

You have heard it said, pride goes before a fall. But our passage today tells us, pride goes before a horse. Our story today covers the beginning of Haman's fall from grace. And the root of his downfall is pride.

Throughout the ages, theologians have said pride is the root of all evil. Because at its heart all of our sinful choices come from a belief that we know better than God. Or that we do not care what God has said and we have our own ideas. So even if you would not call yourself a prideful person, pride is something we all deal with. And Esther 6 will show us the consequences of pride.

Personally, this is my favorite chapter of the book. I think it is the most ironic and funniest. I would also like us to try something a little different this morning. I warned you a few weeks ago this day might come. Part of Jewish tradition was reading this book aloud each year at Purim, the festival celebrating God saving their people once again from destruction. So the mood as they read the book is supposed to be respectful for God's word, but also festive. As part of the festivities, they are a lot more involved in the Scripture reading. My favorite part of that is they would boo Haman anytime his name is read. They also would write Haman's name in chalk on the bottom of their shoes. Along with booing they would stomp their feet to drown out the sound of his name. And to symbolize God's promise that the Amalekites name would be wiped out.

I didn't hand out any chalk this morning. But I want us to try it. We don't have to do it during the whole sermon, just at the beginning when we read the entire chapter. Not just to be silly and festive. But as a reminder of what will happen to the prideful enemies of God's people.

Turn with me to Esther 6 and stand with me if you are able.

I. Worldly pride leads to judgment (6:1-14).

Verse 1, ***"On that night the king could not sleep."***

The king is tossing and turning all night long.

It seems he cannot sleep because he can't wait to find out what Esther's request is.

So he needs something to help him sleep.

"And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king."

Maybe you listen to things while you fall asleep like music, books, or the sound of your children's baby monitor.

The king doesn't have that technology.

But he does have servants who can read to him like a child.

And he randomly picks a particular book.

And it is a good choice to put you to sleep.

It is a history book telling you everything the previous kings did.

I like to read before bed.

Sometimes I read fun fantasy books that can keep me up too late.

And sometimes I read presidential biographies.

Currently when I am really tired I start reading a biography on Warren G. Harding.

That book can put me to sleep in just a few pages.

I think this is the kind of book the king is expecting to read.

Something to put him to sleep.

But something unexpected happens.

Something catches his attention.

Verse 2, **"And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus."**

The king is reminded of how his life was saved by Mordecai.

He hears the story recounted and is amazed.

He seems to have forgotten it happened at all.

Verse 3, **"And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."**

This is not just a matter of thanks.

This is actually a large problem.

Persian kings were meant to be known by their generosity.

Especially rewarding those who saved their lives.

One man who saved a Persian king's life was made the governor of a province.

The reason they wanted to be generous was so others would want to try to please them.

Especially so others would want to stop plots against the king.

If Mordecai was not rewarded, then why would someone else try to save the king's life?

The king recognizes that his own life is in danger if he does not do something to publicly honor and thank Mordecai.

Verse 4, **"And the king said, "Who is in the court?""**

The king has a problem.

And the running joke is the king cannot make his own decisions.

He needs someone to tell him what to do.

It is early in the morning, or late at night.

There will not be many if anyone there in the court.

But the king just needs a warm body to advise him.

"Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him."

Haman providentially happens to walk in at that exact moment.

He has shown up early so he can be first in line.

Some people camp out early to be the first in line to buy tickets to a show, or maybe to buy an expensive tv on Black Friday.

But Haman shows up early to have people killed.

He does not want to wait.

He does not want to risk the king getting distracted by another request.

His must be the first the king hears.

Verse 5, **"And the king's young men told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in.""**

The king finds out Haman happens to be there.

He is pleased and invited Haman to come into his chambers.

Haman is going to get to be first.

But it is not going to work out how he thinks.

His hastiness to kill and destroy Mordecai will not work.

In fact, it will only lead to Mordecai being honored even more.

Verse 6, **"So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?"**

The king wants to do what to do.

He has someone in mind he would like to honor.

But he does not know what to do.

What would Haman suggest?

"And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"

Haman cannot believe his luck.

This is even better than he imagined.

He started today thinking he would kill Mordecai.

But now that will have to wait.

Haman has a chance to be honored even more than he already has been.

It is funny for us to imagine Haman thinking this.

And it is his pride that makes him think this is all about Haman.

But Haman is not totally off base.

After all, the king has been honoring Haman all along.

Haman was first introduced to us after Mordecai saved the king's life.

And Haman instead of Mordecai was promoted and advanced.

Now, Haman gives the king his idea.

And it is clear Haman has been meditating and thinking about this question for a long time.

He has been dreaming of the ways he wants the king to honor him.
Finally this is his chance.
All of his dreams can come true.
He just needs to tell the king exactly what he should do for him.

Verse 7, **"And Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, ⁸ let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. ⁹ And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'"**

Let's run through this.

He wants to wear the royal robes, specifically ones the king has worn before.

He does not want replicas or something like royal robes.

He wants to wear the real thing and be dressed like not just A king but THE king.

He also wants to ride the king's horse.

A special and unique horse only the king would have been allowed to ride.
And a horse everyone would know is the king's.

And he wants to wear the royal crown as well.

He wants to wear the king's own crown.

All the symbols of royalty.

Everything that marks the king as the king.

Haman wants them all for himself.

While wearing all of these, he wants to be paraded through the city.

He wants everyone to see him.

And he wants someone to go before him proclaiming his greatness.

Proclaiming that this is someone honored by the king.

This is someone the king loves and values.

This is a borderline treasonous request.

This is Haman declaring he wants to be the king.

He wants to be seen as the king.

He wants to have everyone acknowledge him as king.

This could even be a part of his plot to take over the kingdom.

We don't know for sure.

But I wouldn't be surprised based on what we know about his ambition.

And what we know about how foolish and out of touch this king is.

Verse 10, **"Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said,"**

The king responds exactly how Haman hopes.

He wants this accomplished right now.

He tells Haman to hurry.

Go pick out the robes he wants.

Go get the king's horse addled and ready to go.

But here is the kicker.

"and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned."

He has to do everything he wanted and imagined.

But not for himself.

Instead, all of this honor will go to his greatest enemy.

The person he hates more than anyone in the world.

Mordecai instead will be rewarded.

The king also makes it very clear what Haman must do.

He cannot leave out anything.

The exact things Haman hoped for himself must go to Mordecai.

He cannot cut any corners.

He cannot give him any less honor than he hoped for himself.

It must all be bestowed, every aspect, to Mordecai.

Verse 11, **"So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor."**

Haman has to be humbled.

He is required to be the one get the horse and clothes.

He has to saddle the horse and bring it.

He has to go to the dresser and pick out some royal robes.

Even worse, he has to help Mordecai get dressed.

Haman plays the role of servant.

He does the job of a servant or slave and dresses Mordecai.

But the worst of all is what he must do at the end.

Haman has to go before Mordecai in the parade.

He has to go before him and repeatedly declare the king love Mordecai.

Pride goes before the horse.

Verse 12, **"Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered."**

After the parade is done, Mordecai goes back to work.

But Haman has to go home.

He can't bear showing his face.

He cannot stand another moment.

And Haman goes to his house mourning and covering his head.

The only other mourning we have seen in the book of Esther so far is from the Jews.

They mourned because their people are going to be annihilated.

Haman mourns because he was humbled.

He mourns because his pride is wounded.

Verse 13, **"And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him."**

Last night he told this same group of people all the great news.

He bragged about how everything was going amazing.
He couldn't stop recounting them his riches and blessings.
But the tone today is much more different.
Now he is complaining.

What his wife says is prophetic and significant.

"Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him."

She tells him to be wary.

She knows his plans against the Jews and against Mordecai specifically.
But if his plan to kill Mordecai was defeated so miraculously,
Then his plan to defeat the Jews will meet the same end.
She tells him he will fail.
Just as he had to bow before Mordecai and honor him,
His hopes to wipe out the Jews will meet the same fate.

How should Haman respond right now?

Should he continue in his plan?

No, of course not.

He should repent.

He should turn from this path.

He should humble himself before Mordecai and ask about his God.

He should humble himself before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He should repent and stop.

But he does not.

And it is too late.

Verse 14, **"While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared."**

In the middle of this warning, the dinner invitation comes.

They hurry to bring him to Esther's feast.

The feast where everything will be revealed.

The feast where he will meet his fate.
Time has run out for him to repent.
In a few hours he will be dead and have lost everything.

The problem is that none of us know when we may have to face judgement.

Haman was on top of the world.
He woke up filled with joy.
He will die and lose it all before the day is done.

This is part of why you cannot put off repentance.
Salvation depends on Christ alone.
The only way to escape the judgment after death,
The only way to enter into eternal life,
Is by repenting of our sins and putting our faith in Jesus.
We must all make this choice before we die.
During our lives we have a million chances.
But after we die, that it is.

You do not know how long you have.
You have no guarantee of tomorrow.
You only have this moment right now in front of you.
Choose to humble yourself before God.
Choose to repent of your sin.

Or like Haman, you will find yourself facing punishment and death.
Don't wait.
Humble yourself today.
Humble yourself before you run out of time.

Most people seek pride.
They are unwilling to throw themselves before God.
They are unwilling to truly confess their sins and seek out grace.

The world seeks to honor itself.
We chase our pride and our advancement over everyone else.
That is the path we see Haman walking down.
But that path only leads one direction.
It might lead to honor for a moment.
But it will eventually lead to destruction and death.
And it is not the path of Jesus.
And the path of pride only leads to judgment and death.

Even as Christians we can be tempted towards pride.
But we have our own distinct versions.
Maybe we are not prideful like Haman, wanting to parade around and tell everyone how great we are.
But one of the things we can do is assume and talk about how bad others are.
When we read stories,
Or we see people who are non-Christians and sinners living like sinners.
We can shake our heads at them.
And we won't just say their lifestyle is wrong and they need to repent and follow Jesus.
We will start to think how terrible they are.
How awful their sins are.
And how much worse they are than us.
We are just like the Pharisee standing and praying "Thank God I am not like these sinners."
Those words may not leave our lips, but they are often in our hearts.

If you read this story and shake your head at Haman, instead of realizing how often we act like him, that does not mean you have conquered pride. It just means your pride is sneakier than you think it is.

II. Christlike humility leads blessing (Philippians 2:4-11).

The behavior of a Christian is one of humility.
It is the desire to see others honored instead of ourselves.
It is the eschewing the need of praise.

This kind of Christian humility was radical at the time.
Humility was not a virtue the Romans valued.
They saw it as a sign of weakness.
Great men and women were prideful.
Only the weak were humble.

To some extent we still believe this today even though we pretend we have changed.
We see the arrogant billionaire, the arrogant athlete, the arrogant politician and we like it.
We are drawn to it.
We convince ourselves that they had to have been arrogant in order to achieve something so great.
Maybe their pride is even a valuable and virtuous thing.

But pride is not Christian.
And if we are to be followers of Jesus, we must Christ not Haman.
And how does Christ act?
You can turn to Philippians 2.
Starting in verse 4, **"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."**

Christians are not to be concerned with our own honor.
We should not just be looking out for ourselves.
We should be considering others.
We should be willing to sacrifice for others.
This is why the early church was known for providing for the poor and needy.
They were willing to sell what they had for what others needed.

They will willing to fast in order to give food to the hungry.
That is humility.

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

This is not meant to be a generic human kindness.
This is not just us trying to become better human beings.
We are to be humble because we are trying to be like Jesus.
Because we are being conformed into His image.
Because He is making us more like Him as we are sanctified.

We have this mind already because Christ gives it to us.
When we were saved and made a new creation, He gave us the mind of Christ.
This means we are not to act like something we are not.
It is not a fake it until you make it.
We are to live like Christ, because being like Christ is who we are.

And what did Christ do?

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Christ had ever reason to be prideful.
Christ had every reason to seek man's praise.
Christ had every reason and right to do what Haman did.

Christ is God Himself.
Jesus Christ is the creator of the universe.
He has a right to every honor.
He has a right to demand of us whatever He wishes.
But the ministry of Jesus was not about exalting Jesus.
His ministry was about serving us.

⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Jesus humbled Himself by becoming one of us.

If any of us could choose to be a God, we would never willingly set all the trappings of Godhood aside in order to have a human body.

Most people these days long to escape our bodies.

We hope technology, medicine, or AI will help free us from the limitation.

But Jesus willingly took this limitation upon Himself.

He got down into the mud with us and took a body made of dust.

The good news of the gospel is the humility of Christ.

He was willing to humble Himself to save us.

He became like we are so that we might become like He is.

He was willing to do whatever it took to deliver us.

We worship a humble God.

Verse 8, **"And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."**

His humility did not stop there.

Jesus was willing to die for our sake.

Do you recognize the humility it would take for God to allow His creation to kill Him?

To sit there silently at a kangaroo court while wicked men lied about Him out of jealousy?

The humility it would take to hold back His power and all the armies of angels in order to die?

Especially the most shameful death at the time, crucifixion.

Jesus was willing to be stripped naked, paraded around, and mocked.

That is the humility of our God.

Verse 9, **"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

Jesus did not just do all of this for His own sake.

He did not just humble Himself to get more honor for Himself at the end.
He did it for us.
He did this out of grace, compassion, and love for sinners like you and me.
He did this in order to offer us salvation and grace.
He did it to defeat the powers of sin and darkness.

There is one time we know Christ rode an animal in Scripture.
He rode a young donkey in the triumphant entry instead of a kingly war horse.
He did this to show His humility and that His kingdom was one of peace.

Only once did Christ wear royal robes.
At His crucifixion they draped purple over him in mockery.
They placed a crown of thorns on his head to humiliate him.
Christ bore these symbols in humility.
And His humility led to our salvation and His exaltation.
He did this to save us and to show us the Christian life.
We are to live lives of humility.
And our humility and suffering will lead to eternal blessings.
But often we have to wait for the blessing.

Mordecai had to wait.
He saved the king and was never rewarded.
But the reward came at a perfect time.
It saved his life.
And it was a greater honor than he could have imagined.
In the same way, our reward from God is delayed.
It is not all coming now.
It will not come until we go to be with Jesus.
And on that day it will be all we need.

One day those who place their faith in Jesus will be rewarded.
They will be resurrected on the final day.
And one day all will stand before the judgment throne.

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man will sit in all of His glory.

The sheep will be separated from the goats.

Those who have put their faith in Christ will here "well done good and faithful servant."

They will be welcomed to inherit the kingdom prepared for us since the foundation of the world.

Jesus will give us the garments of salvation and cover us with the robes of righteousness.

He will place the crown of life on our heads.

And He will invite us to come into the heavenly city.

A place with no tears, or pain, or suffering any more.

Where the former things have passed away and only blessing remains.

And we can come and eat from the tree of life once more.

That is the blessing we wait for.

But the only way there is by humbling yourself before Christ in Christlike humility.

CONCLUSION:

Worldly pride leads to judgment (6:1-14).

Christlike humility leads blessing (Philippians 2:4-11).

At the foot of the cross, and in the Christian life, there is no room for pride.

But there is plenty of room in the kingdom of God for the humble.