

Sermon: Stand Out: Destiny – Lessons from Esther

Introduction:

Destiny is a powerful theme woven throughout the Bible. It speaks of God's unique purpose for each of His children. But to fulfill that purpose, we often need courage, faith, and a deep trust in God's plan. Today, we will explore the story of Esther, a young Jewish woman who embraced her destiny and saved her people. We will also look at how Jesus embraced His divine mission to save all of humanity. Finally, we will apply these lessons to our lives as children of God and joint heirs with Christ.

KEY THOUGHT: Those in Christ Jesus have a general and personal destiny to live out!

Background: The story of Esther takes place during a time of Jewish exile. After the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, many Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Later, the Persian Empire conquered Babylon, and under King Cyrus, some Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. However, many Jews, including Esther and her family, remained in Persia.

The events of the Book of Esther occurred during the reign of King Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus), who ruled Persia from 486 to 465 BC. Xerxes reigned over a vast empire stretching from India to Ethiopia, and the Jews were a minority living within his empire.

Esther, an orphaned Jewish girl, was raised by her cousin Mordecai. She lived in Susa, the capital of Persia, and through a series of events, she was chosen to become queen after Queen Vashti was deposed.

Though she initially hid her Jewish identity, Esther's courage and faith led her to embrace her destiny and save her people from annihilation. Her story unfolds during a critical time in Jewish history when their survival was at stake. It shows God's providence at work, even in foreign lands, where He used a humble Jewish woman to protect His covenant people.

Esther: Embracing Destiny to Save Her People

Esther's life is a remarkable example of someone who has embraced her divine calling. Initially, she was simply an orphaned Jewish girl raised by her cousin Mordecai. But God had a larger plan for her. She didn't immediately understand her role in God's plan when she became queen. However, her defining moment came when Mordecai informed her of Haman's plot to destroy the Jews.

Mordecai's words in Esther 4:13-14 serve as a pivotal turning point:

"Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Esther had to make a decision: to risk her life by going to the king without being summoned or remain silent and allow her people to perish. She courageously embraced her destiny, saying, *“If I perish, I perish”* (Esther 4:16). Through her bravery and faith, she secured deliverance for the Jewish people.

Key Lessons from Esther’s Life:

1. **Purpose in Position:** Esther was not placed in her royal position by accident (Esther 4:14). We must recognize that God places us where we are for His purposes.
2. **Courage in Crisis:** Like Esther, we must be willing to take risks for God’s kingdom (Esther 4:16). Courage under challenging times is a mark of faith.
3. **Faith in Action:** Esther didn’t just pray; she took action. James 2:26 says, “Faith without works is dead.” Esther’s faith was alive because it was accompanied by decisive action.

Jesus: The Perfect Embrace of Destiny

While Esther saved her people from physical destruction, Jesus came to save humanity from spiritual and eternal death. Jesus’ entire life was focused on fulfilling His divine mission. Just as Esther stood out by embracing her destiny, Jesus embraced His purpose with perfect obedience.

Philippians 2:5-8 tells us,

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

Jesus knew His mission from the beginning. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will”* (Matthew 26:39). Like Esther, Jesus surrendered His will to the Father’s plan, even though it involved great sacrifice.

Key Parallels Between Esther and Jesus:

1. **Both Were Chosen to Save Their People:** Esther was chosen as queen to save the Jews, and Jesus as the Messiah to save humanity (Philippians 2:6-8).
2. **Both Risked Their Lives:** Esther risked her life by approaching the king uninvited (Esther 4:16), while Jesus willingly gave His life on the cross (John 10:18).
3. **Both Surrendered to God’s Plan:** Esther said, *“If I perish, I perish,”* and Jesus said, *“Not My will, but Yours be done”* (Matthew 26:39).

Embracing Your Destiny as a Child of God:

As children of God, we also have a destiny to fulfill. Romans 8:17 says,

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”

Our destiny is not just about earthly achievements but is connected to our identity in Christ. Like Esther and Jesus, we are called to embrace our purpose by living for God’s kingdom.

Application:

1. **Recognize Your Divine Position:** Like Esther, you have been placed in your current position for a reason. Whether in your family, workplace, or community, God has a purpose for you. Romans 12:1-2 reminds us to offer our lives as living sacrifices in whatever role we find ourselves.
2. **Step Out in Courage:** Just as Esther acted courageously, you are called to trust God and step out in faith. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.”* Do not fear, for God is with you.
3. **Surrender to God’s Will:** Like Esther and Jesus, embracing your destiny means surrendering your plans to God’s will. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us to trust the Lord with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding.
4. **Live as an Heir with Christ:** As children of God, we are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). We are called to live out our identity in Him and reflect His glory in everything we do. Live with purpose and conviction, knowing you are part of God’s eternal plan.

Conclusion:

Just like Esther, you were born for such a time as this. And like Jesus, you are called to embrace your destiny as a child of God. While the path may not always be easy, stepping out in faith, surrendering to God’s will, and living as a joint heir with Christ will lead you to fulfill the purpose God has for your life.

Are you ready to embrace your destiny? Trust God, step forward with courage, and live the life He has called you to.

Reflections:

1. Take time to consider the environment, position, family, and church God has placed you in. How can you be a blessing, shine your light, rescue the perishing, and make a difference?

2. What is needed by the people around you? How might you meet those needs?
3. What influence has God given you? How might you use your influence to advance the Kingdom of God?
4. What risks or sacrifices must be taken or given to fulfill your God-given destiny? Have you counted the cost? Are you ready to act?