

19TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SEPTEMBER 29, 2013

EXTREME MAKEOVER

Pastor Jim Dunn

Esther 2:1-14

Esther Chosen Queen

2 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. **2** Then the king's young men who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. **3** And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the citadel, under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women. Let their cosmetics be given them. **4** And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.

5 Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, **6** who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. **7** He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. **8** So when the king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women. **9** And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king's palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem. **10** Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to

make it known. **11** And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

12 Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women— **13** when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king's palace.

14 In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

It was on an extreme makeover show. Not one about houses. It was an extreme makeover show about people. On this particular episode, a young woman wanted to become a model. The producers of the show seemed determined to help her. First, they introduced her to a modeling agent. The first thing he did was take her to a hair stylist. When she heard what the stylist wanted to do to her hair, she cried. She sobbed. She told the agent she didn't like the hairstyle the stylist had chosen. Then, the modeling agent took her to a modeling studio. It was the kind of place where models are taught to walk like models. She seemed offended at the idea that she didn't know how to walk properly. The next thing the agent did was to give her some tips on clothes, accessories, makeup, and how to talk to people in public. The young woman phoned her mother to complain about that: "Mom, I don't know if I can do this! They don't like me! They're trying to make me into somebody else!" She repeated these complaints to the modeling agent, and he said, "You're exactly right. We are trying to make you into somebody else. You weren't a model. We're trying to make you into one."

A makeover. Extreme makeover. So was the case of that wannabe model. Was that also true of Esther? When Esther was brought to the palace of the king of Persia for an extreme makeover? She was already beautiful (2:7). Did she need an *extreme* makeover? Not on the outside.

But this was the king's show. It was his version of *The Bachelor*. In his version, every woman brought to him to spend one night had to meet his specifications. Though he would summon by name only one of these candidates to be his bride, all of them had to be able to please him. So, the twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for these women, this extreme makeover, was designed according to the king's likes. He must have wanted his queen to have the scent of myrrh. Each one received six months of treatment with oil of myrrh, so that her skin pores oozed myrrh. Another six months of treatment with various cosmetics and perfumes. Plenty of trial and error and practice till each woman could meet the king's beauty standards. Beautiful Esther's extreme makeover was in preparation of meeting the king, so that she would be pleasing to him. This was Esther's extreme makeover.

We could talk about how King Xerxes' behavior was not in line with God's Word. That was in no way how men are to deal with women. But it is how God deals with us. We are being made over in preparation of meeting our King, so that we may please Him. "Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..." "Create in me a clean heart, O God..." We are being transformed, sanctified, made new, renewed, made over. For not only will we meet our King on the Last Day, just like the words of the Advent hymn say: "O Lord, how shall I meet Thee?" Our makeover continues, it happens as we meet our King in our daily quiet time with Him. This is our extreme makeover.

So, in both Esther's case and ours, an extreme makeover happens. And in both Esther's case and ours meeting the king is a firsthand experience. When it was time for the king to meet Esther, he did not want her to send one of her assistants. He wanted to spend time with Esther. Your King wants to spend time with you. He doesn't want you to send a substitute.

There are just certain things no one can do for you. No one can eat for you. You don't say, "I'm going to hire a substitute to chew my food for me, and I'll just swallow whatever he gives me." Yuck!! Of course not!

No one can do your romancing for you. You don't say, "I'm in love with that wonderful person, but romance is such a hassle. I'll hire a substitute to enjoy the romance in my place. He'll tell me all about it, and I'll be spared the inconvenience." Yuck!! Of course not! There are certain things no one can do for you.

But you and I try to do that with our King. We try to send a substitute. You and I have tried to have a daily quiet time with God. We didn't always reap much benefit it seemed. Or we had a hard time concentrating. All of us are busy. So, we try to send a substitute. We let others spend time with the Lord and then try to benefit from their experience. You let pastors and devotion book writers do the study of God's Word for you. We pastors let Christian book writers and commentary writers do the study of God's Word for us. And our own study of God's Word gets pushed aside.

Our King doesn't want a substitute. He wants you. He wants to spend time with you. And for that He went through His own extreme makeover. The Word became flesh. The Son of God left His throne to be laid in a manger. As part of His extreme makeover, our King went through His own series of treatments with myrrh and perfumes. At the home of Simon the Pharisee, our King's feet were anointed with perfume. At the home of Mary and Martha, our King's feet were anointed with an expensive perfume called nard.

When our King, the Creator of the Universe was buried, His body was wrapped with linen and 75 lb. of myrrh. In God's case, an extreme makeover. Such an extreme makeover of becoming flesh and dying for our sins and being buried was not so that He might spend a night with you. But to make you His own every night and every day for eternity – that you might have eternal life through Him.

As He said through Isaiah: "Fear not, I have redeemed you; *I have summoned you by name. You are mine.*" (Isaiah 43:1b) Extreme makeover that happened at your Baptism just like that. From being a nobody in this vast universe to being the King's own. From being a nobody who dies to becoming the King's own to die but your soul live in heaven and then on the Last Day to live soul and body in the new creation. Extreme makeover just like that.

Now, when it comes to understanding God's Word like one of the King's own, that extreme makeover doesn't happen just like that. Don't be discouraged. Esther's extreme makeover took a whole year. So, don't be discouraged if your study of God's Word doesn't seem to yield much in one night either in your understanding of it or in how you act or in how you think. We grow in those things a little at a time.

A little girl returned from her first day at school. Her mom asked, "Did you learn anything?" "I guess not," the girl said. "I have to go back tomorrow and the next day and the next day..." So, it is with Bible study. Understanding comes a little at a time. That you belong to the King happened faster than in Esther's case. Extreme makeover.

But understanding our King's Words, having the mind and heart and of our King, loving others as our King does, comes with time. That extreme makeover happens over the course of a lifetime. But it does happen. For never has a King rejoiced over his choosing of a bride the way your King has rejoiced over you: "The Lord your God is with you; the Mighty One will save you. He will rejoice over you. You will rest in His love; He will sing and be joyful about you. (Zeph. 3:17)

Amen