

Nov 19 – Esther 5-6

Chapter 5

After fasting and praying (and presumably preparing the banquet) for 3 days, Esther enters the king's space dressed like a movie star. Her luxurious dress is an act of shamelessness (she is trying to show off to impress the king) in a society where modesty would have been most virtuous. However, this act of personal shamelessness on Esther's part was meant to bring honor to her people by doing what needed to be done to save them. The king is indeed impressed, and remembers what he'd been missing from his queen's presence. He impulsively offers her up to half of his kingdom (again, shaming himself through such a bold, impulsive offer). Esther's response to the king's shamelessness is total modesty in decorum: She simply wants the king and his right hand man to join her for a banquet which she herself prepared, and which she herself will serve to them. All of the other banquets in this work so far have been public affairs, this is a private banquet, which makes it all the more of a status symbol that Haman was invited to participate, being served by the queen herself. While they were drinking wine, yet again the king boldly offers Esther anything her heart desires –up to half his kingdom! And Esther's response is yet more modesty and virtue "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet that I will prepare for them, and then I will do as the king has said and tell you what I really want." This amplified modesty and delayed gratification of a response amps up the drama and tension in this story. One can only imagine the king's eagerness to be able to give his queen what she wants after serving him not one, but two private banquets!

Haman leaves the banquet in the best of spirits after having received such special privilege, a privilege literally fit for a king, but Mordecai's persistent refusal to show him honor takes all his joy away. He became infuriated that Mordecai refused to show him honor when even the queen had honored him so, so he asked his wife and friends for advice on what to do about this guy because he hated him so much he just couldn't wait for the genocide in several months' time. His wife recommended that they build a gallows 75 ft high on which to hang Mordecai. Even Haman's wife knows how permissive the king is, in that she believes that Haman can just tell the king his plan and the king will go along with it.

Chapter 6

Now the story really gets hilarious. Again, we see the “behind the scenes” workings of God through all of the ironic twists and turns in this narrative. The king just so happened to be having trouble sleeping, so he had someone read the boring state records to him, and he came across Mordecai’s name and remembered Mordecai’s role in saving the king from assassination. Just as Haman comes to tell the king his plan about hanging Mordecai from the gallows he’d prepared, the king asks Haman to advise him on how to honor someone deserving of honor. Haman is comically narcissistic and assumes the king is talking about him, as who else could possibly be deserving of honor? So Haman tells the king his dream of receiving the royal treatment, wearing the king’s clothes and riding on the king’s horse and being led around town hailed as honorable. The king then tells Haman himself to so honor Mordecai, his mortal enemy who refused to show him honor. As if Haman were not devastated enough by this turn of events, his wife offered foreshadowing that Haman will reap what he has sown and will be destroyed by his own plan for the destruction of the Jews.