

THURSDAY: SOMEBODY

Read: Esther 4:13-15

“Somebody should do that.”

We have all said something similar. We see a situation. Maybe it is at your house and you walk by a load of laundry - “Somebody should put that up.” Or no one has checked the mail in days - “I wish somebody would just go down there.” Church presents lots of these situations as well. Have you ever noticed something undone in the church building to which you replied, “Somebody should get on that?” Maybe you heard of needs in the kids worship and thought, “I wish somebody would do that. OR I wish they would stop talking about it.” I imagine that this is rarely with malicious intent. Most of us feel ill-equipped to do certain things. On top of that, our time and resources are scarce. Yet there are still things that need to be done.

Mordecai presents Esther with a situation that only a precious few people have the power to affect. In regard to Xerxes, she may be the only “somebody” who can do anything. She may be the one person he will listen to at all. In the story of Nehemiah, we see a similar situation. He is the cupbearer to the king and sees a great need for the nation of Israel to be restored. If that is going to happen, he believes it is necessary that he must lead the way. In Joshua 24, Joshua tells the nation to choose who they will serve, but he is going to be the one who leads his family to serve the Lord. Over and over in the life of the apostle Paul, he steps into dangerous situations for the sake of the gospel advancing closer and closer to the ends of the earth. In each of these situations, there is a huge need that can only be filled through a massive risk.

Think about your own life. You are definitely not a Persian queen and, more than likely, you have little political sway. You are not going to be a King’s ‘right hand man’, lead an entire nation to the Promised Land, or write the bulk of the New Testament. However, as you spend time with your neighbors, there is the opportunity for you to be the ‘somebody’ who shows and shares the Gospel. There is great risk, but an even greater reward.

-
1. Who are the people in your life who do not trust Jesus?
 2. How do you approach your interactions with these friends, neighbors, and co-workers? How do you care for their needs and shape your conversations? What are the risks of you interacting with them over the good news of Jesus?
 3. How does your personal budget allow for you to serve the needs of those who are hurting around you in any way?

FRIDAY: RISK

Read: Esther 4:16

When Esther heard the words of her Uncle Mordecai, it was clear that something needed to be done. Can you imagine the questions running through her mind as she considered both her fate

and the fate of her people?

“What will happen?”

“Will my husband listen?”

“Will he not listen to me and kill them anyway?”

There were no promises her husband would turn away from his original plan. Yet the only way for the people to be saved was for her to risk her life by going to Xerxes unannounced. Because of Haman’s wickedness, this had to happen quickly.

So much of trusting God is an attitude like this. Following Him is hard and full of hurdles. We are asked to submit and sacrifice. When we look at Jesus, we see that those very struggles were present. We are reminded that He was tempted in every way we are but without sin.

In many ways, Esther’s struggle is Christ’s struggle in the garden in Luke 22.

And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

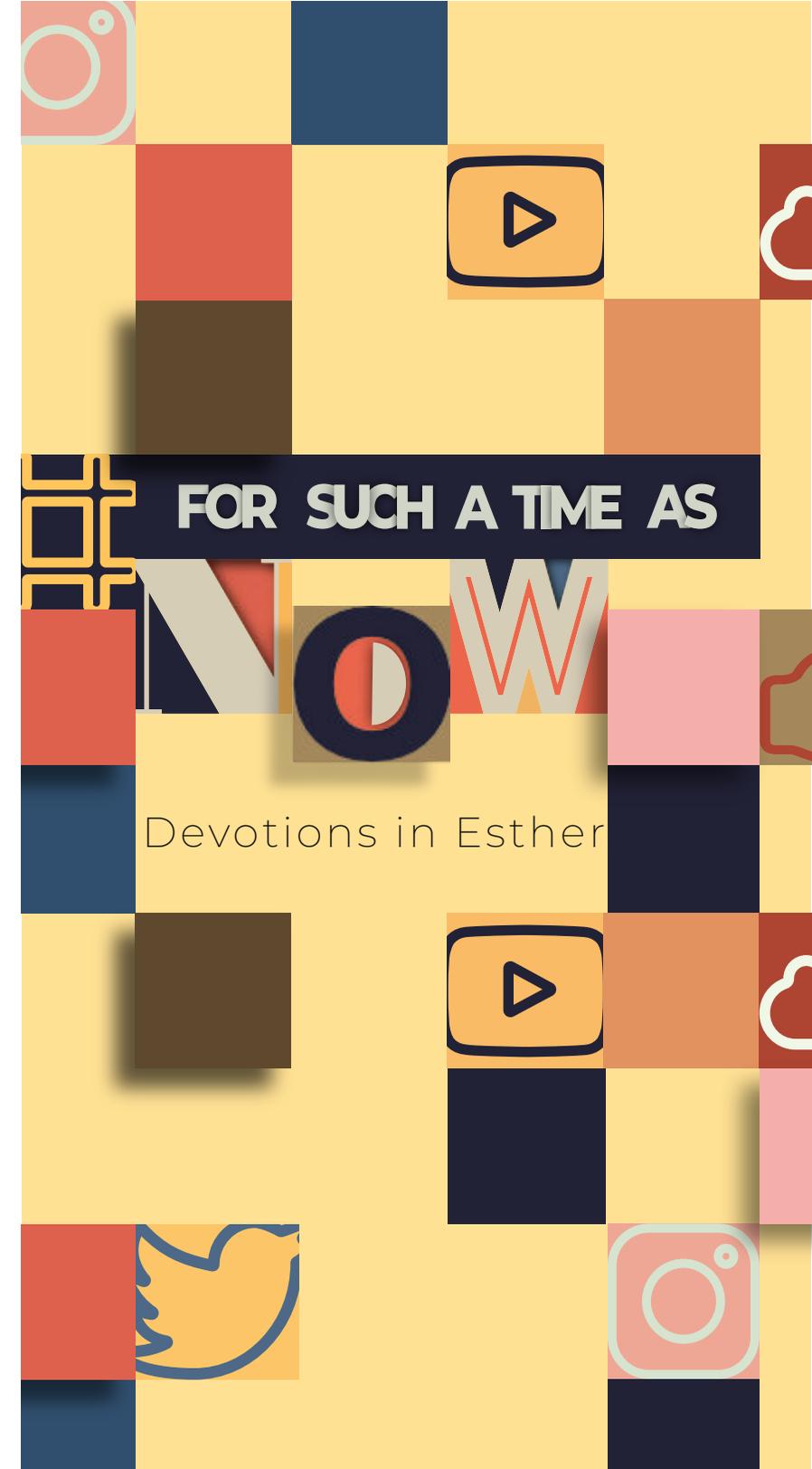
In His humanity, we see Jesus is burdened with the idea of death and carrying the sins of the world. However, in submitting Himself to God’s plan-His sacrifice-there is redemption available for humanity.

There is little to no chance you will ever marry royalty. However, we have to be aware of the fate of our both neighbors and a lost world for us to have God’s heart for them.

SATURDAY: READ & PRAY

Read Esther 5 & 6 to prepare for our gathering tomorrow.

1. Pray for Chad as he prepares to preach God’s Word.
2. Ask God to prepare your heart to hear and obey His Word.
3. Pray that God would use the gathering of the church to encourage the saints and call the lost to repent and believe.
4. Pray for our worship team as they prepare to lead us.



MONDAY: COMFORT

Read: Esther 3 & 4

Who doesn't love to be comfortable? It means something different for everybody. For me, it means wearing gym shorts and a t-shirt with some of my favorite snacks in hand. The kids are most comfortable watching Dude Perfect and eating Chick-Fil-A. For others, it is the beach...or the deer stand...or your recliner (If none of this is comfortable to you, feel free to write your comfort right here _____).

Is there anything wrong with comfort? Not necessarily. There is nothing wrong with relaxation - the LORD actually commands Sabbath. The problem arises when our comfort becomes more important to us than the people that surround us.

Mordecai saw that Haman was on the verge of completely eradicating the Jewish people. The only person capable of helping in this situation was a Jewish lady who happened to be the Queen. But no one knew she was a Jew. Furthermore, being the queen had its advantages! Think about it: Sleep all you want. You can have whatever you want. People will serve you whenever you want. This list could go on forever. In order to rescue her people, she must risk losing not only the comforts of the kingdom, but also her life.

Paul reminds us that Jesus went through something similar. He writes in Philippians 2:5-8:

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (ESV)

Jesus left the comfort of the presence of God the Father and lowered Himself to the most brutal and humiliating death imaginable. He did not only *risk* His life - he *gave* it.

As we think through the book of Esther, do you see yourself in a similar situation? Though we are not royalty, as Americans we have much more than most of the world. As Christians, we have a hope that is eternal. Do our creature comforts keep us from meeting the material and eternal needs of those we spend time with each day?

-
1. Who in your life is in need of a hope that only can provide?
 2. What are you risking for the sake of God's Kingdom?
 3. What sacrifices are you making to show the world that Jesus is worth their attention and affection?

TUESDAY: FEAR

Read: Esther 3:12-15

I hate to wait - *especially* for something I think may be bad. There is nothing worse than knowing you have a doctor's or dentist's appointment and you have to wait for it. My mind runs wild with anxiety and fear as to what this trip will entail. What if I have a rare disease? What if I need surgery? My mind races in every possible direction.

As we read through the story of Esther, it is easy to get lost in the main characters and miss the minor, supporting ones. Even for me, as I read this passage over and over, I forget that Haman wanted to have every Jewish person - young and old, man and woman - wiped off the face of the planet. He used the Persian ritual of 'casting lots' to find out when the 'lucky day' was to carry out the command of killing the Jewish people. Not only does he desire to eliminate these people, the command is sent to every corner of the empire that, in eleven months, all of the Jewish people would be completely destroyed. Not only were the people going to die, they knew when they were going to die. Furthermore, they knew the only person powerful enough to do anything about it gave his full approval to the order. What a terrible situation.

The Bible is full of situations where all things seem lost. We read of Joseph cast into a pit and sold into slavery. Though we know the eventual outcome, it is dishonest to not think that fear was present as he processed his daily trials and possible death. When we read through the story of our Savior, we see Jesus as he processes His finite humanity. We see him burdened to the point of sweating drops of blood, though he knew the outcome was in the hands of God.

When you look at your own life, how often do the fears regarding a pending situation immobilize you? Do you find yourself wondering where God is as you deal with the struggles of life each day? Dealing with uncertainty is a necessary reality for everyone of us. Faith is defined in Hebrews as the 'assurance of what is not seen.' That does not remove the tension our current seen situations.

-
1. Before we move on, take some time to write down words that you would use to describe your emotions if you were in the situation of the Jewish people.
 2. Write down words that describe your feelings about your own fears and anxieties.
 3. It would be disingenuous to simply close out this thought in the neatest, tidiest way possible. As you talk to the LORD tonight, talk with this tension in mind.

WEDNESDAY: DIVINE TENSION

Read: Esther 4:13

The two most well-known phrases in the book of Esther happen in a very short span of time. Mordecai points out the flaws in Esther ignoring the plight of the Jewish people when he says, "Maybe you

were made queen for such a time as this!" to which she eventually replies, "If I perish, I perish." If someone only knows one thing about this Persian Queen, it is this interaction. Both phrases are incredibly memorable.

One of my favorite sayings is 'Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater', but probably not for the reason you're thinking. All of us cling to clichés. Think about some of these:

Actions speak louder than words.
The grass is always greener on the other side
What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

The reason they are so popular is because they usually reflect a degree of truth. However, the clichés Christians use when talking about God are sometimes so trite they lose their meaning and, other times, are void of truth altogether.

"God's got this."
"Let go and let God."

Each of these has a glimmer of truth. God has the whole world in his hands, but we have a tendency to cling to things and not trust Him or His promises. Yet we end up taking these to their passive, ignorant extreme and miss our God using people throughout Scripture to accomplish His divine purposes. Why?

From the very beginning, we see passivity and rebellion in our hearts. Eve wants to do what God has told her not to do. Adam chooses not to interject himself and say, "No". God's commands - which are for our good and human flourishing - are left by the wayside because "God's got this - and he surely wouldn't let us die".

Conversely, when human beings are obedient to God, it is in a way that aligns itself with His reign and rule in all things. Mordecai does not even mention God, but knows the Jews will be delivered. Scriptures tell us to 'cling' to God and it is obvious as one reads the Bible that real faith is active (faith is actually a verb in the Hebrew). Noah *built*. Abraham *offered*. And in each, God *does*. Faith is actively aligning our actions with the action of God.

Think about the story of Moses and how it is completely immersed in the story of God's action. "*I will deliver. I will rescue. I will save...and, Moses, I am going to use you to do it.*" In the New Testament, Peter calls us God's holy people, holy and dearly loved, and a royal priesthood. The summation of these terms is intrinsically tied to us being a people 'who declare the excellencies of He who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.' God's supremacy over everything does not negate human responsibility - it actually fuels it.

-
1. What are you aware of God doing that He's inviting you to be part of?
 2. As you look at the rest of this week, what opportunity to align yourself with God's rescue or display God's deliverance are you likely to overlook? How will you plan to serve Him instead?