

Subject: *The Horrible Face of Evil*

Scripture: *Esther 3:1-15*

As the Lord would have it, we come to chapter 3 of Esther in which we find a mastermind of evil who planned a hate crime against the Jewish people. Evil has many faces that appear from time to time. On April 19, 1995, a man named Timothy McVeigh bombed the federal office building in Oklahoma City. That bombing killed 168 men, women, and children. Hundreds more were wounded. Timothy McVeigh was a man we will never forget. He was the face of evil. Last Wednesday night we were horrified when we heard the news that a 21-year old shot and killed nine people in a Bible study. Dylann Roof is another face of evil.

We know evil is in the world and we see the evidence all around us. But every once in a while a person does something and we know we are looking into the very face of evil. Such was a man named Haman, the sinister character in the book of Esther. Now we are introduced to Haman whose name means “magnificent one.” Let’s call him hateful Haman.

HAMAN’S PROMOTION

Esther 3 begins, “After these things did King Ahasuerus promote Haman.” At the end of chapter 2, Mordecai the Jew saved the king’s life and was not rewarded or promoted, but Haman is now promoted to very high office. Have you ever wondered why bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people? In secular and Biblical history some very wicked people rose to power: Nero, Hitler, Stalin, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, and this man Haman.

Many things happen that are out of our control. Like we learned in VBS, we are on a “Journey off the Map,” and we must trust our Guide. How could God allow Mordecai the Jew to save the life of the king in chapter 2 and then allow that same king to sign his death warrant and the death warrant of all the Jews in chapter 3? To us it doesn’t make sense, but remember God has a plan and purpose. We call it providence.

HAMAN’S PRIDE

Everyone bowed down to Haman except Mordecai. The Jews were not to bow down to anyone or anything except God. When Mordecai stood up he stood out. This made Haman furious. He was a self-centered, power-hungry man. But there is something deeper going on here. Haman was an Agagite and Mordecai was a Jew. Haman was a descendent of Agag, who had been king of the Amalekites. The Agagites and the Amalekites were bitter enemies of the Jews. This goes back about 600 years earlier to the time of King Saul and the prophet Samuel, and even 500 years before that to the time of Moses (Ex. 17:8-14; 1 Sam. 15:1-3, 7-9, 32-35).

HAMAN’S PLAN

At first Haman was angry with Mordecai, but he decided to exterminate all the Jews in the Persian empire which would include Jews living in Persia and those who had returned to the homeland in Israel. This was not the first time nor would it be the last time that someone had a plan to eliminate the Jewish people. This was a plan motivated by Satan himself. To

destroy the Jewish people would destroy God's plan to redeem the world through Jesus Christ. Notice the details of Haman's plan:

- Slander (vs. 8) – Haman promoted a smear campaign against the Jews. Satan is the slanderer, the father of lies. This was the same tactic used against Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was the strategy used against Christians in the early church.
- Greed (vs. 9) – Haman promised an enormous sum of money to the king. This would be equivalent to millions of dollars today. The love of money is the root of all evil. Haman planned to confiscate the money and property of all the Jews. In the 1930s when the Nazis tried to exterminate the Jews they also looted them.
- Power (vs. 10-12) – Haman used the king's authority to accomplish his plan. He knew if the king made it official (in the king's name and with the king's ring) there would be way to reverse it. In verse 10, Haman is called the Jews' enemy. To fight against the Jews is to fight against God. **Genesis 12:3** *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*
- Timing (vs. 13) – The date was set. All Jews would be killed on the 13th day of the 12th month. How did they settle on this date? See verse 7. They cast lots and this day was chosen. Haman apparently thought this was a good time because the Jews would live in fear for a whole year. He wanted to terrorize them and make them squirm.

HAMAN'S PERVERSION

When the king's decree was signed and the date was set for the extermination of the Jews, the city of Shushan was perplexed and shocked, **Proverbs 29:2** *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.* But Haman and the king sat down to drink. They probably joked about the whole thing. They had absolutely no conscience.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

This is a sad turn of events, so where do we see God's hand in all of this?

- God allows evil, but never approves it
People often question, why does God allow suffering and evil in the world? God hates evil. **Proverbs 6:16-19** ¹⁶ *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.* Most of these evil things we see in hateful Haman. God permits evil, but never condones it.

- God restrains anger and uses it for His glory
***Psalms 76:10** Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* God allows evil to reveal its ugly head to show us that He restrains much more evil. He shows us how bad things could be if He removed His protective hand.
- God timing is always perfect – All Jews were under threat of death for a whole year, but God used this time to work things out for them. To Haman it seemed like a time to terrorize and threaten the Jews, but God used this time to preserve them and work out His greater plan. In God's providence Haman's plan was delayed for a full year to give Mordecai and Esther time to spare the Jews. Lots were used to determine several things in Bible times. It was something like rolling the dice, but it was not chance or luck. Like everything else, it was under God's control. ***Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

In 1932, Rev. A.M. Overton lost his wife and baby. He was left with three small children to raise. He wrote this poem to express his faith in the God who does all things well.

He Maketh No Mistake

My Father's way may twist and turn
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad to know,
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead,
For He doth know the way.

Tho' night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break,
I'll put my faith, my all, in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim,
But come what may,
I'll simply trust and leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift,
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, though dark to me,
He made not one mistake.