not character qualities it's all very shallow it's all very superficial those who are selected verse 2 are to be beautiful and they're to be young and they're to be untouched by any other man and so the attendants say let's round them all up do a search across the whole province and let's bring them all in you can choose what you want and this plan was going to destroy the lives of many many young girls and this plan was going to bring heartache to so many families but it would save the skin of the civil servants it would maybe even save them their jobs so they pitched this plan to King Xerxes and he loved it so again let's hit pause and ask the question well what can we learn about this and perhaps there's two lessons we can learn from this the first lesson is a lesson about how we judge people because we look back into this story and we're appalled by the fact that this plan actually exists they're about to have a beauty contest and bringing all these girls by force so that the king can choose whoever he wants they have no say

[40 : 32] they're not consulted their lives are turned upside down by this and we look on in 2022 at such a thing and we rightly condemn this but is it not true that we're still judging people by the way that they look you know take five minutes on social media flick through a magazine switch on the television and we will soon see that we are still judging people by the way they look not by heart qualities not by character qualities and that's not God's way that's the way of this world remember the verse from 1 Samuel 16 and verse 7 man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart another lesson we can maybe take from this as we look at these anxious attendants as they're trying to bring this plan into action as we see the anxiety of these attendants we learn a lesson about about who we have as king and these attendants are anxious they're stressed out of their minds because Xerxes is their king and the truth is if we have anyone other than Jesus over us as king if we have anything other than Jesus even over us as king our lives will be full of anxiety because this worldly kings and rulers are not sovereign and not fair they are very often moody as Xerxes was unjust cruel self-serving even if we take the example of

I think what Emily said this morning the gods that we can have those that we allow to rule over us money if money is our king and as long as we have money we've got some degree of happiness but when our stocks and shares if we had such a thing start to go down anxiety when the business starts to struggle mass anxiety when we don't have enough to make ends meet major stress whatever it is that we allow to be in that position of God over us our lives will be full of stress because of it but when we have Jesus over us as king we have one over us who is absolutely sovereign and he rules over all nothing is beyond his control he is good he is kind he is fair he is just he is loving he cares for us so we look at these anxious attendants with this unjust king over them and we understand why they're so anxious one of the great blessings of having

Jesus over us as king is we don't need to be fearful we don't need to be anxious we don't need to worry because everything that we go through and everything that we experience he sees he knows about our crises he knows about our worries he knows about the things up on the road ahead that we are fearful of but he says to us 1 Peter 5 7 cast all your anxiety on me why do we do that because he cares for us so there's an angry king anxious attendants and the third thing we see here is aliens in a foreign land and that takes us from verse 5 to verse 7 and I'm going to have to ask you just to scan these verses as I talk rather than me read through this because time is against me aliens in a foreign land now when we hear the word aliens we tend to think about little green men in spaceships but the word alien in the bible is a word that's used to describe those who are from another place from another culture and here we see living in the heart of Babylon two aliens that we're now introduced to and we see that in verses five to seven we see

Mordecai and we see Hadassah or Esther and I think the notable point here about Mordecai is that even though he's in Babylon he's still described as a Jew that's what defines him he's Mordecai the Jew and that tells us that although he was far from the land where God would have him be he's still believing in God he's still trusting God he's not worshipping foreign gods he's worshipping the one true God so we meet there in these verses Mordecai the Jew he was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin verse five and then Mordecai has a cousin and her name verse seven is

Hadassah or Esther and Esther's parents we see had both died and so Mordecai looked after her as his own daughter and clearly he taught her to know and to worship the one true God so we see both Mordecai and Esther and they're aliens they're aliens in this strange foreign land that was so anti-God Babylon stood for rebellion against God and there in the heart of that place are two of God's people and you know that's our situation too we can look at Mordecai we can look at Esther we wonder what we have in common with them and one thing that we have in common with them is that we are in this place in this world as God's people if we are trusting in Christ this world is not our home we have no continuing city here we're so aware of that just now but this is where we find ourselves for a few years so how are we to live well we're to live for God we're to live in the world but not be of the world just as

[48 : 40] Mordecai was recognized as one of God's people just as Esther was known or not yet known but would soon be very much known as one of God's people we are to live for God in this place seeking to be faithful to him we're to be in the world but not of the world as Jesus prayed in John 17 we are aliens we are strangers in this world this is not our home but we are sent here as agents as ambassadors for God so aliens in a strange land Mordecai the Jew the man of God that's what we're told about him and that's an important thing and then as we look at Esther a little more we're told in verse 7 that Esther was lovely in form and features which is a strange thing to be told but that too is important and if we're following this and not dropping off to sleep yet when we read that

Esther is lovely in form and features the alarm bells start to sound because we remember the search that Xerxes has commissioned we remember that there are civil servants running around the kingdom looking for girls who were young and lovely in form and features and we start to ask the question is Esther going to be spotted is Esther going to be caught in the net of this plan is Esther going to be the kind of girl that Xerxes pulls in and seeks to use for his own pleasure and to get the answer to that you'll have to come back next week because it's seven o'clock let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for your word we thank you that although we read about a story that is long ago and far from here we see that the world does not change we see so many of the of the grim realities of that time still very much characteristic of our own day and age and we if we are your people know about the tension of having to live in a world that is not our home we ask

Lord that you would help us day by day to remember that this world is not our home and yet help us we pray not to be pessimistic not to be fatalistic not to be bleak and miserable but to remember that we are here for a period and we are here to live for your glory so enable us we pray to take the opportunities that you give us to live in a way that pleases you enable us as we as we sometimes come under pressure and feel the pull of this world help us to resist the enemy and to seek to stand firm and help us to remember when we can't see what it is you're allowing to happen and why things are working out the way they are help us to remember that you are God and that you see everything that you are in control still on the throne that you are able to work all things together for the good of your people and the glory of your name and help us to remember that your ways are higher than our ways your thoughts are higher than our thoughts your plans are much greater than anything that we can see help us to trust you and forgive us Lord when we allow other things other people other kings to take control of us when we allow ourselves to be in that position there is huge anxiety when our happiness is dependent on the things of this world the currency of this world the small g gods of this world we will always be anxious we will always be disappointed so forgive us Lord when we when we look to them and help us we pray to look to and to fix our eyes upon you you are the ancient of days you are the

God who cares for us you are the God father who sent your son Jesus into this world to live for us and to die for us and to rise so that if we believe in him we can have peace joy and life that is everlasting we thank you that there is a continuing city called heaven the new Jerusalem for all who believe in Jesus and we pray that each of us would know that we have a place there and we pray these things in Jesus name amen we'll sing to conclude the hymn the words on the screen the ancient of days as we god

The Conservation Tr Communications I'm before him for a time in his hands For his throne it shall remain on ever's hand All the power, all the glory I will trust in his name For my God is the Ancient of Days Though the dread of life overwhelms my soul

[56 : 15] He is here with me, I am not alone Though his love is sure and he knows my name For my God is the Ancient of Days None above him, none before him All of time in his hands For his throne it shall remain on ever's hand All the power, all the glory I will trust in his name For my God is the Ancient of Days Though I may not see What the future reigns I will watch and wait For the Saviour King

Where my joy compete Standing face to face In the presence of the Ancient of Days Not above him, none before him All the time in his hands For his glory shall remain on ever's hand All the power, all the glory I will trust in his name For my God is the Ancient of Days For my God is the Ancient of Days For my God is the Ancient of Days And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God the Father The fellowship of God the Holy Spirit Be with us now and forever

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen