

Joan Murray was a 47-year-old bank executive for the Bank of America who lived in Charlotte, North Carolina. She loved her family, her job, and her newly found passion for skydiving. Joan had participated in several hours of skydiving training, and up to this point had completed 35 jumps. She wasn't exactly a pro but she was far from being a novice.

On September 25, 1999, Joan woke up, traveled the one-hour trip to Chester County, SC, and joyfully geared up. Joan felt her excitement surge as the plane took off and ascended into the sky. As they reached the required altitude of 14,500 feet, Joan waited for the all-clear and then rocked herself out of the plane door. She rejoiced in the fall with the feel of the wind pushing against her body as she looked out over the landscape.

Approximately 45 seconds into her freefall, she pulled the handle to deploy her parachute. She expected the release of the chute – that would slow her fall and allow her to coast safely to the ground, but instead – nothing happened.

She had to think quickly. Her chute did not deploy as it had the previous 35 times that she had done this – but it's ok, that's what the reserve chute is for. She pulled and the reserve chute deployed just as it should. She began to slow in her descent, but then the unthinkable happened. She began to spin, and the cords of her reserve chute became entangled. She was once again falling fast.

At 700 feet, her reserve chute completely deflated, and she was speeding towards the ground at 80 mph. Onlookers could only watch in horror as Joan's body slammed into the ground nearby. Emergency responders were notified and quickly rushed to the scene.

This was as bad as it gets, but when she hit the ground – to seemingly add insult to injury, she disturbed a fire ant mound and she was stung over 200 times.

Joan was rushed to the hospital where doctors were sure that she would not live. The entire right side of her body was crushed due to the impact. She hit so hard, even the fillings in her teeth were knocked out.

Doctors were baffled that she was still alive but eventually they came to realize that the fire ant stings released a surge of adrenaline in her body which stimulated her nervous system and kept her heart beating. Oddly enough, they concluded it was the ants that saved her life.

Like those little ants who saved the life of Joan Murray, this morning we are going to look at a passage where we see God use something that might seem trivial and insignificant to us, when in fact, it changed the course of history and saved God's people.

Last week we looked at **Esther 5** where two significant moments occurred. The first was a private banquet prepared by Queen Esther for her husband King Ahasuerus and his number two man – Haman. If you remember, Haman is the enemy of the Jews and he has already obtained permission to exterminate them all, and it was at this banquet, right then and there, that Esther could have pointed her finger at Haman, but instead, apparently sensing it was not the right time, she offered a second banquet for the king and Haman on the very next day.

Haman was over the moon with an invitation to another banquet with the king and queen, and as he made his way home to tell everybody about it, he runs into Mordecai again. Mordecai is the centerpiece of Haman's hatred of the Jews – his blood boils just thinking about him, and he thinks about him all the time, and as Haman explains this to his wife and friends – they give him some advice to cheer him up. They recommended, and this will become significant later, that Haman immediately assign a work crew – that very night, to have a tall wooden stake erected so as to have Mordecai impaled on it the following day.

So, it's not looking good for Mordecai or the Jews, but as I have been saying all along, God is working behind the scenes and He is working on the king, and that brings us to **Esther 6** and we will begin with **verse 1**.

During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

During the night – the exact same night that Haman was raising a wooden stake to have Mordecai impaled, King Ahasuerus couldn't sleep – he's got insomnia – and in his sleepless state, instead of counting sheep, instead of listening to music, instead of calling upon a concubine, the king ordered that the **book of records** be brought in and read to him.

Just so you know, these records were journals from a royal perspective, where every occurrence worthy of notice and every memorable fact was documented in a chronological fashion, going all the way back to Cyrus who first ruled the Persian Empire. So, King Ahasuerus wanted to listen to the record probably hoping it would eventually bore him back to sleep.

Now, before we move on, I want to speak to this for a moment. I don't know about you, but every once in a while, I get sleepless and restless, as a general practice, I will ask the Lord if there is someone I need to pray for at that very moment. Other times, for example, God will give me a thought for a sermon I am working on and I need to write it down before I forget it. Whatever the case, instead of seeing your restlessness as a case of insomnia, maybe the Lord is trying to get your attention and you need to respond.

Okay, back to our story. In the king's sleepless state, the servant reads from the book of records while the king listens, and beginning with **verse 2** we are told,

²It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

As the servant reads and the king listens, it just so happens that of all that could have been read, the servant reads a particular portion of the record that was written some five years earlier – and in the record, it was found that Mordecai had uncovered an assassination plot against the king.

If you remember, Mordecai was assigned to the king's gate in some official capacity, and while he was there, he overheard these two guys conspiring to assassinate the king, and so he reported it to Queen Esther, who in turn alerted the king – giving full credit to Mordecai.

Well at this point in the reading, the king interrupts and asks his servant, "*What recognition or reward did Mordecai receive for doing this?*" Normally this king would quickly honor someone who did special services for him – that's what he did, but in this case, it was discovered that nothing had been done for Mordecai. There was nothing written in the book of records that indicated he had been honored, and so it would seem that Mordecai's act of loyalty had been completely overlooked and forgotten by everybody – but not by God.

I want you to consider something for a moment. If Mordecai had been recognized and rewarded soon after he had saved the life of the king some five years ago, on this sleepless night in the palace in Susa, Mordecai would not be a top priority – but on this particular night, the king now realizes he owes his very life to Mordecai – and also keep in mind that the king knows nothing about Haman's plan to kill Mordecai. That's Haman's plan.

As soon as the king learned that nothing had been done for Mordecai, he was shocked and he started thinking about how to honor this loyal man who had apparently slipped through the cracks – wondering who on his staff could help make things right.

Well, the king quickly gets his answer beginning with **verse 4**.

⁴So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. ⁵ The king’s servants said to him, “Behold, Haman is standing in the court.” And the king said, “Let him come in.”

The king is mulling over this matter about Mordecai when he hears someone in the outer court. The sun is just coming over the horizon, and the king asks a servant whose out there this early in the morning and he’s told its Haman – and we know that Haman rushed to the palace as early as he could to get a jump start on making his plea to the king to have Mordecai executed that very day. For Haman, *“the early bird gets the worm,”* so he wanted to be the first in line to have an audience with the king to finish off Mordecai once and for all.

Now Haman, just like everyone else, could not enter the king’s presence without being invited, but apparently it was his lucky day, for while he was still standing in the outer court, the king is already calling for him. *“Tell Haman to come right on into my bedroom.”*

From Haman’s perspective, this is working out better than he could have expected – this is going to be a great day, but before Haman could get a word out of his mouth, before he could falsely accuse Mordecai of being a menace to society who needs to be executed immediately, the king had a question for him, and in **verse 6** we are told,

So Haman came in and the king said to him, “What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?” And Haman said to himself, “Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?”

Wow, for Haman the day is getting even better. The king asks him, *“What should be done for someone I want to honor in a great way?”* And of course, Haman, who is a very proud and arrogant man, assumes the king is talking about him because that’s what proud and arrogant people think – **I mean, who else could it be? Who else is the number two man in the Persian Empire? Who else has**

attended a private banquet with the king and queen, and has another one to attend later that day? No one but Haman.

So, for Haman, he assumes this is his moment to bask in glory, and he gives his reply to the king beginning with **verse 7**.

⁷ Then Haman said to the king, “For the man whom the king desires to honor, ⁸ let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; ⁹ and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king’s most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.’”

If you notice, Haman says nothing about riches or property or power because he already has all those things – instead, he wants to feed his ego and he begins to list every glory he can imagine for himself. Haman thinks he is being allowed to describe his own rewards, and of all things, he wants to experience the honor of being treated like a king.

And so, he begins with a **royal robe** – king’s clothing – a robe that King Ahasuerus had already worn. This would be a great honor, and it would give him the appearance of a king.

Haman also wanted to ride on a **horse** – a horse that the king had already ridden – a horse with a symbol of the royal **crown** on its head. Some read this passage and think the crown was to be worn by Haman, but with the Persians, horses were often decorated with ornaments of royalty, which could include turbans and crowns fitted on their heads. Again, Haman wanted to appear kingly.

Then last but not least, Haman wanted to flaunt his glory by being paraded through the city square like a king, all the while being led by a prince who loudly proclaims **“Thus it shall be done to the man who the king desires to honor.”** Haman had a lust for respect and glory, and he wanted to be treated like a king in front of as many people as possible.

Haman couldn’t imagine anything greater for that “special someone” – for himself – the king thought his idea was perfect, and beginning with **verse 10** we read,

¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, “Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king’s gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said.” ¹¹ So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.”

What? King Ahasuerus tells Haman to ensure all those things he secretly wanted for himself were to be bestowed upon Mordecai, and to make matters worse, the king says, *“Haman I want you to be the one who personally leads the horse through the city square and makes the announcement about how great this man is who sits on this horse.”*

With that command, there’s no way Haman can now say to the king, *“I want to kill the guy that you want to honor.”* That doesn’t look good, so instead of impaling Mordecai on a wooden stake that day, Haman puts him on a horse in royal robes and parades him around the city square for all to see.

Did you notice the king knows that Mordecai is a Jew? If you remember, when the king blindly authorized the extermination of the Jews under the advice of Haman – Haman only told the king they were a “certain people” who he described as being different and rebellious – and in the king’s best interest, he recommended these “certain people” be destroyed.

Anyway, Haman had to be in complete shock. This was supposed to be his big day but it’s turned into a day of great humiliation. He walked into the palace early in the morning to get the king’s permission just to have one Jew executed. He’s already arranged to have the entire Jewish race exterminated in a matter of months, but he can’t kill this one guy named Mordecai, and on top of that, he assumed he would bask in glory that day. He thought Ahasuerus was going to honor him just like a king, but now the tables have turned and Haman must personally honor the man he can’t stand and wants to kill.

Because of one sleepless night, God has turned Haman's world completely upside down as he carries out the king’s command. Then we come to last portion of this chapter, and beginning with **verse 12** we are told,

¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered. ¹³ Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to

fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.”¹⁴ While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

When the parade was over, Mordecai went back to work at the king’s gate, while Haman is a wreck and he rushes home with his tail between his legs to tell everyone what had just happened. He expects to be consoled by his family and friends – he needs some encouragement – but they have nothing for him.

The Persians were a very superstitious people, and it alarmed them that Mordecai the Jew should be dead but he was honored instead, and as a result, they warn Haman that nothing good is going to happen for him – it’s the beginning of the end.

Haman takes it all in – maybe a vacation is in order right about now, or maybe he needs to figure out a clever way to weasel out of this one, but before he can do anything – there is a knock at the door and he is swept out of the house and escorted to the palace for Queen Esther’s second banquet. This was a banquet he once desired – but now, it’s a banquet he dreads.

If this chapter teaches us anything, God’s timing and His ways are always perfect. On the very night that Haman was erecting a tall wooden stake to impale Mordecai the Jew – King Ahasuerus was sleepless in Susa. Although the king had options, he chose to review the book of records. As a servant reads to the king from volumes of entries, he comes to a portion of the record which documents an incident involving Mordecai that had occurred five years earlier. Mordecai had saved the king’s life, but his loyalty had never been honored. The king’s insomnia came at the right time, and now the king wants to right a wrong. He wants to see Mordecai recognized and rewarded, and just at the right time – Haman shows up early in the morning. He comes to plea for Mordecai’s execution, but before he can even get a word out of his mouth, the king commands Haman to honor the man he wants to kill.

God’s timing and His ways are always perfect – even those ways that might seem trivial and insignificant to us at the time, and let me explain what I mean with a sneak peek, so to speak. The king’s divine insomnia will save the life of Mordecai, but not only that, for it will also serve as the springboard that will change the fate of the Jews who are set to be exterminated, and if you really want to think ahead, the rescue of the Jews would ultimately lead to the redemption of mankind for Jesus came from the line of David, the tribe of Judah, the Jewish nation of Israel.

God's timing and His ways are always perfect, even when it doesn't always seem that way.

A man who was shipwrecked on an uninhabited island painstakingly built a little hut for protection from the elements and to keep the few items he had salvaged from the wreck. For weeks he lived with only the hot sun, the cold nights, and the tropical storms for company. Prayerfully, he scanned the horizon for the approach of a ship – any ship, but there was nothing.

Then, one evening, when he returned from a search for food, he was terrified to find that his little hut was in flames. As he stood there, unable to put out the fire, he was crushed by the disaster. What few possessions he had were now gone up in smoke. He went to sleep that night near the ashes, listening to the surf pounding on the sand and his heart throbbing in despair.

Early the next morning he awoke to find a ship anchored off the island – the first ship he had seen in weeks. Still trying to believe his eyes, he then heard a man's voice: "We saw your smoke signal, and we came to rescue you."

For this man, God seemed so distant, and so absent, for so long – but all along, God was working to bring a ship, at just the right time, when everything had gone up in smoke, to bring about His deliverance. That's what God did for Mordecai – that's what He does for His people.

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