



Turned Tables

Session Nine

Look Back at Last Week

- In her sermon on Esther 8, Pastoral Resident Jeanmarie Tade highlighted Esther's unselfish persistence on behalf of others. When have you had the opportunity to unselfishly persist on behalf of others? How persistent are you in your prayer life for others?
- In Chapter 8 Esther returns a second time to King Xerxes to plead for the life of the Jews. Relate times when you have returned a second time to ask for something. What made it easy? What made it challenging?
- King Xerxes' very long day extended from Esther Chapter 6:1 - 8:2. Discuss times when you had a very long day. How can we rely on God to meet the demands of very long days?

Read Aloud

Passage for this week: **Esther 9:1-22**

Head (15–20 Minutes)

OBSERVE THE TEXT AND THE AUTHOR'S MAIN POINTS

1. The instruments of governing—edicts, mandates, policies, laws—can be used to cause significant harm or significant good with justice leading to flourishing. What insights can we discover in the irony of this truth in the story?
2. The King receives a report of the number of his subjects who were killed at the Citadel in Susa and wonders about the other provinces, but it's unclear if he responds with shock or is pleased with the news (v.11-12). What do you think? Is the response of God's people toward their enemies justified?
3. How does the institution of the Feast of Purim reflect the themes of the passage?

Heart (15–20 Minutes)

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

1. The Book of Esther is encouraging and inspires faith and courage. It is possible, however, for this story to collapse into justifications of tribal violence. How can we - the church - appreciate the two-edged sword of this book?
2. How can the example of the Jews' unity in the face of their enemies impact the church's approach to injustice in our city, country, and the world? What can we learn from this kind of unity? What prevents unity?

3. Reflect on a time when you experienced a significant reversal or deliverance. How did that experience shape your faith and perspective?

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

Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- As our study of Esther comes to a close, re-read the whole story from start to finish and recall the lessons learned from this scripture. Recall places God worked behind the scenes to orchestrate events that were plot twists or reversals.
- Set aside intentional time alone or do this with your small group: express gratitude and celebrate how God has brought about deliverance in your life in large and small ways.
- Reflecting on verses 18-19, discuss how often you rejoice in the rest and relief Christ provides. Discuss why and how to make the effort to do so more.

Reaching Outwards: Investing in Your Neighbors

- Esther is a story of deliverance that encouraged and reminded the diaspora Jews of God's faithfulness. Invest in your neighbors by sharing stories of deliverance and offering support to those in need especially those who need help after Hurricane Beryl. For specific opportunities, contact Madie Weir, Missions Coordinator, at mweir@fpchouston.org.
- July 21 - 26 - High School Adventure Trip to Yosemite. Pray for logistics, safety when traveling, camping, and hiking, and that all who participate grow in their relationship with God as they interact with His beautiful creation.

Reaching Beyond

- Participate in community service projects or charitable activities mirroring the Jews' acts of giving portions of food and gifts to the poor. For information about FPC Mission Partners volunteer opportunities go to fpchouston.org/serve/ways-to-serve/upcoming-opportunities.
- July 25 - Pray for the next post-Alpha group meeting. May those who come feel welcome and continue their interest in and commitment to the gospel. Pray that those with unresolved questions about Jesus would sense His love and draw close to Him. For additional information, contact Emmanuel Paulpeter, Pastor of Outreach at epaulpeter@fpchouston.org.