

GOD THE GOOD SHEPHERD

UNIT TWO: God's Messengers

Lesson 6: How Queen Esther Saved Her People

CONTENT:

1. Like Daniel, Mordecai was a Jew living in Babylon. He adopted his young relative Esther. When he heard that King Ahasuerus was looking for a queen, he sent Esther to join the other girls, but told her not to reveal that she was a Jew. The king chose Esther out of all the girls and she became queen.
2. Haman was a very powerful man in the king's court. He hated Mordecai, because he did not bow down to him as the others did. He spoke to the king and sent a letter sealed with the king's ring that all the Jews should be killed on a certain day.
3. Queen Esther and all the Jews fasted and prayed to God to rescue them. Then she went to the King's court, even though this was forbidden and could cost her her life. God turned the king's anger to kindness and he promised to do whatever the queen asked. She invited the king and Haman to a feast.
4. Haman built a scaffold and planned to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai on it. But that night, the king discovered that Mordecai had once saved his life and had not received any reward for it. He asked Haman what should be done to honour someone in the king's favour. Thinking he was the favoured one, Haman described great honours.
5. At the queen's feast, Esther revealed that she was a Jew and that Haman had plotted to kill her and all her people. In the end, Haman was hanged on the scaffold he had made for Mordecai and the Jews were saved.
6. *INTERCESSION means asking or praying on behalf of others. Jesus is the main intercessor. On the cross he prayed to the Father to forgive us all. Like Queen Esther, Mary is a queen too and she intercedes for all of us. We also should join Jesus and Mary and pray for others. [CCC 2634-36; 2679.]*

ASSIGNMENT: Read handout at home. ✕ Pray the same prayer for one week every day.

REFERENCES: Book of Esther. Luke 23:34.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts.

I. STARTER:

- Suppose you hear that someone is planning to attack all the Christians in India and kill them. What would you do?
[Let the students give their suggestions. If it doesn't come out, make the following points:]
 - All the Christians might get together and pray to God to save us.
 - We might write a letter to the Prime Minister of India and ask him to save us.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

Today we will hear the true story of a girl called Esther and how she acted when her people were in danger.

This story took place in the same place as the stories of Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There was a Jew called Mordecai who lived in Babylon. He had a beautiful young daughter named Esther whom he had adopted, because her parents had died.

One day, Mordecai heard that the king (his name was Ahasuerus) was looking for a queen. Many young girls went to the palace where they were given beauty treatment and dressed up. Mordecai told Esther, "Why don't you also try, and see if the king chooses you? But don't tell anyone that you are a Jew."

So Esther joined the other girls in the palace. Out of all the girls, the king chose Esther, and she became Queen.

Now Mordecai used to sit at the king's gate. One day he heard two men plotting to kill the king. He quickly went and reported this. The men were caught and the king's life was saved. This was written down in the king's Book of Records.

There was another person whom we must hear about: His name was Haman (*pronounce hay-mun*) and he was a very powerful man in the king's court. When Haman passed the king's gate he noticed that everyone except Mordecai bowed down to him. This irritated him more and more. At last he thought, "I will kill all the Jews and that will be the end of Mordecai too!"

He went to the king and said, "There are some foreigners in our land who don't follow your laws. They are our enemies. Give me your signet ring and I will see that they are all destroyed." The king agreed and gave his ring to Haman. At once Haman sent a letter to the whole land. "On a certain day, all the Jews are to be killed. You can take all their possessions for yourself."

When Mordecai heard about this letter, he sent a message to Queen Esther. She said, "If anyone goes into the king's court without him asking, that person is killed at once. But I must try to save my people. Let us all fast and pray for three days, and then I will go to see the king. And if I die, I die."

So for three days all the Jews fasted and prayed. Esther took off her grand clothes and jewels and covered herself with sack-cloth and ashes. She prayed to the Lord, "O my Lord, you are the real king. Help me, because I am alone, and have no help except you. Make me brave and give me the right words to say to the king. Turn his heart against Haman and save your people!"

After three days of prayer Esther bathed and changed into beautiful clothes. Then she went with her maid to the king's court. Though her heart was frozen with fear, she smiled and walked in, looking very beautiful. But when she looked up she saw that the king's face was red with anger. He looked so terrifying with his gold and jewels that she turned pale and fell down in fear.

At that moment God turned the king's anger into kindness. He jumped up and ran to the queen. He lifted her in his arms and said, "I am your husband. Don't be afraid, you will not die. What do you want from me? I will surely give it to you!"

Esther replied, "First I want you and Haman to come to a feast that I will prepare. Then I will tell you what I want."

That evening Haman felt very proud of himself. He boasted, "Even the queen honours me before everyone else!" But as he passed the king's gate he saw Mordecai, and all his happiness vanished. "I can't enjoy anything as long as that man is alive!" he told his wife. His wife said, "Make a gallows and tomorrow get permission to hang him on it!" So that very day he got the gallows made. The next morning he went off to the king's court to get permission to hang Mordecai.

But God had been at work that night. The king had been unable to sleep, so had ordered his servants to bring in the Book of Records and read it to him. When he heard the story of how Mordecai saved his life, he asked, "What reward was given to this man?" "No reward!" they answered.

Just then, Haman entered the king's court. The king said, "Tell me, Haman, if I wanted to honour someone, what should I do?" Haman thought, "The king wants to honour me!" So he answered, "Give the person royal clothes and a crown and a royal horse. And let the highest official dress the man and take him around the city praising him!"

The king smiled. "Good idea! Now go and do exactly as you have said for Mordecai, who sits at my gate!" Haman did not dare to tell the king what he had planned. Instead he had to dress the man he hated and take him around the city praising him. He covered his head in shame and anger and returned home.

That evening, the king and Haman went in to Queen Esther's feast. After a while the king asked again, "Tell me, Esther, what do you want from me? I will give it to you, even if it is half my kingdom!"

Then Queen Esther replied, “If you please, O king, let me live and let my people live. For someone wants to kill us all!”

“Who is he and where is the man who wants to kill you?” shouted the king.

“It is this wicked Haman!”

The king was so angry he got up and walked out into the garden. Haman fell at the queen’s feet and begged for mercy. When the king came in and saw Haman, he became furious, “Will he even touch my queen in my own house?” he shouted.

One of the servants said to the king, “Haman has built gallows to hang Mordecai on.”

“Hang him on the same gallows!” ordered the king.

When the king found out that Esther was a Jew and Mordecai was her father, he gave Haman’s house to Mordecai and stopped the people from killing the Jews.

This is how Queen Esther saved her people. She prayed and did what she could and God acted.

[Give out the handouts. The students fill in the missing words in the story by searching for them in the word maze. The number of letters in each word corresponds to the number of dashes.]

NEXT CLASS:

[Recapitulate the story by letting different students tell parts of it.]

- There are different kinds of prayer. Sometimes we thank God. Sometimes we praise him. When we pray for someone else what do we call it? *[INTERCESSION.] [Write it on the board.]*
- We are like the Jews in the story and the devil is like Haman. He would like to destroy us all, but we have someone who prays for us, who intercedes for us. Who is that? *[The main person is Jesus.]*
- As Jesus was hanging from the cross, he prayed, “Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing!” Because of Jesus’ prayer, we can live forever.
But people still say no to Jesus and they will be lost, unless someone prays for them and they turn back to God. So we still need to pray for people. We have to intercede.
- There is another person, a queen like Queen Esther, who prays for her people. Do you know who that is? *[Mother Mary. She is a queen in heaven and she keeps praying for us.]*
- We also can join Jesus and Mother Mary and pray for others. Remember how Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia prayed for sinners? Would you like to help save people so that they go to heaven?

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Let’s do it right away. Each one think of someone who needs God’s help and write down who it is. You don’t have to write their actual names.

[If possible the following prayer takes place in a chapel.]

Besides praying for people they know personally, lead the students to write other intentions such as: those who don’t believe in God, those suffering from famine, epidemics, wars etc.

After everyone has written short prayer in the space provided in their handouts, they read it out one by one, while the rest respond, ‘LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER!’]

IV. ACTIVITY:

[On the reverse side of their handouts, students draw a picture depicting Jesus, Mary and themselves praying for others. They should write the actual prayer. They could also add other details such as people who are in trouble, people receiving help etc.]

<p>Home assignment: × Read handout at home. × Pray your prayer every day for one week (or more, if you are ready to)</p>
