

Rise and Fall > Esther 7:1-10

7:1-6 Esther's "salvation": after another banquet, Esther makes her requests known to the king: that her own life, and the lives of her people, be spared. The king responds with anger at whoever would threaten his queen and her people in this way; only now does Esther reveal that it is Haman who has plotted such a wicked course.

7:7-10 Haman's condemnation: the king leaves the room and Haman realizes that his life hangs in the balance. He appeals to Esther, falling before her, but the king returns right at that moment and misinterprets what is happening, deciding to use the situation to deal with Haman. One of the king's eunuchs points out – ironically – the massive gallows that Haman has been constructing for Mordecai and the king agrees to use it upon Haman.

Context: This chapter is a turning point – we've seen plotting against the Jews and Mordecai in the prior chapters, with Esther caught up in it all. Now, we see her life spared. What will come later is the reversal of the law against the Jews.

Aim: Those who stand against the Lord shall eventually get the judgment that their sins deserve.

Gospel: God's plan to bless and redeem a people for Himself will not fail, even though powerful people and fearful nations may set themselves against it. We are secure in Him.

Applications: Ultimately, those who lay traps for others will find themselves falling into them. They bring about their own condemnation. Are you living that way? Or do you live in the pattern of Christ, with grace and forgiveness towards others?

Here is how I will apply these truths: _____

Announcements

1. Friends, several weeks ago I announced a decision from the church board to keep to our current policy of “strongly recommending but not requiring” face coverings at this time. A number of you have weighed in, and I want to applaud each of you for your graciousness and respect with your comments. We need more of that in our world, don’t we? And we need to prize one another more than our own opinions and thoughts – that is what it looks like to follow Jesus in divided times. So, both an encouragement and a challenge: well done, and let’s keep asking the Lord for patience, wisdom, and unity.
2. Speaking of masks, one question that I’m often asked by folks who hold to one viewpoint or another is “am I the only one?” I can say that – of those who have spoken to me – we have very thoughtful, caring, and faithful folks in about three different categories. I have had a handful of comments from folks wanting to either require masks or, on the other hand, being opposed to any sort of mask requirement. I have had many more comments and notes supporting our current stance of “recommending but not requiring.” I’m not counting specific numbers for any of these categories because my intent isn’t to generate debate. Instead, I’m bringing it up for two reasons: wherever you land on these questions, you likely aren’t alone. That should bring comfort. At the same time: wherever you land, you have faithful and loving brothers and sisters here at the church who think differently. And that should bring humility.
3. As far as guidance from the church, we continue to monitor the situation here locally, as well as for what we are hearing from health officials and other churches. As with everything else Coronavirus related, our guidance may well change in the short or long term depending upon the facts of the situation – that’s just a part of life right now. Rather than trying to be prophets and predict the future, let’s deal with the situation as it comes. **James 4** warns us against trying to think we are wise enough to make plans without the Lord’s guidance; **Matthew 6** teaches us that we need to take each day at a time rather than trying to solve tomorrow’s concerns. Taking these two passages seriously is one way that we can love each other well and also help our neighbors and community to look to the Lord during these times.

Prayer

Father, we need You. We always have, we always will. We need You both for salvation from our sins and also for resurrection from the dead – new life and life eternal. But we also need You for everyday decisions. You tell us in Your Word that we need wisdom and yet – how gracious! – You don’t just leave us to find it on our own. Instead, You tell us to call to You because You love to dish it out generously. So Father, today we pray: give each of us a generous helping of wisdom. Wisdom that is based not upon our world or even the smartest people in it. Wisdom not based on our own intuition or thinking. But instead wisdom that comes from the Spirit applying Your Word to our lives.

Not only that Lord, but we also pray that this wisdom You give would change us. Don’t just let us become smarter or puffed up with pride; instead, make us humble. Help us to see as You call us to see. Let Your wisdom train us to count others as more significant than ourselves. In doing so, our prayer is that we will be more like Jesus, that our lives will be like mirrors that reflect His grace and mercy given to us so that others would see Him. Now, use this service as part of forming us. In Christ’s name, amen.