

5. The Bible has a lot to say about evil. What important themes do you detect in these passages on evil?

Romans 12: ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Ephesians 6: ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

1 Timothy 6: ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

6. God does not call us to remove and isolate ourselves from the culture around us. He instructs us to be engaged and involved in the communities where we live. Read these words from Jeremiah 29:7; "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." What are some ways you can seek the peace, prosperity, good, and betterment of the community in which you live?

Finding Our Way Back to God (The Book of Esther) - Part 4

"Three Ways We Experience Evil in Exile"

Esther 3:6-15

Three Ways We Experience Evil in Exile

1. Evil in _____

As people who follow Christ and seek to live out the truths that God holds out to us, we can often feel immense pressure to either change our beliefs or _____.

This is precisely what it feels like to live in exile. To feel the pressure of _____ and at times a growing distance from our God.

We have to have the _____ to differentiate between the cultural characters who are creating the lies and those who are caught in them.

In this story, we see this in Haman and Xerxes. Haman created the idea, and Xerxes is _____ by it and perpetuates it.

2. Evil in _____

In the story of Esther, _____ is the incarnation of pure evil.

Pride, _____, and envy, are all present and driving him toward the evil he is plotting to carry out against God's people.

What makes the evil we see in Haman different than the evil we see in Xerxes is found in the way Haman _____ his hate into a plot to commit evil.

You don't have to be someone who cultivates evil in order to _____ it.

3. Evil in _____

Left _____, the evil we see and experience in exile creeps into our hearts as mode of operation rooted in what is around us rather than the truth of God that is within us.

"God's kingdom mission is to form intimate human connections, where we confront souls whose minds have been captivated by a lie, and our calling is to compassionately help them reimagine their world." - Mike Cosper

We are sufferers, saints and sinners...

If we're only sufferers we become _____

If we're only saints, we become _____

If we're only sinners, we end up _____

"There is hardly a culture or century that doesn't eventually find a Haman determined to rid the world of evidence and reminders of God. This is life in exile. Meanwhile, Esther continues to speak the final and definitive word: you can't eliminate God's people. No matter how many of them you kill, you can't get rid of the communities of God-honoring, God-serving, God-worshiping people scattered all over the earth. This is still the final and definitive word." - Eugene Peterson

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. God can feel as invisible and non-existent in our own lives as he does in the book of Esther. Despite this, how have you seen God's presence and power at work in your circumstances?
3. Read Esther 3:6-15. What characteristics do Mordecai and Esther demonstrate that help us to know what it looks like to stand firm in our faith today? Are there any characteristics present in Mordecai and Esther that you find to be troubling?
4. How do the characteristics of our culture compare to those found in the book of Esther?