

Pastor Shaun Arndt  
May 24, 2020  
Sermon Text – Esther 6:1-14  
Ascension Sunday

## God's Right Hand behind the Scenes

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come. Amen.*

*Dear Friends in Christ, Our Ascended Lord,*

Moses stretched out his staff and the LORD made the waters stand firm like a wall. A highway of dry land wide enough for a whole nation to cross in one night now ran through the sea. Moses lifted his hand again and Pharaoh's army sank like a stone in the crushing waters.

When Moses put those events into song he said: **Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power.**

The Right hand of God is not a place or a literal arm, but the Bible language for God's power and sheer might. When we confess in the Creed that Jesus **ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty**, it means that Jesus Christ, the God-man, has all power **in heaven and on earth** to rule for the good of His people. He will deliver them from every enemy in either the short term or when He comes again in glory.

But the old sinful voice that still lives inside us wants to ask: "Really? If God is ruling for our good, then why doesn't it look that way sometimes?" When persecution and problems, heartache and heresy are everywhere and our lives feel turned upside down, Satan tempts us to wonder if Jesus is really ruling for our good. The scoffers of the unbelieving world join in to attack our faith: "If God is real then where are all the big miracles today?"

The Bible book of Esther crushes those objections as it shows us the way God has most often ruled for the good of His people through all history—in quiet, every day, hardly noticeable ways. It reassures us that Christ is ruling at **God's Right Hand behind the Scenes.**

Esther is unique. It is the only one of the 66 books of the Bible that never mentions the name of God and in which God never appears! And yet, God is everywhere in the book of Esther working for His people in all the little details, just as He is still today.

I really encourage you to take a little time this week to open your Bible to read the book of Esther on your own or with your family. It takes only half an hour to read its ten chapters out loud. It is history and it is fact, but the Lord had it written down for us in an engaging story form full of twists and turns and stunning irony that at times is almost comical.

Consider what we read earlier, how **Haman** the villain, eagerly arrives at daybreak because he's so eager to get the King's permission to kill **Mordecai the Jew**. But in a stunning twist of events, **Haman** instead finds himself bestowing the nation's highest honors on the man he wanted hanged! Oh, and who dreamt up this *royal* treatment he has to give **Mordecai? Haman!**—thinking it was for himself!

But there's far more at stake in the book of Esther than **Haman's** feud with **Mordecai**. **Haman** wasn't content with just wanting to kill **Mordecai**. Earlier in the book, **Haman** had already successfully engineered a plan to kill every single Jew in the Persian Empire.

Now this all takes place in the year 473 BC. If **Haman's** plot would be successful, it would mean the death of the ancestors of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The events we celebrate at Christmas, the Word made flesh, the birth of the Savior, God the Son born from Abraham's family could not happen.

But the Lord always keeps His promises. And so He stepped in to act. And if you read the whole book of Esther you'll find God already put the way to rescue His people into place even before the danger appeared.

At times the Lord has used fire and earthquake to help His people. He has an angel to shut lions' mouths to save Daniel. Another time He struck an entire enemy army blind to rescue the prophet Elisha.

So what big thing does God do in the book of Esther? Nothing but little things that in many ways are commonplace. A king's pride that banishes current Persian Queen. A sordid search for a new queen puts the crown on **Esther, Mordecai's** cousin who hides her Jewish nationality and family background. None of that is earth shattering or obviously miraculous.

But there's more. **Mordecai** overhears and stops a plan to try to kill the king, but in the commotion he's never rewarded for his loyalty until years later. When **Esther** risks her life to try to stop Haman's plan to kill the Jews, she delays twice before daring to accuse **Haman** who happens to be the King's drinking buddy!

And it's during that delay, that the king can't sleep. And it "just so happens" he wants the records of his rule read, and it "just so happens" that the servants turn the page to that time **Mordecai** saved the King's life which makes the King grateful to a Jew all the more ready to listen when in the next chapter after our reading **Esther** reveals her nationality and pleads for her people's life.

Now I won't give away the ironies of the final chapters, you'll have to read them on your own. The final outcome is obvious, though from God's point of view it was never in doubt. The Jews are rescued so that Jesus will be born in Bethlehem just as the prophets foretold, just as God *promised*. Because when God makes a promise, He will keep it, ruling even a king's sleep **behind the scenes** if that's what it takes!

So there are no flashy miracles in the book of Esther, just like you and I don't see any miracles today that look flashy to our eyes. Just God ruling all the mundane little details of things that happen every day, the events of history, but in such a way that what He has promised will always be done. You know, the kind of things that are sometimes called coincidence or "dumb luck."

But you see the point, don't you? There are no coincidences, there are no "just so happens" when it comes to our Lord ruling for the good of His people. Whether it takes the shape of stunning miracles or just a ruler's timely insomnia, God will always keep His promise to do what is eternally best for His people.

So often when the Lord rules with the power of **His Right Hand** it is all behind the scenes, where we may never see or notice it. Neither **Mordecai** nor **Esther** fully realized how God was at work while all those little events were piling up into God delivering His people.

Even when **Mordecai** was honored, there was no guarantee that **Esther's** plea to save the Jews would work out in the next chapter. But all the while, God was still at work **behind the scenes** just as He still is today. Whether we see it or not, still He is keeping His promise to work all things for our good.

But why should He? After all, how often have we failed to either confidently trust or properly thank the Lord for His amazing care, especially when it takes the shape of everyday things like rain and sunshine to make things grow and feed us? How easily our old hearts want to give way to worry that acts like either God isn't in control or He hasn't promised to take care of His people, despite His perfect track record throughout history!

So why would He care for us? The only answer is grace—His amazing and unearned love that chose to save us. Only the startling love of God that ruled history so Jesus came as the Savior for all people, which includes you and includes me. Love that chose to save the Jews in Esther’s day, and why? So that God the Son, God himself would become a Jewish man to one day hang on a cross and choose to suffer all the punishment and pain we earned for our sins of doubt and worry and thanklessness for God’s provision.

Yes, God loves you and cares for you! The proof is Jesus who lived and died to rescue you from your sins, who rose from death to give you eternal life, who has ascended into heaven to rule all things, including all the little things “**Behind the Scenes,**” all for your good, all to bring you to live with Him forever!

Indeed, the Lord ruled all history to bring you to faith in Christ. The Bible teaches us no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit works such faith in human hearts through the Gospel in Bible, Baptism and Communion.

And just think, the Lord ruled history, the spread of the Gospel through the world all the way down to that day you were brought to a baptismal font and God put His saving name on you. Indeed, He has ruled all things so that this very day you would be nourished in faith as you hear the good news of God’s love and forgiveness in Jesus!

No, maybe we have not seen one of the “flashy” miracles like fire falling from heaven to protect the prophet Elijah. But in Bible preaching and teaching, Word and Water, Bread and Wine, our Risen and Ascended Lord is present to assure us of His love and that He is still at the **Right Hand of God Behind the Scenes** to keep every promise He has given His Church.

He is caring for you even when you can’t see it or understand. And by the way, He has never required that you understand it or that you need to torture yourself trying to figure out what God is doing in such things, but rather just trust that He is in control ruling for your good. For yes, He is ruling to carry you through all life’s ups and downs to bring you to that perfect, everlasting home He has prepared for you. Amen.

*The LORD’s right hand is lifted high; the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. Amen.*