This morning is the second part of our series on the book of Esther. The story of Esther is a fascinating story of courage and of the sovereign hand of God protecting the Jewish people. The plot is filled with danger, romance and a lot of twists and turns.

The Jewish people were in exile in a foreign land and the king of that land was looking for a new wife to serve as his queen. He gathered a number of beautiful women to choose from and ended up choosing Esther. Unbeknown to him was the fact that Esther was a Jew. God gave Esther favor and in doing so was protecting the Jewish people for what was to come. The kings second in command, Haman, had a hatred for Jews and manipulated the king to sign an edict that all Jews were to be killed on a certain date.

This is where Esther is put to the test. Was she willing to reveal her identity and put her life on the line to try to save her people? She could keep quiet and continue to enjoy her royal status and no one would know the difference. Or she could speak up for her people, risking it all, including her own head.

We pick up on the story when her adoptive father Mordecai, who raised her, asks for her help.

Read Esther 4 – 5:5, Esther 7

Lessons we learn from Esther’s courage.

1. **Courage requires us to have strong convictions.**

Inner convictions help us to take an outward stand when the time of testing comes. Esther’s parents died when she was very young and Mordecai, a relative and devout Jew, raised her. He would have instilled in her the convictions of her faith.

Like Esther, many of our convictions and beliefs are instilled in us when we are children. They might not be fully understood or developed but they are like seeds planted in fertile soil.

**Proverbs 22:6**  *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Parents, don’t underestimate the power of you taking time to read the scriptures to your children and talking about spiritual things with them. At times they may act distracted and bored but you are planting seeds. Seeds they will need to draw on later in life like Esther did.
I thank God for our Children’s Ministry but it can never replace the impartation that comes directly from the parents sharing and living these values with their children. You are the greatest influencer in their lives.

There came a day when Esther needed to draw on those seeds that Mordecai had planted in her as a little girl. These seeds had grown into personal convictions that she now carried as a young woman. With these convictions she found the courage to take a stand that was not only unpopular but put her very life at risk.

In our post modern culture today where biblical absolutes are considered narrow-minded, many people have preferences but not as many have real convictions.

- **Preferences** shift and change. I prefer Coke today and maybe Pepsi tomorrow.
- **Convictions** on the other hand are something you are willing to fight for and maybe even die for.
- **Preferences** are things we can compromise on but ……. 
- **Convictions** are based on the authority of God’s word and we can’t choose to change God’s word by popular vote or the changing winds of culture.

Esther spoke up, not because it was her preference but because it was her conviction that she had no other choice if she was going to be faithful to her God. When our faith comes under fire we need convictions that we are willing to go to the mat for and fight for.

As biblical truth and values becomes increasingly unpopular we are tempted to stay in the shadows or keep compromising some of our values and convictions so we won’t be made fun of and ridiculed as being old fashioned or out of touch, or narrow minded, or intolerant, or some kind of weird dangerous fundamentalist.

We need to speak and live our convictions to make a difference.

Humorous story - Baltimore City Hall story….

- Living your convictions and doing the courageous thing does not always mean you feel courageous - shaking inside and hanging onto God like crazy.

  2. **Courage is putting the well being of others ahead of your own.**

There are many stories of people doing courageous things to save others at the risk of their own lives. Our police officers and fire fighters do so on a regular basis. We honor them.
Esther had a tough choice to make. If she spoke up she risked not only having her friends in the kings court alienating her but she risked the king getting mad at her. And in those days if the king got mad at you it was off with your head in most cases.

Sometimes it takes tremendous courage to speak up. Put yourself in Esther’s shoes for a moment.

The king could accuse her of deception in hiding her true identity all these years. He could feel betrayed by her. Made to look like a fool in front of the whole nation for having a queen who was really one of the despised Jews.

On top of that it was against the law to approach the king without a personal invitation from him. The punishment was not just a fine or being turned away but the punishments was certain death if the king was not in a good mood and didn’t extend his royal scepter to accept your uninvited visit.

Esther was struggling with all of this. Who wants to risk losing their head? Its one thing to do something courageous at the spur of the moment without thinking as the adrenalin is pumping.

- Pull someone out of a burning car that could explode

Its altogether another thing to actually plan on doing something that could kill you.

- Esther was facing the ultimate test of courage and her faith
- Mordecai challenges her to stop thinking about herself but about the thousands who were about to be murdered in cold blood.

Then he said those powerful words that have become a rallying cry through the ages.

**Esther 4:14b “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”**

“Esther, maybe you were born for such a time as this.” Maybe you and I were born to this generation and this time in history to make a difference.

- Maybe we were born to speak up and make a difference to those innocent babies destined for destruction through abortion. Maybe that is the edict of our day that we are to give voice to.
- Maybe our voice is to promote adoption or supporting single moms feeling the pressure of aborting.
- Maybe it is human trafficking or speaking up for the disadvantage who have no voice.
- Maybe it is taking the gospel to the unreached.
- Maybe it is taking a stand in school with students or a professor who mocks your faith.
Story: At age 26, Ken Elzinga joined the faculty of the University of Virginia. After a tenured colleague warned him that being explicit about his faith would hinder his career, Elzinga was stunned to see a flier with his face on it placed at a prominent campus location. A campus ministry had posted it to advertise a talk he had agreed to give.

A relatively new believer, Elzinga worried. Would fellow professors think less of him? Might this harm his tenure chances? He experienced a dark night of the soul, returning to campus and secretly taking the poster down. But the next morning, Elzinga put the poster back up. After hours of soul-searching, he concluded that his life was not about career ambition but about faithful discipleship, and that being private about his faith was not an option.

In the four decades since, Elzinga has been named professor of the year multiple times and is still a speaker in high demand. He will be the first to say that serving only one master has been liberating. Why? Because pleasing an audience of one makes us less anxious, less sensitive to criticism, and more courageous. Because in doing so, we become more secure and compete less for our honor.

I think we all need to ponder the question. Why was I born in this nation at this time? Why was I given the privileges and influence or job I have? What courage is God requiring of me?

Courage and self-preservation don’t flow together. You have either one or the other. Esther had to choose.

It is much easier to keep our mouth shut then to speak up and let people hear our convictions. The risk can be great. Everything from people unfriending you to losing your promotion or job or even your business. And in some places of the world you are risking your life.

Christianity is under fire in our country today. God is looking for men and woman with the courage of Mordecai and Esther who are willing to trust God to take care of them as they risk it all.

3. A life courageously lived leaves a legacy for others to build upon.

The book of Esther ends with a special tribute to Mordecai who raised up Esther and stood by her during this difficult time. Because of his encouragement Esther was able to stand with great courage under fire. Here is his legacy recorded.

**Esther 10:3** Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews. He didn’t live just for himself – He and Esther spoke up and made a difference in their generation.
What kind of legacy are you and I leaving for our children and for the next generation to build upon?

Do we live with clear strong convictions that those around us see lived out in our everyday lives?

You and I were born for such a time as this. Our faith is under fire. The Scriptures and values that have guided us for generations are now being questioned and compromised.

What will history say about us? Will it say that like Mordecai and Esther we spoke up and we made a difference in our day? Will God say well done good and faithful servant, you represented me well on earth? You lived a life of courage and conviction.

**Closing Blessing**

May the Lord grant you convictions that give you courage
Courage to come out of the shadows
Courage to speak up for those with no voice
Courage to let your light shine in the darkness
Courage to stand alone when necessary
Courage that leaves a strong legacy for those behind you to walk in.
For you were born for such a time as this!