



The Real King

Session One

Look Back at Last Week

- In his sermon on May 19 about the church in Laodicea, Pastor Curtis said that as a community and as individuals, all have an invitation to open doors to Jesus. Discuss where Jesus needs to be invited in, communally and individually.
- Pastor Curtis quoted Jerome, an early church father, as saying, “The greatest anger of God is when God withdraws His anger from us and lets us go our own way.” What are your thoughts about this?
- Share takeaways from the seven churches of Revelation sermon series. How relevant was the series to FPC? To you?

Introduction to the New Sermon Series: For Such a Time as This

In this series set 2500 years ago, we uncover a timeless truth: God is present, even when He seems absent. Taking place in one of the four capital cities of ancient Persia, the story of Esther often has been neglected throughout church history because it never mentions God, the miraculous, prayer, worship, dietary laws, the temple, Jerusalem, or the Hebrew Scriptures. Why, then, should we study Esther? Because we, too, live in a time when God can seem absent from the world around us, when God can seem no longer in control. Also, all of us will have - or have had - times when we realize that we are called to have courage and speak up in difficult situations.

Read Aloud

Passage for this week: **Esther 1:1-22**

Head (15–20 Minutes)

OBSERVE THE TEXT AND THE AUTHOR’S MAIN POINTS

1. What do we know about the time and setting of the book of Esther?
2. What type of person was King Ahasuerus? What does his relationship with Queen Vashti tell us about him?
3. Why did Queen Vashti refuse to come when summoned?

Heart (15–20 Minutes)

ENVISION HOW THE TEXT—WHEN APPLIED—MIGHT TRANSFORM YOUR INNER LIFE IN TERMS OF YOUR THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS

1. What do we learn from Queen Vashti's courage in standing up for her dignity?
2. How does our culture put women in a similar place as Queen Vashti?
3. Discuss real and hypothetical situations where difficult choices are made on principle.

Hands (10 Minutes)

APPLY THE TEXT BY MOVING FROM INWARD REFLECTION TO OUTWARD ACTION LOOKING FOR WAYS TO LIVE THE TEXT OUT IN OUR LIVES TO SERVE OTHERS

- Discuss guidelines and instances to take a stand for what is right, even if it means going against authority or societal norms.
- Consider ways to advocate for justice, dignity, and equality in our communities, offices, classrooms, etc.

Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

1. How does this passage inspire and encourage us to live faithfully as a disciple of Jesus “in exile”?
2. Pray as a group for the Holy Spirit to give discernment in challenging situations, and confess times silently or aloud when we have not had the courage to speak up.

Reaching Outwards: Investing in Your Neighbors

1. **Alpha Prayer:** Thank you for your prayers for the Retreat on the Holy Spirit Saturday May 18 at FPC! There was a good turnout, especially in light of the aftermath of the storm that occurred just two days before it. Pray that the gospel message will sink deeply into their hearts of all who came. As Alpha continues, please pray for flourishing relationships and responses to the gospel for our guests, and for our volunteer hosts and helpers to have stamina, good health, and clear schedules to be able to return weekly and show the love of Jesus to our guests.
2. **VBS Volunteer:** Help children experience the every-flowing, never-ending love of God at VBS 2024 by volunteering to serve during this important week, Monday - Friday, June 10-14 (9AM -12PM). The theme is SCUBA, diving into friendship with God. For more information and to register go to fpchouston.org/vbs.

Reaching Beyond

1. **May 31 (Friday), 6-10 pm Every Shelter: Dignify the Displaced -An Art Auction - at the Rice School of Architecture's New Cannady Hall** - All proceeds from this art fundraiser will be used to help build and support Every Shelter's refugee-centric ecosystem in Uganda. Come experience live music, craft refreshments and cocktails, and an immersive billboard shelter. Admission, food and drinks are free.
2. **Opportunities to Assist With Houston Storm Disaster Relief** - As thousands of Houston residents remain affected by the aftermath of the May 16 storm, help and volunteers are needed. Houston Responds has volunteer information and recovery resources on their

website: www.houstonresponds.org/activedisaster. Please consider helping in any way you can - whether it be donations, assembling aid boxes, property cleanup assistance, etc. If you have questions on how to provide assistance, please contact **Madie Weir** at mweir@fpchouston.org or **Steve Winstead**, FPC's Central Coalition lay leader at steve.winstead@att.net.

