

Sermon Notes – Sunday 1st September

Esther – ‘God at work even when we can’t see it’

- What was the most memorable celebration you ever attended?

Read Chapter 1 of Esther or the summary on the notice sheet.

The historian Herodotus informs us that King Xerxes appeared quite a contradictory character – sometimes impulsive and indecisive, whilst at other times bold, ambitious, visionary and a confident leader.

- What else might you derive about the kind of man he was from the first chapter of this book?

Women in that culture did not socialise with men, hence Queen Vashti’s separate banquet (v 9) so the summons of Vashti by the King was already an inappropriate request, let alone the suggestion that she appear wearing only her royal crown (as some commentators have indicated).

- What kind of risk was Vashti taking by her refusal and what does this tell us about the place of women in Persian society, and how does it compare with the 21st century?
- Can you think of a situation where you have been asked to do something that you disliked, found inappropriate or unacceptable?
- How did you react and what were your feelings as you responded?

There is now, as then (1:11), a cultural pressure to conform to a certain body image (of physical beauty) particularly for young women.

- How can we keep Peter’s instruction before us (1 Peter 3:3,4) and encourage our children to resist building their self esteem on the number of ‘likes’ on social media?

Read Chapter 2 and consider what life would have been like for Esther and the other women in the harem.

- What was Esther like?

God at work. Although God is never mentioned in this book, He is clearly evident working in the background behind the scenes to fulfil his purposes.

- Have there been times in your life when God has felt absent and yet with hindsight you can now see that he was there all along?
- How did this grow/challenge your faith and teach you to trust in Him, come what may?

Esther had to go through a year of beauty treatments before she came before the King. God often gives us seasons of preparation that we need to embrace in order to get ready for whatever might come next?

- How might God be preparing you and what do you need to do to embrace it?

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