

The Glory of the King's Gate

Esther 6:12 KJV And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

I. INTRODUCTION -- THE COMMON LIFE

-I find myself somewhat indebted to Linda Little who taught me 11th grade English. One of her assignments was met with much complaint, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, of which I am certain that I was in that crowd. But those four assignments put me into the acquaintance of Robert Frost.

-She had us to memorize four of his poems, "Fire and Ice," "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Mending Wall," and perhaps his most famous "The Road Not Taken."

-Robert Frost's poems pour out of the common life that he lived. He really saw rural New England for what it had to offer to his mind and ability to creatively write poetry. It was the New Hampshire farms and the Vermont apple orchards that brought so much power and light to what he wrote.

-I realize that some might think the faint fellow has lost his bearings when I tell you to read some of Frost's poems and really see what he wrote. "Two Look at Two" is gripping in its depiction of a couple who wandering and even wavering in a walk in the woods. "Birches" give powerful insight into seeing beyond the forest and really looking at the trees and as you see the trees, life eases its way out of the poem.

-Robert Frost was a man who really had the ability to not just live his life but to see life in the common. Because of the common, he sets the soul on fire with the power and passion that can come from just doing what you are supposed to do.

-If I could take this message and preach into you the incredible power that comes from the common avenues of life that is what I desperately want to do. One of the great dangers of the common life is that the devil would do much to get you to give up and give in to the tedium and boredom of daily life and make a decision that would have far-reaching and negative effects on your life.

-I have discovered that we do not gain necessarily gain great things at conferences or campmeetings. We do not necessarily glean greatness from seminars and holy huddles with our comrades. We make our greatest steps of progress when we allow the common to be the fuel to help us do what we are supposed to do.

-There is an inherent but often untapped power that comes in the king's gate. It provides a foundation like none other for us. Don't curse the common! It is in the king's gate that great glory can be discovered.

II. THE STORY BEHIND THE TEXT

A. Royal Insomnia

-It was a night that the king could not sleep. For whatever reason, insomnia had found its way into the royal palace and had disturbed the sleep of royalty.

-A number of things could have troubled his sleep.

- The cares of the kingdom.
- The ambition to take more land and captives.
- His troubled conscience.
- It could have been his own ridiculous moods.

-One historian confirms that when Ahaseurus returned from his Greek expedition that he had gotten so made with the River Hellespont for breaking the floating bridge of his boats that he ordered one of his servants to lash the river with 300 lashes. Obviously there was a lot going on in his poor, sleepless mind on that particular night.

-I am certain that Ahasuerus had tried everything he knew to try and get to sleep on that night.

- He had moved from the soft bed to his soft couch.
- He counted the lines on the drapes that hung from ceiling to floor.
- He counted the designs on the Persian rugs that were scattered about in his room.
- He had rearranged the pillows and swapped from feather to cotton and back again.
- He had tried to listen to the soft music of the Persians.
- He had paced a bit.

- He had read a bit.
- He had snacked a bit.
- He probably had tried every trick in the book.

-Nothing seemed to work to get the king to sleep. Because we have the ability to read the Bible, we know that a far greater plan was at work keeping this king from his sleep. God's hand was involved in it all because He wanted Mordecai to be brought into the council of the king.

-So finally in great frustration that nothing could help the king sleep, he calls for someone to bring the records of the chronicles to be read aloud to him. What Ahasuerus did not count on was instead of the tales being tedious and boring and pushing him into a state of drowse, he was literally cast into and suddenly caught up in the records of a heroic tale that he had forgotten.

B. Unrewarded Deeds Will Ultimately Be Crowned

-The story of two of the king's closest aids, members of his inner circle, was suddenly brought into the glaring light of scrutiny in the dim darkness of the king's bedroom. It was a tale of subterfuge and betrayal.

-Two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh had determined that they were going to sneak into the quarters of Ahasuerus and kill him.

Esther 2:21-23 KJV In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. [22] And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name. [23] And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

-The Bible really does not address how this murder was to happen. It only tells us that that these two men were very wroth and their anger sent them to their graves (there is a whole message in that!). However, during those days great kings were constantly on guard to preserve their power over the people. They always were required to be watchful for insurgents and potential political coups.

-Bigthan and Teresh allowed something to fester in their souls that got out and managed to become a plot that Mordecai (who was in the king's gate) heard about. Mordecai passed along this information and saved the king's life.

-These two men were hanged and the assassination never came to pass. We can only imagine what might these dark men might have been going to resort to:

- Perhaps they were going to poison his wine.
- Perhaps they were going to let in an assassin in the palace.
- Perhaps they were going to attack him when they found him alone.

-The Bible is silent on what they were going to do to kill the king but on this sleepless night in the palace, the story pours out of the chronicles of the kingdom.

-In the end, the chronicler is dismissed and the king wants someone to help him honor this man, Mordecai, who had reported the dark deed of Bigthan and Teresh. It just so happens that there is someone who is in the king's court who can help him.

C. Come To Front and Center—The Nerd Named Haman

Esther 6:3-4 KJV And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him. [4] And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

-What a turn of events! Haman is coming to speak to the king about killing Mordecai and the king is going to talk to Haman about honoring Mordecai.

-Have you ever seen a Haman? Let me describe him for you.

- He is usually a nerdy little sap.
- He is a know-it-all who is quite willing to express all he knows usually within earshot of the boss.
- He always is right up under the feet of the boss.
- He always speaks about his past "experiences" before anyone else.
- He always says what the boss wants to hear. In fact he always uses fawning words and flattery about the boss in front of people but especially when the boss is present.

- He always is reporting the minor inconsistencies of others to the boss and then pointing out his own perceived strengths.
- He always makes himself look good in the eyes of the boss and others look like fumbling fools.
- The boss really doesn't like him but he has become so subservient that the boss ignores the distaste he has for him.
- He always is right at the elbow of the boss with every little tool the boss might need or to run off to manage any little errand the boss might desire.
- He is a real dork but he has enough on the ball that he keeps everyone at bay because of his relationship with the boss.
- He spends much time trolling around in front of the boss with more of an emphasis being spent on looking productive instead of being productive.

-That is Haman in full-color. He is so full of himself that he has no room for any one else.

-But there is more to the story. . .

Esther 6:5-6 KJV And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. [6] So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

-Notice how quickly that Haman's heart turns from murder and mayhem of Mordecai to the exaltation of self. Haman has predetermined already in his mind that the honors are about to come his way. So he quickly designs his own parade. . . .

- I would honor the man by putting him in a tailored thousand dollar Hart Schaffner & Marx suit (with its accompanying free pair of britches), a hundred dollar Zegna necktie, a four-hundred dollar pair of leather Johnston and Murphy wingtips, all hand-delivered by the White House staff.
- I would equip him with a cool leather briefcase that had a cutting edge Dell notebook with constant Internet access along with an I-phone, Mont Blanc pen, and a personal aide to take care of every need.
- I would put him in a motorcade of stretch limousines with Secret Service agents riding shotgun in their black Suburbans and parade him all through Washington, D.C.

- I would hold a press conference in the Rose Garden on the White House lawn and give him great honor in front of the nation.
- I would let him use the official presidential seal on all of his personal documents.
- I would promote this man to be an ambassador of the nation to the world.

-Haman got so caught up in the promotion that the more he suggested the more self-congratulatory steam the plan generated. Ahasuerus was so impressed that he told Haman to go and get it all together. Haman was “juiced” as they say.

-People like Haman who are hung up on being noticed and filled with self-importance in the long run usually come to nothing good.

-He could see himself enjoying every bit of the parade, the honor, the attention, the excitement, and all the trimmings that went with such an honor. But when Ahasuerus told him to go find Mordecai and give him the parade, Haman almost choked. He hated Mordecai.

-Imagine all of the humiliation and agony of spirit that Haman felt when Mordecai was in the highest place of honor in the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

III. AFTER THE HONOR IS THE GLORY OF A LESSER PLACE

-When Mordecai had enjoyed all of the honor the king had given to him, the text that we read brings a huge principle to us concerning the way that we live our lives.

A. Returning to the King’s Gate

Esther 6:12 KJV And Mordecai came again to the king's gate.

-This was his station in life. This was the place where Mordecai made the most important contribution to his own existence. It was the familiar and the ordinary that elevated him to such a place of honor.

-We need not soon forget that there is glory that often comes in the king’s gate. We cannot survive on parades, on honor, on banquets, on feasting, and on the superficial elements of life.

-What a powerful principle. . . And Mordecai came *again* to the king’s gate.

- He did not hang around to try and prolong the honors of the king.
- He had little time to try and squeeze from the crowd more adulation.
- He did not go to his house and hold a party among his friends so he could tell them of his great day.
- He did not continue to seek after the attention of the king.
- He did not try to get Haman demoted.

-He simply went back to the king's gate. There are very few in life who can handle such immediate promotion and it not ruin them. Prosperity and promotion has slain far more than has adversity and disappointment. Mordecai was never greater than when he returned and came back to the king's gate.

-Alexander Raleigh wrote in a commentary on the book of Esther (from 1880) the following:

A proud and ambitious man would have said to himself, "No more of the king's gate for me! I shall direct my steps now to the king's palace, and hold myself ready for honour. . . which surely must now be at hand." Mordecai seems to have said with himself, "*If* these things are designed for me in God's good providence, they will find me. But they must seek me, for I shall not seek them. Those who confer them know my address. 'Mordecai, at the king's gate,' will still find me. Let the crowd wonder and disperse. I have had enough of their incense. Let Haman go whither he will, he is in the hands of the Lord. Let my friends at home wait; they will hear all in time. . . I can wait best at the old place and in the accustomed way—'*at the king's gate.*'"

-Mordecai kept his place in all of this and did not let the parade or the show rattle his commitment. He understood that there, often, the highest glory comes by staying in the lesser places of commitment, of responsibility, of discipline, and of courage.

- It takes commitment in our times to stay tethered to a family.
- It takes a sense of responsibility in our times to stay on the job.
- It takes discipline to stay faithful to God and His house.
- It takes courage to fulfill what you may have set out to do in life.

-With a seeming suddenness, Mordecai was pulled from his familiar surroundings and elevated. The effect that these things have on us, greatly determine what we will become when the parade is over. Where do you go after this?

-Sometimes the events come unexpectedly and at other times, they come after long years of pushing and pulling and working diligently at your craft.

-It is also of crucial importance that we notice that the king came and honored the man who was in the king's gate. This is the way that Lord works. He honors those who are diligent in the king's gate.

-Don't let the promotions, raises, the blessings, and achievements rob you of your life being fulfilled in the gate. Far too many times if we are not careful, we will allow the frivolous to take us away from the king's gate.

-It is interesting how that when some first got in the church, their job did not take them away from the gate but as elevation came, the lesser place of the king's gate seemed so unnecessary and unimportant. It was easy to pay tithes when you were making \$400 a week but now that you are making \$2000 a week, there is almost a hesitation to go back to the king's gate.

-If we are not careful we can allow the pursuits that achievement demand, take us away from the king's gate. So you made an A on the Fluid and Electrolytes test. . . Good, go back to the gate. So you are the Employee of the Year. . . Good, go back to the gate.

B. Returning After The High Moments of Life

-It is sort of like coming home after a good vacation. There is a certain amount of dread that comes to us when we think on returning back to school or to work. We have been able to shirk off the demands of a schedule and the harassment of a boss or teacher or a confining set of circumstances.

-Sometimes a seminar or conference that your employer sends you to can create these sorts of feelings. Ideas are absorbed, plans are determined, and great hopes are embraced. We spend just long enough to shake off the boredom and the tedium that comes with the job to begin to dream once more. But the dream and the vision can get dashed when we are sent back to the king's gate.

-I feel certain that when Mordecai got out of the motorcade that was to honor him that the king's gate looked a lot less appealing than it had in the moments before the crowning honor.

- The rust now stands out on the hinges more than they did yesterday.

- The wood of the gate looks a bit more rotten than it used to.
- The people who are in the gate look like misfits of society.
- There is a settling of depression that clouds his vision.
- There is a sense of hopelessness that wasn't with him before his honors.
- The gate looks a little less appealing than it did before the party started.

-But just like Mordecai, we must bravely and diligently return to the job the Lord has called us to do. There is great glory in the gate!

-There is not a lot of faithfulness required of us in the mountain-top experiences of life. But real faithfulness can only be demonstrated when you go back to the gate.

C. Returning After Trials and Difficulties

-Sometimes we can be pulled from the gate by a trial or a great dilemma in life.

- A bad choice is made.
- A heartrending loss occurs.
- Divorce rips apart the family.
- A wayward child's rebellion becomes our distress.
- Some great betrayal unsettles our life.
- We receive some very bad news that affects us greatly.

-We were at a point of enjoying the highest part of life and suddenly the breath is knocked out of us. We are pulled from the security and the surroundings of the king's gate.

-I can only commend to you some of the wisest advice that we can get from Mordecai's life. Understand the glory of the gate and go back to it.

- Quietly get back to the gate.
- Patiently settle into the task at the gate.
- Go back to the job.
- Go back to school.
- Go back home.

-This is the way that you live victoriously and powerfully when you are under the assault of a deep trial. There is glory in the king's gate!

-What we do after the trial is of very crucial importance!

- After the Flood, Noah had to build an altar.
- After the Covenant was established with Abraham, he had to walk it out.
- After Joseph was taken from the prison, he had to prepare for the famine.
- After the wilderness experience, Jesus went about teaching and healing.
- After the death of James, the Early Church had to continue.
- After Peter and John had been let out of prison, they had to defend the faith.
- After the trial. . . you have to go back to the gate.
- After the pain. . . you have to go back to the gate.

Rex Johnson writes in his book *With a Palm and A Willow* in a chapter entitled "The Unfathomable Mile" about the loss of his wife and young four year old son in a fiery automobile accident. As I read through the chapter, Brother Johnson writes with such emotion as he describes that intersection in Dallas, Texas that forever changed his life. Fortuitously his young daughter was pulled from the wreckage before she would have suffered the same fate as her mother and brother. Brother Johnson describes have to do everything within him to walk that unfathomable mile.

This accident came at a very high point in his life. He had settled in Dallas and the church he was pastoring was growing and thriving and he had experienced some personal accomplishments in ministry in the last few years of his life. Life was fantastic until this day that his whole life caved in. He writes with a very open honesty about some of the huge questions that plagued his mind at the time. He questioned God, he questioned himself, and he questioned some of the men that he held in high regard in his life. He writes that perhaps the most wicked voice of all that he had to deal with was the one of self-incrimination where he literally became his own accuser.

I can distinctly remember hearing Brother Johnson preaching a conference somewhere (the exact location no escapes me) of how that then UPCI General Superintendent N. A. Urshan told Brother Johnson that he would need to preach the following Sunday in his church in Dallas following the tragic accident. I remember him saying that he did not want to preach at this conference but that Brother Urshan wasn't too interested in hearing this and Brother Johnson spoke of the beginning of the healing of the grief that came to him with his return to the pulpit.

Brother Johnson also writes of three other pastors, John Harrell (Bridge City, TX) who called him everyday for three months after the accident just to check in with him and be a listening ear and to give him words of encouragement. He also wrote about L. C. Treadway (Beaumont, TX) who came to Dallas to spend a day with him and uplift him. He also wrote of John Kershaw (Dallas, TX) who would meet with him and eat 2-3 times

a week to help him. All three of these men in their own way were helping Brother Johnson go back to the king's gate. Certainly as time has passed, many can see the benefits of his returning to the king's gate. But I sincerely doubt at the time that he saw the full benefit of the king's gate!

-The king's gate has a way of restoring purpose, initiating healing, and resetting priorities of life.

IV. CONCLUSION -- FAITHFUL TO THE GATE

On the afternoon of April 18, 1775 a young stable boy hurriedly ran down the Boston streets until he came to the silversmith shop of Paul Revere. He reported that he had overheard some British army officers talking about an event that was to happen the next day.

It just so happened that earlier in the day he had been relayed some information that came from some men who worked the wharves of the Boston harbor. They had noted two ships in the Boston harbor, the *Somerset* and the *Boyne*, both of HMS (His Majesty's Ships) from Great Britain. The British officers had carelessly discussed some plans that would lead to the arrest of colonial leaders John Hancock and Samuel Adams in Lexington.

So Paul Revere and his close friend Joseph Warren determined to do something with the information that literally had come to them from the grass-roots of the Boston society.

The rest is history. We know now that on that night that Paul Revere took to his horse and rode through the streets of Boston and on to the other towns along the way on his mid-night ride. He rode through Charlestown, Medford, North Cambridge, and Menotomy before reaching Lexington. He sounded the alarm, "The British are coming! The British are coming!"

Before long, church bells started ringing, drums begin beating and the news fanned out all over the countryside. The news ran on through Lincoln by one A.M., Sudbury by three, Andover by five, and by nine it had reached as far west as Ashby, near Worcester.

When the British finally begin their march on April 19, 1775, they were shocked and stunned by the resistance they found from the minutemen and the patriots along the way. Resistance was organized and fierce and the militia soundly routed the British. From that incident came the American Revolution that would start the steps toward an American nation.

How crucial it was for the young man who worked in the stable to have been in his "gate." How crucial it was for the workers on the wharves to have stayed in their

“gate.” How crucial it was for Paul Revere to have been in his “gate” when the information begin to trickle in his direction. (Adapted from *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell, pp.30-33, 56-59)

-There is great power in staying in the King’s Gate. . . .

- By staying in your marriage. . . You stay in the gate.
- By continuing to do your work. . . You stay in the gate.
- By just showing up to manage the task. . . You stay in the gate.
- By shouldering the daily responsibilities. . . You stay in the gate.
- By living the ordinary life. . . You stay in the gate.
- By raising your children. . . You stay in the gate.
- By living by the grace of God. . . You stay in the gate.
- By being a better husband. . . You are staying in the gate.
- By being a more devoted mother. . . You are staying in the gate.
- By being a kind brother or sister. . . You are staying in the gate.

-The accolades and the rewards do not come in the king’s gate, they only come because you fulfill the responsibilities of the gate.

-This places a huge premium on consistency, character, and sheer determination to do what God has called you to do and to be.