

Overtured: Week 5 — The Turning Point

Passage: Esther 5:9–6:14 (NLT)

Big Idea: God overturns pride and lifts up the faithful.

Opening Question: What's something you have felt proud about that didn't last long (a grade, an achievement, a piece of art you created, a post that didn't get as many likes as you hoped, etc.)?

Transition:

We all like to be noticed. But when our worth depends on recognition, it doesn't last. In Esther 5–6, we meet two very different people: Haman, who lives for attention, and Mordecai, who quietly stays faithful to do what's right.

Read Esther 5:9-6:14 <Leader note: You can read this in its entirety, chop it up, or sum it up.>

I. When Your Worth is Based on Recognition, It Won't Last (5:9–14)

When your mood and well-being depend on recognition, it fades fast.

- Haman leaves the banquet happy and proud until he sees Mordecai not bowing. One person's lack of recognition and respect ruins his whole day.
- Haman's happiness is fragile because it's built on pride and approval from others.
- In v. 11, he brags about his riches and importance, but it's all self-centered.
- Haman can't enjoy his riches or position because his pride is fixated on Mordecai's disapproval.
- This leads to Haman and his friends plotting the downfall of Mordecai. If Mordecai will not lift Haman up, then Haman will do anything to tear him down.
 - The specific way they plan to do this is by building a huge pole to impale Mordecai on. Haman wants to publicly humiliate and destroy Mordecai.

Application:

- When pride and the need for recognition is what motivates you, if that's where you find your value, then that will lead us to act in ways that mistreat others.
- We become fixated on who likes or dislikes us and how we can change their opinions.

- When we put ourselves above others, we justify mistreating them or making them look bad to make ourselves look better.

Transition: This moment plants the seed of Haman's downfall: His obsession with recognition will lead to his downfall. Proverbs 16:18 is the classic verse: "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall."

II. God Works Behind the Scenes for His People (6:1–3)

- Even when God's name isn't mentioned, He's still at work. We see God working here through a series of coincidences.
- This is the pivot of the whole book: through these coincidences, God is going to knock down the first domino to overturn the unjust system that would have killed the Jews.
- We see our hidden God working silently in the fact that:
 1. King Xerxes "coincidentally" has trouble sleeping.
 2. King Xerxes "coincidentally" chooses to read the book and section that records Mordecai's act of saving his life.
 3. The king just happens to read the exact record of Mordecai's loyalty—at the very moment Haman walks in with his plan.
 4. This happens "coincidentally" in between the two feasts that Esther throws for the king and Mordecai. This sets them up for Esther's bold request at the second banquet
- If any of this would not have happened, the rest of the story would fall apart. God orchestrated such a precise series of events.

God's silence does not mean God's absence.

Application:

Even in the moments when God seems silent, he works in small moments and ordinary people—So many more moments than we can imagine.

III. Our Pride is Self-Defeating (6:4–14)

Haman is so full of himself that he can't even consider that King Xerxes would want to honor someone other than him. Haman's assumption leads to his humiliation.

- Instead of the king honoring him, he's forced to honor Mordecai.
- This is an "ironic reversal." Irony happens when the opposite of what is intended or expected happens.
- Haman's plan is ironically overturned. He intends to humiliate Mordecai but ends up humiliating himself.

- And so Mordecai's quiet faithfulness is finally recognized, not because he sought it, but because God arranged it.

We see an important contrast between Haman and Mordecai. Haman represents pride, and Mordecai represents humble faithfulness, a commitment to justice even when no one is looking. He does what is right even though there is no reward for him. Everything Haman does is for recognition and the spotlight. Ultimately his selfishness is exposed.

Application: How do we make our own decisions about when to stand for what's right? Are we like Haman? Do we only stand up for what's right when others will notice and reward us? Do we do it only to make ourselves look better?

Or, like Mordecai, are we committed to standing up for justice even when no one notices, trusting that God sees us and will reward us in his timing?

Haman's fall begins where his pride peaked. The higher you lift yourself, the harder the crash. But those who humble themselves—like Mordecai—will be lifted up by God in his timing. Even when God is quiet and we wonder what he is up to.

Big Idea: God overturns pride and lifts up the faithful.

Gospel

Jesus is the ultimate example of faithfulness.

- Like Mordecai, He was overlooked, mocked, and rejected.
- Unlike Haman, Jesus didn't grasp for honor. In His humility, God exalted Him above every name (Philippians 2:5–11).
- The cross looked like defeat, but it was the turning point for all of creation.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think people care so much about recognition or being noticed? How does pride show up in your own life?
2. When have you seen something "coincidental" happen that might actually have been God working?
3. Why do you think God sometimes works quietly instead of obviously?
4. When have you had to do the right thing even when no one noticed?