



APPNOTES

Date: September 23-27, 2019

Series: This Is Us

Esther 4:14 If the story of Esther could be summed up in a news headline, it would be: Beauty Queen Boldly Approaches King and Saves a Nation (with the subtitle: Haman Gets His Just Desserts). We know the outcome of the story, so we don't feel the tension that Esther did. Approaching the king without being summoned could have had deadly consequences for her, but not approaching him would mean the destruction of the Jewish people. This verse calls Esther to action. It calls us to action, too. We live in a spiritually dark corner of the world, and these people that God loves are waiting for us to help them find the way back to God. Whether you were born here or moved here more recently, God put you here for such a time as this.

Matthew 5:13-16 Back in the Middle Ages, churches were often built on a hill, for two reasons. For one thing, you wanted the cemetery on the hill so, in case of torrential rain, the dearly departed weren't washed away. But the second reason is because the church on a hill was the gathering place. Everyone went to church, every day, more or less. If a traveler came to a village, he could easily find the church: it was the most visible building in town. The church also became a safe place in case of attack, because it was on the high ground and it was made of sturdy stone. Modern churches come in all shapes and sizes and repurposed buildings, but our intention to be the gathering place hasn't changed. We want to be that safe place that people can run to when they're in need, so we can help them find the way back to God.

1 John 3:16-18 We all like to hear, "I love you" – from a spouse, a friend, a parent, a child. But that person could say it all day long and it would mean nothing if we felt neglected and alone. Love is not words or feelings. Love is action. John reminds us in these verses that God didn't just say He loves us – He showed it by sending Jesus to die on our behalf. It is rare in this world that we'll need to lay down our lives for someone else, but sacrificing our time, comfort, and possessions is just as important. Northeast Pennsylvania is a disadvantaged piece of the state, and many people are in

need; this gives us, the body of Christ, ample opportunity to serve others. God loves them. Let's tell them. We do that by showing them we love them.

1 Peter 2:11-12 I believe our world is angry, and scared. No one wants to admit they don't have the answers, so our world has decided tolerance and anything-goes is the answer. When followers of Jesus tell them, in love, that the answer is a relationship with Jesus, they lash out. They lash out and accuse us of intolerance and hate. It isn't true, but arguing about it won't change their minds. For that reason, Peter tells us in these verses that we need to live such good lives among the world that even though they spout anger at us, they'll have to admit that we do good things for our community. We can't control how the world responds, only what we do. Let's work to meet the needs of NEPA so that, no matter what they may say, they'll know they are loved.

Matthew 25:35-40 When people say a woman is a Mama Bear, they aren't referring to the Bearenstein Bears, they're referring to the big, scary bears knocking over garbage cans in Scott Township. Don't get between her and her cubs. Mama Bears don't wait for a threat to hurt her cubs before she lashes out; just the threat is enough. Coming after her babies is the same as coming after her, and she'll step in to take care of it. This passage from Matthew takes the same idea and flips it around. God says, "What you do to My children, you do to Me." But He isn't talking about attacking, He is talking about caring. We need to take care of the people around us because they are God's children. We can meet difficult needs as well as basic needs. Maybe we'll have the chance to speak about God in the process, but at least the people will be warm and fed. Let's start there.

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