

Sermon Notes – Sunday 8th September Esther – ‘The rise of evil’

Read Esther Chapter 3 and note how Haman’s hatred and desire for revenge is out of all proportion and reflects how evil magnifies as it takes root. Consider also the history of the Jewish people who not for the first time have been threatened with annihilation. Why do you think this is?

- Consider the possible reasons why Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. He did not know that the consequence of his refusal was to put his people in danger, but do you think he was right to do this in disobedience to the King’s command?
- Do people have to earn our respect or should we afford them respect anyway as those made in the image of God whoever they are?

We can see how Satan loves to exploit division and magnify it for his own destructive purposes in order to increase its impact on people’s lives.

Read Chris and Suzy Wilson’s prayer letter and pray for them and others living in difficult circumstances seeking to overcome hostility and suspicion between communities with the love of Christ.

- Read Ephesians 2:14-16. What was the ‘dividing wall of hostility’ to which Paul refers?

Read about the commission that God has given us in 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21.

- Are there areas in our own lives and relationships (family or work) where there is tension, bitterness or hostility? How can we be those who are peacemakers and exercise a ‘ministry of reconciliation’ both to one another and to God? Share your particular story.

Haman’s prejudice towards the Jewish people would have been handed down from his forefathers. Prejudice is something we may deny in ourselves but if we dig deeper we may feel uncomfortable with what we find. It may not be as extreme as that of Haman but we may find ourselves reacting negatively about somebody without due cause. Equally, like Xerxes we may be ready to believe what we hear without thinking carefully and checking it out (v10).

- Has the Holy Spirit exposed an area of prejudice in your own heart?

Consider Jesus as a wonderful role model for accepting people as they were and for treating them with grace whilst challenging their lifestyles (e.g. John 8:1-11)

Pray for one another that the Holy Spirit would expose any prejudice in our hearts towards other people who might be different to us. Pray that we might reach out with the love of Jesus to all people and the church would be known first of all for its love of all people irrespective of race, class or religion.

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