

## ***Providence and Prayerful Courage - Esther 4:1-17*** **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

### **Notes from the Sermon**

A study performed by the social media giant Facebook with results published this week in the Wall Street Journal revealed that Instagram is having a significant impact on adolescents, with as many as 1 in 3 revealing that its use is having a negative impact on them, often pushing them toward depression, eating disorders, and even suicide. “The pressure to look perfect, the tendency to share only the most positive and polished parts of a person’s life, and its addictive nature can send teens spiraling toward eating disorders, an unhealthy sense of their own bodies, and depression, according to the article, which cites an internal Instagram report from March 2020 (from *New York Times* article on the study).” Social media can have positive uses, but so much of it unlocks an inner desire to make ourselves known and honored. Of course, then we then move toward comparison and find the self lacking. The truth is, this study is confirming the basic truth from Scripture and revealed in story form from our text this week in Esther.

Esther 4 is designed to be read as a contrast between two characters, Esther and Haman. After being confronted about the reality that her ascent to royalty was an act of providence and that her coming to the kingdom was perhaps, “For such a time as this,” Esther has decided to come before the king and request that he rescind the law. The law in question was proposed by Haman out of hatred for her cousin Mordecai and all the Jews and called for the extermination of this people all over the kingdom in a little less than a year. But another law threatens Esther, stating that a person who comes before the king without being summoned can be executed immediately, and she has not been with the king for a month. But she has come to the decision that she is willing to lay down her life and give up her moment of glory on behalf of her people. Esther becomes a beautiful picture of humble faith as she offers her life for others and trusts the Lord with her life. Think about this, would you do this? She went from being a nobody to being the queen, now has the chance to live large and have a Kardashian sized social media account. But she prays and decided to potentially give this all up. So she comes to the king and finds grace from him rather than the axe. He is willing to grant any request, but instead of quickly spurting out the problem she asks for a moment to serve the king and her enemy Haman. I think this is important in the story, as it seems bizarre. But she invites Haman to a banquet, and there is nothing in the story that makes it seem that she is trying to exact revenge on Haman. She even gets timid and rather than sharing her concern with the two of them she pauses and asks them to come to another banquet the next day, possibly showing a little bit of fear in the moment. But as we will see, this was also part of God’s providential plan.

Meanwhile, Haman is exhibit A putting human pride on display. He leaves joyful, and we are later told that it is because the queen invited only he and the king to a feast that day and another one tomorrow. In his mind it is proof of his importance and glory. But then he sees Mordecai (still has no idea that the queen and he are related and that Esther is a Jew). Mordecai again does not bow to the wicked villain in the story and is not even afraid of him, which ticks Haman off even more. His pride has so wrecked his view of self and the world that he cannot even rejoice in the events from the day out of rage over one person who would not cower and fall before him like a god. He gets home and recounts all of his glory, riches, and even that he has a bunch of kids. But that is not enough as long as Mordecai lives. We then find that his friends and wife are little more than yes men who stroke his ego and give him permission to do the ridiculous and awful, building a 75 foot tower to publically hang Mordecai the next day. Its not enough to just kill the dude, the plan is to do it on a platform that can be seen from anywhere.

James 4:6 tells us that God opposes the proud yet gives grace to the humble. We

live in a world that tells us happiness and success come when we put self in the middle, live our truth, and make much of the self. But this is the very essence of pride. When you think of pride, who comes to mind? More than likely, if you stopped to answer you thought of some athlete, actor, politician or social media giant. But the truth is that if your first response was not to think of your self, that alone might be a clue. Pride is that thing inside of our sinful heart that places self in the center and hopes all else revolves around me. Truth is, we can express pride in so many ways, including our religious activity and commitments. Humility, on the other hand, only happens when we see self honestly and God in his glory and greatness. Think again about James 4:6, it is simple, direct, and clear. Pride is the path to being opposed by God, meanwhile humility is the way to put yourself in the position of grace, receiving God's undeserved favor and blessings. So I close with a quote from Andrew Murray in his little book *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness*. "Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue. And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil."

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Luke 21	Luke 22	Luke 23	Luke 24	Exodus 1	Exodus 2	Exodus 3

Reading from this past week: Esther 5:1-14

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Esther 6:1-13

**Family Worship**

Song - *God the Uncreated One*

<https://youtu.be/rswH9CSyWHk>

Gospel Project

Story: Sin entered the world.

Big Picture Question: What does it mean to sin?

Answer: To sin is to think, speak, or behave in any way that goes against God and His commands.

Scripture: Genesis 3

New City Catechism

Question #39: With what attitude should we pray?

Answer: With love, perseverance, and gratefulness.

Verse: Philippians 4:6

Scripture

Esther 5:1-14

\*When you think of pride, who do you think of? Why don't you think of yourself?

\*How can you see humility in Esther and pride in Haman in this story?

\*Why would Scriptures tell us that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble?

Prayer

\*Pray and ask God to give you humility and wreck your pride.

\*Pray for our service at Eureka Days this weekend.