



# For Such a Time As This

June 26 - July 2, 2022

[Esther 4-6](#)

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## **MAIN POINT**

God often asks us to take risks to defend His name and His people.

## **INTRODUCTION**

**What is the biggest risk you've ever taken for another person, and why did you take it? What was the outcome? If you went back in time, would you take the same risk again?**

**What is the biggest risk you've taken for the gospel as you followed Jesus?**

It's important for us to understand that God is just. Most of the time, we think about justice in terms of retribution: someone commits a crime and must be punished for that crime lest society deteriorate toward lawlessness. Retribution, however, is only part of justice. Biblically speaking, justice has to do with peace, wholeness, and righteousness. The world God created was wholly good and just, however, Scripture is also clear that God's good world has been corrupted by sin such that it is longing for the day when peace and righteousness will be restored through the return of Christ ([Romans 8:20-25](#)). We learn from Esther 5 that in the meantime, God calls us to stand for His justice, which often means boldly stepping out in courage and faith.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

The events of Esther 5 focus on a plot to wipe out the Jewish population. King Ahasuerus had elevated Haman to high office in the Persian court. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, had not shown Haman the admiration the vile Persian official craved. Haman then used his status with the king to seek revenge against Mordecai. Haman sought payback by wiping out the entire Jewish population. When Esther learned of Haman's plot, she eventually decided to intervene for her people. Esther realized that she should act at once.

## **READ [ESTHER 5:1-8](#).**

**Esther 5 begins with the phrase, "On the third day" (HCSB). Read [Esther 4:15-17](#). What was the third day referring to?**

**What must Esther have believed to be true about God in order to encourage these instructions and then act on them?**

The third day would have been after Esther and the Jews had completed their fasting. This reference emphasizes that whatever Esther did next either was guided by God or was at least what had been promised in His presence. If she believed that prayer and fasting were effective, her faith would require that she act. We can also see an indication of God's wisdom given to Esther. She sensed that the time was not right for her important request. In God's providence, time was needed for some other details before Esther made her request. Likewise, we need to be sensitive to God's timing and not be impatient with delays.

**Have you ever fasted in order to seek God's wisdom and direction? What was the experience like? What did you learn about God and your relationship with Him through the process?**

**Read [Esther 4:9-11](#). What risk did Esther take in approaching the king?**

**What emotions do you think Esther experienced as she entered the courtyard ([5:1](#))? Do you think her emotional state changed after the king's comments?**

Don't overlook the two words "and stood" in [verse 1](#). These words are a reminder that Esther broke the law by standing in the king's court without having been called. Esther had come to her moment of truth. She had publicly confronted the king. The king's response, however, reveals that he knew that if Esther came like this, at risk of her life, she must have an important matter in mind.

**Why do you think God values courage and risk for the sake of the gospel? What do we communicate to a watching world when we are willing to take significant risks that require courage like Esther's?**

**What are some other stories from Scripture that help you understand why and how God wants His people to take risks in His name?**

The Lord still wants His people to take risks in order to help others and advance the gospel. God expects His people to step out in faith when He asks them to do so. Failure to do so reveals a lack of faith in God. God is greater than any danger that obedience might entail.

#### **READ [ESTHER 5:9-14](#).**

Here the author included another episode in the struggle between Haman and Mordecai. Mordecai had removed his sackcloth and was back again in his former position.

**What does this story teach readers about Haman? What does it teach about human nature?**

**Read [Romans 2:1-10](#). How is Haman like all of us apart from Christ?**

Haman's happiness depended on circumstances—in this case on his being honored. This type of happiness is not lasting, as the author quickly showed. As soon as Haman saw Mordecai, who did not honor him, his happiness evaporated. With his place of power and all of his riches, he was still unhappy and dissatisfied because one person refused to honor him. His pride was the source of his sin. Haman did not realize he was preparing his own doom, and he was not alone in preparing his own downfall. The Bible teaches that all are guilty of the same sin: "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed" ([Romans 2:5](#)).

**[Verse 13](#) indicates that Mordecai had power over Haman, whether Haman realized it or not. How can this truth encourage your faith?**

The two stories in Esther 5 illustrate that one person can make a difference. Both Esther's approach to the king and Mordecai's refusal to kneel down to Haman reveal that as long as there is one person willing to risk his or her life, there can be true justice.

## **APPLICATION**

What encourages you about the pictures of faith in [Esther 5](#)?

What act of God in the New Testament revealed that He is truly just?

Why is the gospel worth any risks God calls you to make in order to make it known?

What risk is God leading you to? What is the next step you need to take, and how can we support you?

## **PRAYER**

Close in prayer, thanking God that He invites us to be a part of His work in the world, even when that truth is scary. Thank Him that He doesn't leave us to do this on our own but gives us the strength and power to live for Him. Ask God for direction and courage as you respond to any leaps of faith He may be asking you to take at this time.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **ESTHER 5:1-14**

**5:1-2.** On the third day of the three-day fast, Esther prepared herself for her surprise appearance before the king. She wore not her fasting and mourning clothes, but her royal clothing, possibly as a reminder to her husband that she was indeed the queen of Persia. When she won his approval, what could have precipitated her death had instead become her opportunity.

**5:3-4.** Ahasuerus's offer to Esther, even to half the kingdom, was not to be taken literally; it was an exaggeration meant to emphasize the generosity of the king ([Mark 6:23](#)). Considering the breadth of the offer, the answer must have been surprising: an invitation for the king and Haman to come to a banquet (that Esther had prepared. Just as the first banquet in the story ended with the downfall of a queen (chap. 1), so this series of banquets would end with the downfall of the king's second in command (chap. 7).

**5:4,8.** Interpreters have speculated endlessly on Esther's motives in inviting Haman. A common suggestion is that Esther was trying to get Ahasuerus jealous and thus create a rift between her husband and Haman ([7:7-8](#)). Whatever the motivation, these scenes add to the story and make Haman's catastrophic fall all the more dramatic.

**5:9.** Haman's rage only got worse when he saw that Mordecai not only did not rise in his presence, but did not even tremble in his presence. Defying Haman did not even make Mordecai nervous.

**5:14.** Just as Jezebel once plotted with her husband to kill an innocent man ([1Kings 21:7](#)), so now Zeresh, along with Haman's friends, suggested a plan to publicly murder his enemy, Mordecai. Zeresh believed this plan would assuage her husband's murderous rage against his enemy. Haman was pleased with his wife's advice and he had the gallows constructed, believing the next day would be a triumphant moment in his life.