

The Story (20): Esther- God in the Shadows

(Esther)

I. Introduction

- A. Let's today begin with a brief responsive reading from [Psalm 29](#)
1. Imagery that follows inspired the song we just sang ([29:3-8](#))
 - a. This describes storm rising from the sea and moving to land
 - b. The storm is being observed from the perspective of Temple
 - 1) This is symbolic; Temple isn't really waterfront property
 - 2) Storm isn't a storm but a symbol of the voice of Lord
 - c. God's presence shake world— worshippers respond ([29:9](#))
 2. Does your life feel that you live in the middle of [Psalm 29](#)?
 - a. Or does feel like the louder the storm, the quieter God gets?
 - b. One of my favorites is on flip side of "*The Voice of the Lord*"
*I was sure by now, God you would have reached down
And wiped our tears away, stepped in and saved the day.
But once again, I say amen—and it's still raining
As the thunder rolls I barely hear your whisper through the rain, I'm with you*
 3. Does God thunder over your storms? Or does He Whisper?
- B. Much of the Bible speaks for God, Psalms speaks for us to God
1. David also sings the second song, where God is hidden by storm
 - a. "*Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*" ([Psa 10:1](#))
 - b. "*How long will you hide your face from me?*" ([Psa 13:1-2](#))
 - c. "*Why are you so far from saving me?*" ([Psa 22:1,2, 11](#))
 - d. "*LORD, you have seen this; do not be silent!*" ([Psa 35:22-23](#))
 2. In storms of life, we want God to do something; Luther said—
Bless us oh, Lord, or curse us, but do not remain silent!
 - a. Sometimes God seems to be hiding from us in the shadows
 - b. But like the sun when it's raining, God is still there in storm
 - c. He is still working in our lives, even when we can't see him
 3. That's the point of *The Story* we look at today: Book of Esther
 - a. God isn't mentioned in the book even though storm rages
 - b. God is at work in the storm, even though He's in the shadows

II. God in the Shadows: The Story of Esther

- A. Esther takes place in Persia during reign of Xerxes (485-465 BCE)
 - 1. Vashti refuses king's order display herself at a drunken feast
 - a. We're not told why she refuses; we're told that she's deposed
 - b. Esther wins and is named queen, but doesn't tell she is a Jew
 - 2. Every story has a heavy; our bad guy is Haman, Grand Vizier
 - a. Jewish feast of Purim marks the events of Book of Esther
 - 1) Book is read; when "Haman" is mentioned, they hiss-n-boos
 - 2) As I tell the story, hiss or boo when I mention "Haman"
 - b. We're told Haman is Amalekite; He hates Jews (*esp Mordecai*)
 - 3. Drama is driven by his mad desire to destroy Mordecai and Jews
 - a. So Haman tricks Xerxes into an ethnic cleaning of the Jews
 - b. He also builds huge gallows on which to impale Mordecai
- B. Mordecai is James Bond—he uncovers a plot to kill King Xerxes
 - 1. King was happy not to be assassinated, but forgets a reward
 - 2. Mordecai also uncovers the planned ethnic cleansing by Haman
 - 3. Much of story is a series of messages between Esther/ Mordecai
 - a. Mordecai tells her of the plot; Esther tells him she can't act
 - b. Unless she is summoned to see the king, she can't see him
 - c. Mordecai makes his famous speech (**Read: Esther 4:13-14**)
- C. Esther is convinced and rolls the bones (**Read: Esther 4:15-16**)
 - 1. From this point, Esther takes over; it becomes "book of Esther"
 - a. Queen's job was banquets— that's why Vashti was fired
 - b. Her plan is a party; she asks the king to attend with Haman
 - 2. First party was such a blowout Xerxes can't sleep that night
 - a. He has the royal records read to him to put him to sleep
 - 1) Years ago, one of our members had chronic insomnia
 - 2) He listened to old tapes of my sermons to help him sleep
 - b. The king is reminded of Mordecai, and Mordecai is honored

3. The honoring of Mordecai serves to embolden Esther
 - a. First, she reveals the plot to kill her (**Read: [Esther 7:3-4](#)**)
 - b. Then she drops the hammer on Haman (**Read: [Esther 7:5-6](#)**)
 - 1) King is so mad (or drunk) that he leaves to clear head
 - 2) Haman falls all over Esther begging for her mercy
 - 3) Xerxes returns and thinks Haman is attacking queen
 - c. For some reason, there's a huge gallows right outside palace
 - 1) Haman is "*hoist on his own petard*" (line from Hamlet)
 - 2) The Jews were saved, and Mordecai gets Haman's job.
- D. God isn't mentioned in this book, but He is anything but silent
1. There are no miracles; God doesn't shake the desert sand
 - a. But nonetheless, he has Persian empire skipping like calf
 - b. Esther doesn't hear God's voice; she becomes God's voice
 - c. God may seem silent, yet He thunders in that silence
 2. Notice the coincidences that must happen for Jews to be saved
 - a. Vashti had to be deposed and Esther placed on the throne
 - b. Esther must win Season #1 of *Bachelor* and become queen
 - c. But she must keep her Jewish nationality secret from Haman
 - d. Mordecai had to right place/time to discover assassination plot
 - e. He must also be James Bond again to discover Haman's plot
 - f. Xerxes must insomnia at the right time and read right story
 3. If any of these coincidences fail to happen, the Jews were toast
 - a. What if Esther had only won the Miss Congeniality contest?
 - b. What if Xerxes, like most intelligent men, wanted a redhead?
 - c. What Haman knew from the beginning Esther was Jewish?
 - d. What if it was Haman, not Mordecai, who was master spy?
 - e. What if Xerxes dosed off before he read about Mordecai?
 - f. What if Esther had been too afraid to roll the bones?
 - g. What if Xerxes had toothache on when Esther visit. him?
 - h. Xerxes had grown tired of the banquets and refused to come?

III. Conclusion

- A. What is it that God is doing right now in the storms of your life?
 - 1. What makes Bible stories different? *Narrator tells God's part*
 - a. Why do we know about Satan's part in Job? *Narrator*
 - b. How can we know Abraham entertains re angels? *Narrator*
 - c. Why do we know why God confused languages? *Narrator*
 - 2. We can know when we are going through the storms of life
 - a. We can't know what God is doing in the storm. No narrator
 - b. Esther had a storm, right? What she didn't have was narrator
 - 1) And she acted in faith in a God who is over the storm
 - 2) She reminds us that God is over the storm even if silent
- B. Esther calls to faith and faithfulness despite the storms in our life
 - 1. Whatever is your storm today, know that God is over it!
 - a. We can't see what God is doing until we have perspective
 - 1) We can't always look upward to see what He's doing now
 - 2) We can't see now the coincidences that are God-incidence
 - b. But right now, in the middle of storm, all we can see is storm
 - 2. But the voice of Lord is over the waters; God of glory thunders
 - a. Sometimes He thunders in silence and we don't understand
 - b. We continue to look despite the storm and in the storm
 - c. And we continue to seek to praise Him in the storm
- C. If there is a spiritual need you have, talk to elder or minister later
 - 1. Our invitation today is different—to mediate on your storm
 - a. You can't live very long in this world without facing a storm
 - b. If we're going to praise Him, we must praise him in the storm
 - 2. Sometimes the storm is so loud that we cannot hear God.
 - 3. God thunders over your storms and whispers, “*I am with you*”