

What is God Doing in the World?

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[0 : 00] in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. 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. Then the king asked, What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, they will be given to you.

If it pleases the king, replied Esther, let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him. 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. As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, Now what is your petition? It will be given you.

And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted. Esther replied, My petition and my request is this. If the king regards me with favor, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them.

[1 : 09] Then I will answer the king's question. 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.

Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honoured him and how he had elevated him above other nobles and officials.

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. But all of this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate.

His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, Have a pole set up, reaching up to a height of 50 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. That night, the king could not sleep.

[2 : 26] So he ordered the book of the Chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, and who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

What honour and recognition has Mordecai received for this? The king asked. Nothing has been done for him. His attendants answered. 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.

His attendants answered. Haman is standing in the court. Bring him in. The king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?

Now Haman thought to himself, Who is there that the king would rather honour than me? So he answered the king. For the man the king delights to honour. 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.

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 honour, 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 honour.

[3 : 49] 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. 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 honour. Afterward, Mordecai returned to the king's gate, but Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, and told Zeresh, his wife, and all his friends, everything that happened to him.

His advisors and his wife Zeresh said to him, Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him. You will surely come to ruin. While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived, and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, 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. Then Queen Esther answered, If I have found favour with you, your majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life.

[5 : 05] This is my petition. And spare my people. This is my request. 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.

King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, Who is he? Where is he? The man who has dared do such a thing? Esther said, An adversary and enemy. This vile Haman. Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

The king got up in a rage, left his wine, and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realising that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?

As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house.

[6 : 14] He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king. The king said, Impale him on it. So they impaled Harmon on the pole he had set up for Mordecai.

Then the king's fury subsided. Thank you.

Do you ever wonder what God is doing in the world? So I was chatting to our builder, Scott. We were having our loft extension done just before Christmas. And Scott's a sort of thoughtful guy.

And he was saying to me, Look, a lot of you Christians have told me about Jesus, and I believe in him, and I believe that stuff about him dying on the cross, and I can believe he rose from the dead. But what I can't understand is why is there so much terrible illness?

Why do children die young? It's a great question, isn't it? Why is there suffering in the world? I guess it's a question that a lot of us are asking. Maybe it's a question that a lot of us should be asking more.

[7 : 18] You see, we can accept God at work in the big things, the big events of the Bible. We can accept God at work in our lives, probably when life is going well. You know, we can talk about how blessed we are when the kids are healthy, or we get that promotion at work, or the house move comes off okay.

But the problem is today we've been faced in Esther with the God who's at work through everything, the unseen, the hidden, the God who works through every detail of our life.

And we've seen in what is one of the most comforting verses of the Bible, Romans 8, 28, often quoted to those who are struggling, and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who've been called according to His purpose.

And we want to say amen to that, but we've seen that means He's at work in everything. So do we really believe that He's at work in the person who we happen to be sitting next to on the bus? It's not a coincidence.

Is He at work in that traffic jam we end up in that causes us to be late for work, where we're doing our heads in? Is He at work in that illness that drags you down and means either emotionally or physically or both, you just can't do as much as you want to, even to serve at church?

[8 : 40] Is He at work in the marriage, which just seems like a battle every day, and you're not sure you're getting many victories? See, Esther has shown us that God is at work through all the mess of the world.

He's the God who rules every country, who runs every empire, who oversees every detail of life. Now, if you remember, it's 480 B.C., and what we've seen this morning in Esther is this young Jewish orphan who ends up in the harem of the Persian king Xerxes as his number one wife and queen.

A concerned cousin Mordecai over, here's a plot to assassinate Xerxes, but instead of Mordecai being rewarded, what happens is the Jew hater Haman is made prime minister.

It doesn't take long for Haman to get the huff when Mordecai refuses to bow to his ego, but rather than disposing of the irritating Mordecai, what Haman, the megalomaniac, decides to do is exterminate the Jewish race, wipe them off the face of the planet.

It only takes a little bit of buttering up and a big bung for the weak-willed Xerxes for him to agree to sign their death warrant, even though he hasn't got a clue who he's killing off.

[9 : 56] Mordecai responds in repentance, and he calls on Esther to use her influence as queen for the sake of her people. She says, look, you just can't waltz in to the king's presence.

People get killed for doing that. Anyway, I don't think he fancies me anymore. We've not done it for a month. To which Mordecai replies in chapter 4 and verse 13, if you remember what we saw at the end of last time, Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you are alone of all the Jews will escape.

For you remain silent at this time. Relief and deliverance for the Jews will arrive from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows? But you have come to this royal position for a time such as this.

Do you see what he's saying? We saw he's saying God will save his people, Esther. That's what he's doing in the world. Now you can either get with the program or perish.

So Esther agrees to go. And so far, actually, the book's been a bit of a slow burner. We've covered nine years so far this morning. But now things speed up.

[11 : 07] In two back-to-back episodes of 24, we cover in these chapters an intense period. And so as not to wreck the tension, what I'm going to do slightly differently is we're going to work through the whole text.

And then at the end, we're going to see three things that we can learn. So have a look at chapter 5 and verse 1 with me. On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace in the front of the king's hall.

The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall facing the entrance. Hey, we've just sung, haven't we? Things happen on the third day in the Bible. Men rise from the dead. Young queens risk their life.

Verse 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.

Phew. First hurdle crossed. She's alive. Now to beg for mercy. Then the king asked, What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given to you.

[12 : 14] He doesn't really mean half the kingdom. A bit like he didn't really not want the money. It's just what you say if you're a known ruler of the world. It's a bit of bragging and big hairdos in Persia. What he's really saying to Esther is, Hi Esther, I'm feeling friendly.

Try me. So she does in verse 4. If it pleases the king, replied Esther, let the king together with Haman come today to a banquet. I have prepared for him.

Well, Esther knows the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Haman doesn't seem at all bothered by the fact he's going to be the spare part, or gooseberry, at the romantic meal for two. Xerxes' banquets seem to be largely of the liquid kind.

They're more bunga bunga party than church buffet. And if anyone's had a few drinks, well, when Xerxes had a few drinks, he is literally anyone's. And sure enough, as the first bottle of Merlot is finished, Xerxes asks the question in verse 6.

Now, what is your petition? It'll be given to you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it'll be granted. Now's the time to beg for mercy.

[13 : 16] But instead, Esther says, won't you come to another party for three tomorrow night? Well, we don't know why. It might be she thinks, well, a little bit more time and a little bit more wine.

And the more I get Xerxes to say, and what is your request? Up to half the kingdom, the harder it will be for me to go back on it, him to go back on it when I plead for my people. But that's what happens.

A Haman totters off, happy as Larry, until he bumps into Mordecai in verse 9. 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.

See, Mordecai is a man of principle. He knows the consequences of not looking up from his laptop when the boss enters the room. And Haman hates him for it because Haman isn't content just to be powerful.

He wants everyone to respect him, to praise him, to fear him, to jump at the click of his fingers. Haman's universe has him firmly at the center.

[14 : 19] But he manages to restrain himself and goes home to the delightful Mrs. Haman who we're just about to meet. Look at the second half of verse 10. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he'd elevated him above other nobles and officials.

He must have been a terrible bore, eh, Haman? He's the sort of person who can only talk about themselves. Haman would never ask you how your day's been or what you enjoyed doing in your spare time.

And if he did, he'd quickly interrupt and tell you what he enjoyed doing was bigger and better and more fun than your life. No, I love verse 12. Have a look at verse 12 with me.

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's invited me along with the king tomorrow.

And that's not all. But that's not enough for Haman. Verse 13. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate.

[15 : 35] So we live our lives enslaved to comparison. We can be quite content with our house or our holiday or our car or our job until someone else's house looks better or their holiday looks more fun or their job looks more fulfilling.

The writer C.S. Lewis hit the nail on the head when he said this. Pride gets no pleasure of having something only out of having more than the next person.

We say that people are proud of being rich or clever or good looking but they're not. They're proud of being richer, cleverer or better looking than others.

If everyone else became equally rich or clever or good looking there'd be nothing to be proud about. Gore Vidal, the author was a little more cynical when he said every time a friend succeeds something inside me dies.

See Haman was constantly comparing himself to others on Facebook. Have they got more likes? Do they look thinner? Older? Younger? Are their children at better or worse schools or university?

[16 : 43] Does their job look more interesting? More important? Is their holiday more glamorous? I mean if Haman had Facebook imagine how many people he'd want to impale at once all over the kingdom.

Because once he thought you were better than him he was miserable and miserable megalomaniacs are not much fun. Fortunately his charming wife and chums say look don't worry about it Haman.

Why not have a 75 foot that's a 25 meter for you youngsters stake set up on the front lawn and ask King Xerxes to impale Mordecai on it tomorrow morning.

I mean that'll make you feel so much better then you can go off to the banquet without a worry in the world. They might quite a couple don't they Mr and Mrs Haman. So Haman goes off to bed and he sleeps like a baby dreaming sweetly of Mordecai's mutilated corpse displayed for everyone else on the street to see.

And we're left thinking no Esther why didn't you just ask for mercy after the first meal? And as the credits roll on this episode we start to think next week's going to start with a skewered Mordecai while Esther serves kebabs to Xerxes and Haman too late.

[17 : 52] It's going to need a miracle for God's people to be saved. But not everyone sleeps that night. Have a look at chapter 6 and verse 1. 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.

This innocuous little case of insomnia is the heart of the book of Esther. It's a little set of events that changes everything. This is God turning the plans of his enemies on their head.

It just so happens that Xerxes can't sleep. And rather than taking a pill or putting on the telly it just so happens he asks for the book of the chronicles of his reign.

He loves a bedside story from a book that's all about him and how great he is. Where shall I read from your majesty? Oh you choose I'm not bothered. And it just so happens that the page that the royal reader turns to is the account of Mordecai saving Xerxes' life.

And then verse 3. What honour and recognition has Mordecai received for this? The king asked. Persian kings love a bit of honouring it keeps the subjects happy.

[19:10] Nothing has been done for him. His attendants answered. Well we must do something. What shall we do? I mean is there anyone here who can help me decide what to do? Remember this is the man who rules over 127 provinces but he's incapable of thinking up of a good thank you present.

There are actually quite a few blokes like that in the world. Well what do we see verse 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 set up for him.

He's walking in humming a little ditty to himself Haman I impaled him on the pole at 75 feet I impaled him on the pole at 75 feet when the royal servants come and say to him the king needs your help I bet he does thinks Haman on my way I'm the man for the job and Haman's joy only increases when he hears the question in verse 6 when Haman entered the king asked him what should be done for the man the king delights to honour?

Now let me think who is the man the king delights to honour? Who's the top dog around here? That's me! I mean Haman is incapable of thinking outside of himself life revolves around what sort of day he's had how other people have made him feel whether he's got his own way or not how many of the traffic lights were green on the way to work he is king in his own little world and he loves to be treated like that and so he says in verse 7 for the man the king delights to honour let him bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden on one with a royal crest placed on its head 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 honour 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 honour let him fly in Air Force One Xerxes let him appear on the balcony of Buckingham Palace let's have a documentary where Prince William and Prince Harry are interviewed and say what a jolly good fellow he is give him an open tour bus parade just do whatever makes him feel good about himself now before we all scorn at Haman there's just a little bit more of Haman in all of us than we'd probably like to admit in one way he actually describes every human heart the world that revolves around us that we want people to in the end praise us that others should make us feel good about ourselves sometimes how we choose the social gatherings we go to will it make me feel better special loved you see from the beginning of the

Bible we believe the devil's lie that he sold Adam and Eve no really life is all about you no no it really is it's about you you'll be happiest when you get what you want I mean I don't know about your relationships or your marriage but certainly in my marriage the primary set of really important arguments are not about how we raise the kids or what we're going to do to serve the Lord Jesus no they're about the trivialities where I just want to get what I want and it doesn't just happen to be in that moment in time what my wife wants because the world's about me getting what I want we've packaged it in our culture we call it the importance of self-affirmation we can even practice it as Christians we think that what we need to tell people is that they're not as bad as they think they are maybe not even as bad as the Holy Spirit is convicting them that they are really you're a good person and what you need is to believe that of yourself it's all about me thinks Haman then the bottom drops out of his world did you see that in verse 10 go at once the king commanded

[23 : 11] Haman get the robe and the horse and do just what you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate do not neglect anything you have recommended absolutely everything don't miss a detail all for Mordecai the Jew clearly Xerxes has not got a clue that he recently ordered the extermination of the Jews can you imagine how Haman felt forced to dress Mordecai in royal robes himself then lead him on a horse proclaiming this is what is done for the man who the king delights to honour I can't I suspect there can't be much heart and soul felt in Haman's proclamation much warmth perhaps he just comforted himself by thinking in a few months him and the rest dead afterwards Mordecai heads back to the office and Haman hurries home miserable how was your breakfast meeting dear don't ask look at what what Zeresh and his friends helpfully say in verse 13 and he told

Zeresh's wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him his advisors and his wife Zeresh said to him since Mordecai before whom your downfall has started is of Jewish origin you cannot stand against him you will surely come to ruin if he's one of God's people you're stuffed dear well thanks very much wife perhaps you should have considered that last night when you were giving me the advice about the steak don't you tell me I told you so dear you didn't say anything of the sort my memory of the conversation is very different indeed but before Haman can really get going verse 14 while they were still talking the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared Haman the haughty suddenly hurried around by the servants I expect he played with his food maybe he knocked back a couple of drinks quickly demanding the servant fill it up he might not have been listening that hard to the conversation but the third time that Xerxes asked Queen

Esther what is your petition it will be given to you what is your request even up to half the kingdom it will be granted I think he was listening as Esther got through her answer have a look at chapter 7 and verse 3 if I have found favour 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 they're her people I'm one of God's people I mean I wouldn't have troubled your majesty she said if we were just going to be sold into slavery but we've been sold to be destroyed to be killed to be annihilated it's an exact quote from Haman's decree back in chapter 3 his plot is unravelling he's with the king and he's responsible for ordering the death of the queen verse 5 King Xerxes asked Queen Esther who is he where is he the man who has dared to do such a thing Esther said an adversary an enemy this vile

Haman this hateful this hostile man Xerxes burst through the French doors and onto the patio perhaps he's realized that he's the one who took Haman's money and sold his wife to death perhaps he's trying to work out a way to save face without causing a disaster politically Haman thinks I'm a dead man my only hope is to beg for my life with Queen Esther but things go from bad to worse as he rushes over to fall on his knees before her he trips over a rug this being Persia and all and he falls head over heels on top of her on the couch and with the timing of an healing comedy it happens just to be the moment that Xerxes comes back off the terrace and sees all he needs to see and we read in verse 8 just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall

Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining the king exclaimed will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house well Haman has the end in sight Xerxes has all as the word left the king's mouth they covered Haman's face that could be the words he spoke it could be literally that they put a hood over Haman's head and led him out to be executed you get an idea for how other people in the palace feel about Haman when a harbinger one of the king's servants chips in with a suggestion don't know if this is relevant to your majesty or if it's any use to you but it just so happens there's a 75 foot stake just around the corner it's actually in Haman's front garden it just happens to be there he set it up for Mordecai the Jew yeah Mordecai you might remember him he's the one who rescued you I don't know it's unused could be handy just information for you sire

[28 : 43] Mordecai then the king's fury subsided now the problem is in the panto of life we all cheer hooray just as loudly as we should boo whenever Haman came onto the stage things have worked out right we're hardwired to rejoice in this it's a bit like the latest Marvel film oh no it's not like that one but it's a bit like isn't it that superhero film where the end the baddie comes to a sticky grisly finish and our superhero escapes just by the nick of time by the skin of their teeth and we go hooray but what we've seen that Mordecai and Esther they're not innocent in one way they don't deserve anything from God yeah they're in the people of God but according to God's law their behavior at best has been compromised at worst it's been downright disobedient remember what's a good

Christian girl doing agreeing to be in a harem anyway and how come her guardian told her not to say anything about going to church or trusting in Jesus but just to keep her head down and have sex with the emperor whenever he wanted Christians because Mordecai and Esther are our spiritual ancestors because we are the covenant people of God as they were in the covenant people of God the one who had his promises promises which the New Testament teachers are fulfilled in Jesus these people show us how not we should behave but how God rescues us despite ourselves not because of ourselves so here are three things just to end, to learn from the middle of Esther. See, the first thing this shows us is the sovereign God does save his people. And sovereign means sovereign over everything, from global wars to general elections, from what bedtime story you choose to read your kids, or the random way you bump into an old friend. God rules over every detail of our lives.

Oh, that doesn't mean that we're not responsible for our decisions. Esther presents us with real people getting themselves into a real mess. But God is so powerful that he works through all the chaos of our lives to bring us to safety. He even works through evil. Do you remember what the apostle Peter said at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 as he preached that sermon? He said this in Acts 2.23, talking of the Lord Jesus, this man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

The cross was God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, but it was also the responsibility of wicked men who killed the righteous Son of God. Both are true. See, at the foot of the cross, we see how God saves his people through all of the history of the world.

The second thing shown here is that the sovereign God brings people down to size. You see, what marks out Haman is the size of his ego. He is the man who appears to have it all.

[32 : 05] And what marks out Esther as though she's queen is that she is humble. She's willing to put herself down, to risk her life, to be identified with hated and condemned people. And Jesus says that the humble will be exalted, and the exalted will be humbled. And the promise of the Bible is that one day, the day when everyone stands before the Lord Jesus as judge, all the attitudes and actions of this world will be turned on their head. I mean, can you imagine standing before Jesus on the last day having, and saying to him, look, Lord, have you seen my A-levels? Do you know how many people followed me on Instagram? Look at my new kitchen. Everything we take pride in is rendered meaningless when we stand before the throne of the Lord Jesus. And he promises it will be those who've humbled themselves before God, those who trust in him for their rescue, who will be exalted. And those who exalt themselves in this life, who've been God in their own life, who've lived life for self-love, not for loving God, who'll be humbled as they face his righteous judgment. And why are things turned on their head? Well, it's because lastly, we see the sovereign God humbles himself that you and I might be exalted. Now, what a difference two days make. In two days, God has turned literally the world of the Persian Empire upside down, done it through an extraordinary incidental act of an emperor not quite sleeping and reading a book and happening to come across a certain chapter. But that reversal is nothing compared to the reversal that was achieved 2,000 years ago in three hours outside the walls of Jerusalem. Three hours that can turn your life upside down. Because out of his great love, the ruler of the universe, the king of kings and the lord of lords chose to come and take on flesh. The son of God became man so he could be nailed to a stake for us, a cross. And there the evil one, the devil, the enemy of God's people, the prince of this world as Jesus calls him, the one who has human beings under his power, he was defeated. So now we can live in freedom of the love of God and the certainty of our relationship with him in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, Jesus humbled himself to death, even death on a cross. He did it not for our, not for his pride, but for ours. He did it not for his selfishness, but for ours. He did it not for his anger, but for ours.

He did it not for his self-love, but for ours. Not for his cruelty, but for ours. He died our death. He bore our sin. And it's only when we begin to see there's a little bit of Haman in all of us, or maybe rather a lot more of Haman in all of us, that we begin to see how precious God's rescue through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, really is. And again, I'll say to you, if you're not yet sure you're a Christian, can't you see why this is the most incredible gift in the universe?

The gift of the glory of God's King, the Lord Jesus, at the cost of his death, despite the way you reject him. And having risen from the dead, God exalted the Lord Jesus to the highest place, a place far higher than the one Mordecai is about to receive. Because as chapter 8 begins, Mordecai is made second in command only to Xerxes. The reversal is complete. And Mordecai needs to be there. I mean, the crisis is over because God's people in the Persian Empire, well, they're not going to suffer death now, but the death sentence has not finally been taken away. Do you remember?

That edict has still gone out. Someone needs to speak for them in the throne room of the empire. And the same is true of us. In one way, the crisis is over. Sin, death, the devil, our enemies are defeated. They have no power over us. But the final reversal has not yet been seen. We still live in a world of sin and suffering. And how do we cope with that world day by day? Well, we look back to the day when God ordered history to save us. The day when all those little things added up to the Calvary, to the Lord Jesus dying in our place, to God's love being demonstrated once and for all.

[36 : 57] And we look up and see the Lord Jesus exalted to the highest place at the right hand of God interceding for us. What we're going to see tomorrow morning, that there is one on our side at the heart of the throne room, not of the Persian empire, but of the universe. And we know because of that, that God rules his world and he will take us home to be with him. How do we know it?

He's nailed it into history on a stake outside Jerusalem. He's pledged his love for us now and into eternity. And tomorrow we're going to see that home is going to be our final destination, a place of no more suffering and wickedness, a place where we're taken by the loving heavenly father who is the sovereign Lord of the universe. Let's pray together.

Our father in heaven, we thank you so much for our Lord Jesus Christ, for the one who bore in his body on the tree, all of our evil, all of our self-love, all of our sin, all of our comparisons and pride, all of the little ways we celebrate, sometimes even the failure of those we love, the ways we look down upon people and the ways we big ourselves up, who knew us inside out and yet still loved us enough to die for us. We thank you, our father, that you ordered history then that we might be saved and you order history today that we might be saved and go to be with our Lord Jesus forever. And we praise you for that. And we ask that you'd help us to trust you day by day. Now the Lord who rules over our lives in love for your glory and for all good. In Jesus name. Amen.