

## Courage

- What is courage?
  - Black Watch on parade here in Dundee yesterday...
  - but I don't face bullets each day...
  - have folk ever known someone they would describe as courageous?  
*who/what/when?*
  - choosing to do something in the face of risk?
- When do we need it?
  - at every decision or point of action...
- And where does it come from?
  - from a security of knowing who we are and what is important, forged out a myriad smaller actions and choices along the way...
  - eg choices to steep ourselves in Scripture... will equip us for a harder, starker choice later on
  - it is closely related to our life view. Do you save your life or lose it for something bigger than yourself?

## What's the story?

- Recap so far first (*image*) then move into story of the present chapters (*image*)
- *5:1-8, Esther goes to king and invites him and Haman to a banquet*
  - what is Esther thinking as she enters the king's presence?
  - note how carefully she has dressed and perfumed herself...
  - huge tensions between royal protocols and personal, human relationships...
  - and there are times when we experience these tensions in situations, things we know to be right but find incredibly hard to actually do or say...
- Probably not asking outright for what she wants so as not to back the king into a corner of having to respond publicly
  - and a second banquet makes the king intrigued as to what is so important, allowing the king's curiosity be piqued, perhaps an Eastern cultural thing?
- *5:9-14, Haman sees Mordecai still not bowing to him, goes home and boasts of his power and influence; wife and friends suggest a big gallows for Mordecai*
  - beautiful story-telling, scene shifting, having a sense of the whole picture that none of the individuals do...
- *6:1-14, King can't sleep so has records read; story of Mordecai's help read; decides to reward him; asks Haman how someone should be honoured... and honours Mordecai in this way!! Haman's wife and friends change their tune completely!*
  - hidden hand of God... and sense of the tides changing as Haman's wife and friends change their tune!
- *7:1-10, Esther's banquet, including Esther denouncing Haman (cf David and Nathan!), and Haman's hanging*
  - how can Esther be so bold in naming the enemy of the Jews?
  - have to look back to where her foundations lie... raised by Mordecai to fear the Lord, to live in relationship with him, to "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deut 6:5)
  - *when can I go out on a limb? When I'm confident that limb is securely anchored to the tree!*
- *8:1-17, Reversal of fortunes, and king's decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves*
  - though original decree can't be directly revoked, the change of mind is clear in

this new decree!

- the Jews fate still hangs in the balance, even though Esther's is now secure
- she is acting beyond her own interests for the benefit of others...
- (could we be trusted, as Esther was, not to exploit the King's anger and write a decree even more favourable to the Jews? Note how they didn't exploit the situation financially)
- *9:1-17, Jews arm themselves, though they still have to take up the sword to defend themselves... as a people they are saved, but don't exploit financially their good fortune*
- *9:18-32, Esther and Mordecai institute Purim as a celebration of their salvation*
  - value in celebrating God's actions...
- *10:1-3, Xerxes greatness extolled, and Mordecai's prominent place celebrated*
  - wrapping up the story...
  - and a gentle reminder, for our purposes, of where Esther's foundations were built...

## Conclusion

- When do you have to have the courage to decide to do what is right?
  - *what situations face you this week?*
  - *what situations may face you this next year?*
  - *how will you prepare for the choice?* what things might you put in place now that will secure your identity in Christ and prepare you for future action?