

Well last Sunday of 2018. Where did the time go?

JOKE: Here's some advice for you this New Year's Eve, when everyone's counting down the final ten seconds to ring in the new year, get up off the couch and stand up. stand up and raise your left leg and just leave it raised for a little while until the countdown finishes and midnight strikes, so that way you can always start the new year off on the right foot.

"I promise not to make any bad jokes for the rest of the year."

A new year is almost here. A year full of possibility and opportunity. 12 months. 52 weeks. 365 days. 8760 hours. 525,600 minutes and 31,536,000 seconds. What will you do with all this time?

Who Me?

There is a lot wrong with the world in which we live.

There are the global threats things like: hunger, water shortages, war, poverty, the list could go on and on.

There are also Spiritual issues: disobedience to the things of God, people not believing in Him at all, believers mis using the grace that God gives, this list too could go on and on.

What if you could just fix it all? What if there was an answer to all the problems, all the situations and you could just fix them all.

Here's one plan...

Show Laboratory troubleshooting flowchart. . .

Wouldn't that be great if duct tape and WD-40 could fix everything. Let's face it duct tape can fix a lot.

If you put duct tape on the wheels of an office chair it will prevent scuff marks.

Duct tape can water proof your shoes

It can keep the feathers in your sleeping bag.

You can use it to fix a broken window

They can even make handcuffs

I've seen people use it to re-connect a broken tail light on their car

You could use it to hem your pants

And one of my favorites use can use it as a belly button lint remover.

But let's face it duct tape and WD-40 won't fix everything, especially all of our current issues.

The book of Esther presents us with a world very much like ours.

Persia was ruled with an iron fist by a prideful dictator. The wealthy few were extremely wealthy while most other people lived in extreme poverty. Women were denigrated, and children well they were unvalued. Brutality was commonplace.

The book opens with King Xerxes hosting a six-month drunken brawl to celebrate. . .himself.

Esther 1:3–4 (NIV) - ³ and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. ⁴ For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.

This is the reign of Xerxes.

Then at the end of the celebration, he asks for Queen Vashti to come and entertain the men with her beauty. She refuses, which launches the king into a rage.

After consulting with his nobles, he sends a letter to the entire kingdom with the news that Vashti is no longer Queen and is now banished from his presence forever, and...

That's the world in which Esther lived. . .She was essentially a victim of human trafficking as a Jew.

And then add to this the brutality of Haman's plan to annihilate the Jewish people in a sweeping act of genocide. He was like Hitler wanting to terminate a people group.

What do you do when the moment comes that you need to decide between God's purposes and your comfort?

At first, Esther was unwilling.

We find out that Esther had been hiding her identity...

Esther 2:20 (NIV) - ²⁰ But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

And then when Mordecai first pled with her to speak to the king to spare the lives of the Jews, she responded with apprehension.

Esther 4:11 (NIV) - ¹¹ "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

And if the story ended there it would not be a very good ending and we learn that Esther finally came to understand the ramifications of saying or doing nothing.

Esther 4:14–17 (NIV) - ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" ¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to

Mordecai: ¹⁶“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.

And from this exchange, as Mordecai and Esther show that their faith is growing, we learn some big lessons about what to do when the world is broken...

First, decide to do your part in helping with the solution

That doesn’t mean you can solve all the problems. But you can be part of the solution to one or to a few problems.

Our theme this year is Breathe, Speak, Give - Hope and Love. And if we will do that, I believe it will solve a few things by itself.

We have plenty of analysts and commentators to point out the problems, and very few who are doing the actual work of solving problems. I don’t know about you, but I’ve heard many people say what’s wrong with a person, church, family, or whatever else they find. And they instead of being a part of the solution feeds off the problems.

What we need to understand church is that WD-40 and Duct tape can’t fix everything, and neither can you. But Jesus is the answer to every obstacle that comes your way.

It's not about you, it's about him and his purposes. So, when you see people hurting or oppressed, you need to do what our theme for 2019 is: Breathe, Speak, Give hope and love.

Perhaps the most powerful thing Esther said was, *"If I perish, I perish..."*

And maybe you're wondering what can you do? What can one person possibly accomplish?

What you need to understand is that God is always at work in us, working with us, and desires to work through us.

Let's once again look at this story in a little more detail. . .

Esther 4:13–17 (NIV) - ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" ¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

Church what we need to realize here is that God puts his hand upon available people and invites them to co-labor with him, empowering them to pay a significant part in reconciling the world back to Himself. As a matter of fact, he called us to the ministry of reconciliation.

There were so many times that one person who co-labored with God was able to accomplish much.

People like: Abraham, Joseph, David, Jeremiah, Mary, Peter, Paul... and in our current history - Martin Luther King, Jr., Billy Graham just to name a few.

And all it took for them was one encounter with the Savior of the world:

Elijah and his Mt. Carmel moment, Peter with Cornelius, Saul on the road to Damascus.

But what is required of us? Obedience.

God uses a believer, in moment, who commits one single act of obedience to turn the tides of history!

Let's get back to our story with Esther. . .

So, Esther goes before the king, not knowing what will happen she just realizes that she was put on this earth of a purpose and that this could be here time, her destiny, her calling.

Listen church obedience to God is always right, even if what he is asking you to do doesn't make a lick of sense.

Esther 5:1–5 (NIV) - On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. ² When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

³ Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." ⁴ "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet

I have prepared for him.” ⁵ “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

I love that it's almost like Psalms is being fulfilled listen to it:

Psalm 23:5 (NIV) - ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Esther knowing Haman wants to terminate the Jews and her being one, invites him and the king to a banquet. Not once but two times.

Look at verse Esther 5:9 (NIV) - ⁹ Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.

Esther 5:11–12 (NIV) - ¹¹ Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. ¹² “And that's not all,” Haman added. “I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow.

Haman was so happy for all that he saw going on. But he still had a problem look at the next verse

Esther 5:13 (NIV) - ¹³ But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate.”

And so, Haman and his wife devises a plan.

Esther 5:14 (NIV) - ¹⁴ His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the

morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself.” This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.

Now I want to pause here and talk about sowing and reaping. Not leaving obedience. I will be spending a few weeks on that topic, I think. But look at what happened because one-person Esther was obedient and listened to a fellow Jew Mordecai.

Esther 6:1–3 (NIV) - That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. ² It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. ³ “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered.

Not the Book of Chronicles that many of us pass over, but the record of his reign as king.

Esther 6:4–5 (NIV) - ⁴ The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him.

⁵ His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.” “Bring him in,” the king ordered.

Esther 6:6 (NIV) - ⁶ When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?”

I smell trouble brewing. Scripture does tell us, “pride comes before the fall.”

Esther 6:7–10 (NIV) - ⁷ So he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, ⁸ have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a

horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. ⁹ Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!' ” ¹⁰ “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.”

Esther 6:11–14 (NIV) - ¹¹ So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!”

Now for time sake let me just tell you what happens next. Haman goes home with his tail between his legs. Tells his wife what happens then goes to the banquet that the queen prepared for him and the king.

Esther 7:1–7 (NIV) - So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, ² and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” ³ Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. ⁴ For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.” ⁵ King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?” ⁶ Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. ⁷ The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Now let me try and bring this bird in for a landing. . .

Esther 7:10 (NIV) = ¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

The obedience of one queen Esther saved a human race. And. . .

Esther 10:3 (NIV) - 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.

So, here's my point today church. You never know whose life you will impact if you will be obedient to what the Lord has called you to. Speak what he has asked you to speak. Live like He has asked you to live. And do what He has asked you to do.

I'm not clapping for the impalement of Haman, but we do sow what we reap. That's another Scripture as well.

See here's the most important thing to understand.

Romans 5:12 (NIV) - ¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

Romans 5:18–19 (NIV) - ¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

That is the good news. The obedience of Christ took Him to a tree so that we could be free from all the consequences of our sin we were guilty, but. . .

Isaiah 53:4–5 (NIV) - ⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:4–5 (NLT) - ⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! ⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

The only way to fix the problems we have, is to understand what He did and then allow ourselves to be reconciled and transformed by Jesus.

Andre Couch had a song years ago that had these lyrics:

Jesus Is the Answer for The World Today
Above Him There's No Other Jesus Is the Way