PREACHING CHRIST THROUGH THE BIBLE |
ESTHER: Jesus as our Mordecai, our Advocate

I hope that at this point in time of our sermon series on seeing Jesus threaded throughout all the books in the Bible, you’ve already gained a lot of interest if not already developed a sense of greater longing to find Jesus in the books of the Bible. Please remember that the primary goal of our teaching team here in BCI was really to help continually provide careful studies and reflections of the Bible from the lens of ordinary Bible students like myself and our pastoral staff. So, as we continue to navigate in the Old Testament even at this point, I strongly encourage everyone to also commit adding value to the lessons we are learning every Sunday by doing your part in studying the books of the Bible in your own personal Bible studies, devotions and quite time with the Lord.

So, before we dive into our study this morning, how about a little bit of historical background on the events that happened in the book of Esther? What we have learned so far from the book of Ezra and Nehemiah is that the events happened during the times of the Persian Empire and highlighted the triumph of the exiled people of God returning in Jerusalem. In fact, if we go back to our historical timeline again, after the fall of the Divided Kingdoms (Southern and Northern) to the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the Persian Empire thrive and conquered Babylon in 539 BC. These paved a way for King Cyrus the Great to release a decree in 538 BC to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem. As explained thoroughly by Pastor Jerry Sunday, there were 3 waves of return to Jerusalem that actually happened, each one led by Zerubbabel (538BC), Ezra (458BC) and Nehemiah (445BC).

Now, if the book of Ezra and Nehemiah tells us about the triumph of the Jews in exile returning to Jerusalem, the book of Esther on the other hand will tell us about the triumph of the exiled people who remained and stayed in the lands outside of Israel, in this book it is in the city of Susa. The events in Esther was just about 10 years long within the reign of King Ahasuerus or Xerxes I from 486-465 BC, in which the events will fit in within the 80 years gap between the 1st and 2nd wave of return to Jerusalem.

What is fascinating to see through these historical events was to recognize that whether God’s people were in Jerusalem or still in far away lands (those who did not return to Jerusalem), God’s hand will always be at work to fulfill His promises through His people and to fulfill His ultimate plan of deliverance. This is where I would like us to begin reading from the Word of God to set our hearts in our study this morning.

Esther 4:13-16 (ESV)
13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” 15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

My task this morning is to present Jesus as our Mordecai, our Advocate. But before we introduce and get to know Mordecai in the story, I would like us first to understand what exactly we really mean when we refer to a person as an advocate. What does it mean to be an advocate in
the first place? Looking first at the Webster Dictionary, it was defined as the one who pleads the cause of another; one who defends or maintains a cause or proposal; and the one who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group. The English word Advocate is also translated from the Greek word parakleton, which means “helper, adviser, or counselor.” It means the one who advocates offer support, strength, and counsel and intercede for us when necessary. An advocate will ensure a person has the tools to make an informed decision; it is not about making the decision for the person.

So as we consider our study on the book of Esther, we will attempt unravel the actions of Mordecai that reflected Jesus Christ and served as an Advocate to his generation.

I. Mordecai Offered Compassion.

As Mordecai was introduced in chapter 2, you can immediately sense his heart always beats for the needs of others, we can specifically point to at least two specific examples in the story where he has exemplified this attribute.

A. Father to the Fatherless.

The moment Mordecai took his orphaned niece Esther after her parent’s deaths, you can tell that the display of compassion and kindest heart were natural in his character to care for Esther as her father, guardian, and helper.

Esther 2:7,11 (ESV)
7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.
11 And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

20 Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him.

It was pretty obvious that their relationship is a truly a loving bond, for when Esther was taken to be presented to the King, Mordecai always made sure to stay as close as he is allowed, and be able to learn about her welfare. What is admirable with Mordecai was that he always made sure she is in good care and Esther reciprocated this care by obeying Mordecai’s instructions with diligence. I truly believe that her obedience has kept her always in good standing and in better position as she continued to find favor in the eyes of many, from the eunuchs to the time she was presented to the king and eventually be chosen as the queen.

Jesus too in His lifetime never failed to show that He really cares, he came into this world for you and me to save us from eternal condemnation. He wanted the best for us, He did not only die for our salvation, but He also made sure we have everything in this world to live by and follow Him. He continued to reveal himself through His Words and the power of the Holy Spirit were made available and accessible to everyone who will believe in Him.

John 14:15-17 (ESV)
15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”
Literally, when Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to whoever believes Him through His Words, He has in mind the best for us as we get to know Him more and ultimately be one with Him when we follow and obey Him.

I wonder what is the state of your heart this morning knowing that the ultimate love of a father continually pursues you and me, “Will you embrace and follow Him who only desires the best for you?”

B. Sympathetic to his People.
Mordecai has also showed his compassion to his people, when he learned of the evil plan of Haman to have all the Jews killed in the kingdom. Haman is the villain in the story of Esther, who has the privilege to be the highest official under the king.

Esther 4:1-3
1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. 2 He went up to the entrance of the king’s gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king’s gate clothed in sackcloth. 3 And in every province, wherever the king’s command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

His actions definitely speaks a lot to show his sympathy over the tragic decree to destroy his people. We all know that in the Bible times, wearing sackcloth in protest is a public display of grief, remorse, or repentance.

Whenever we read the Gospels in the New Testament, we definitely won’t miss to see Jesus marked by kindest heart and compassion too. His consistency to meet whatever needs that comes His way is undeniable.

Matthew 14:14 (ESV)
14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

John 11:35 (ESV) 35 Jesus wept.
He healed the sick, touched lepers, loved children, took time to touch the heart and conscience of a Samaritan woman, even looked out for His mother’s needs while on the cross, and almost in every way showed love to the poor and the needy that he encounters.

The question is, “Are we willing to the same?” In our own circumstances in life, we all probably been in several situations where there are opportunities to exercise our compassion and benevolent hearts towards the people around us and our fellowmen. It is my prayer that just like Mordecai and Jesus, we have hearts that will continue to beat for our fellowmen and do whatever we can to show kindness and compassion.

II. Mordecai Offered Faithfulness.
Other attributes that are undeniable with Mordecai were his faithfulness and courage to fulfill God’s calling and provision.

A. Faithful Servant.
In Esther 2:21-23 we see Mordecai’s faithfulness with respect to the king! Never mind that King Ahasuerus is a Persian Monarch, with immoral character, but Mordecai was faithful to serve whom God had placed on the throne.
Esther 2:21-23
21 In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. 23 When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

So, when Mordecai became aware that there was a brewing plan to assassinate the king, he immediately informed the king through Esther. The matter was investigated, and justice was served to the guilty. Mordecai’s loyal service to the king was officially recorded and chronicled but not rewarded at that time, but amazingly enough, the recording was used in the later part of the story to influence the King Xerxes to reward Mordecai, that which eventually led to saving the Jews from annihilation or destruction. A tragic faith turned into a blessing, only our great God can orchestrate such fate, one strong evidence of God’s hand at work in the events of the book of Esther.

B. Faithful to his Beliefs.

As we continue reading and jump to Esther 3:2-3, you will notice that Mordecai is the one who can stand up firm for his beliefs and will never back down under pressure.

Esther 3:2-3
2 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him. 2 And all the king’s servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. 3 Then the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate said to Mordecai, “Why do you transgress the king’s command?”

You see, when the book of Esther introduces Haman, as a powerful minister, second in command, Mordecai didn’t really back down even when all officials were asked to pay homage to Haman. He was courageous and stood up for his beliefs that Haman, the Agagite was not worthy of being bowed to. Remember that in Jewish history, the Agagites belong to the royal family of Israel’s hereditary enemies, the Amalekites. Mordecai was faithful and courageous to stand for his beliefs that which were more important than bowing down to an Agagite.

Both actions by Mordecai for being a faithful to his king and beliefs reveals another overarching theme in Esther, “Always do what is right in the eyes of God”. A principle taught by Moses to his people and was evidently passed on to the generation of Mordecai as we read from Deuteronomy 6:16-19.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 (ESV)
1 “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

If you read the whole chapter of Deuteronomy 6, the chapter itself contains the whole reference of the greatest commandment from the Old Testament period that never grow old that Jesus himself was referring to these when asked about which is the greatest commandment in the Law. We are all very familiar with Jesus response when asked “What is the greatest commandment?”
Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)
37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’
38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’
40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
I don’t know about you, but I still believe until today that when our heart is right with the Lord, our faithfulness and obedience to our King of kings is still the one condition of true prosperity and success in life.

III. Mordecai Offered Wise Counsel.

As we continue reading Esther, there is one verse that is almost always often quoted and used in most sermons about hope and God’s deliverance. It would be fair to say that one of the most celebrated verses in the Bible comes from this book, also considering that it came from the lips of Mordecai, who continually instilled hope and offered wise counsel to Esther. Let’s look at how Mordecai again served as an advocate for Esther here.

Esther 4:13-14 (ESV)
13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”
You see, Mordecai was practically advising Esther to recognize God’s purpose in her life. To stand up for her people and take courage to tell the king about Haman’s evil plot to destroy the Jews. Mordecai was instilling hope in her that maybe this difficult position she was in was ordained by God for her to have.

After this persistent but wise counsel from the lips of Mordecai, Esther knew that she needed to connect to God through fasting and prayer, to learn and discern of God’s plan for the circumstances she was put into. I’m pretty sure Mordecai and together with all the Jews in Susa fasted and prayed for Esther. Again, Esther listened to Mordecai and did what is right for her people and in the eyes of God. The story ended with great hope and victory as God intervened and evidently orchestrated the succeeding events that not only made Haman pay the prize for his evil plans, but also ended his life and his family. Mordecai on the other hand was honored and elevated in position that helped spare and save his people from destruction.

As I close, I want us to remember that just like Mordecai, Jesus has always been our advocate to our Father in heaven. I’d like to end with this exhortation from 1 John 2:21 to live by.

1 John 2:1 (ESV)
1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Jesus loves us so much, He is compassionate for all our needs, faithful and just for our sake and always providing help and wise counsel through His Words and guidance from the Holy Spirit to help us grow our relationship with Him. So, let it be our desire to keep doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord, knowing that we have all the help we need as we follow Him. And May the Lord be exalted as we trust Him with all our heart, our righteous and ever present Advocate!