

5. Christians are called to resist being assimilated into the culture. Reflect on the following passages that call us to resist and live distinctively Christ-following lives:

Matthew 5: ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 7: ²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

John 8: ³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Romans 12: ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Peter 2: ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

6. What are some of the ways you can better resist assimilation in your life?

Finding Our Way Back to God (The Book of Esther) - Part 1

“Resistance is (Not) Futile”

Esther 1

Assimilation and Resistance

“Prepare to be assimilated. ...Resistance is futile.”

Resistance to assimilation into the larger _____ is a major theme in the Bible.

Resistance is _____, difficult, and often costly because God doesn’t call his people to stick to themselves and forget about everyone else.

In the Old Testament, _____ is the archetype of resistance while living in exile, far from the Promised Land.

Esther and Mordecai are Persians now. They live by Persian _____. And they are, practically speaking, assimilated. The story of Esther is the story of how they find their way back to God.

The way the story is set up is instructive in and of itself because (1) it describes a world much like our own, and (2) it describes it using _____.

“[Esther] satirizes the empire, mocking its claims to power and authority. Satire takes the object of fear, the authority, and makes fun of it, showing its ridiculous side. The book is meant to make us laugh. For oppressed and powerless people, satire is a key weapon, cutting the vaunted splendor of the empire down to size. ...If the people once perceive that the emperor indeed has no clothes, then the empire’s power to command obedience and instill fear is broken.” (Iain Duguid)

The Way of Resistance

1. The Way of _____

Esther takes you behind the scenes almost like a _____.

It's meant to lead to laughing at _____ because assimilation happens when we want to fit in, we want to experience extreme wealth and 180-day parties, we're enticed by political or economic power, and we're often too willing to sacrifice our faith and sometimes our families (and certainly our values) to get a taste of what the people at that party experienced.

What's laughable right now in your _____?

2. The Way of _____

If we can't laugh at _____, and if it doesn't lead to mourning, we're simply judgmental, bigoted, self-righteous, and blind.

3. The Way of _____ and Faith

If we simply mourn, we lose our _____ for Christ. Who wants to listen to someone living a droopy, anemic, prudish, and miserable life?

Repentance and faith is how we convert, but then it becomes a repeating _____ in the life of the believer as we identify more and more idols in our lives that are taking us away from God.

Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. When you were a kid or in your teens and you thought of your grown up self, which of the following did you most desire: popularity/fame, money (and the things or experiences it provides), or power?
3. Read Esther 1. List some of the satirical elements you can spot.
4. What are some of the "idols" and idolatries of the Persians you can detect from this chapter that our culture shares in common with them.