

Esth 8:15-9:19 The Forgiveness Card (GCC—11/13/22)

Introduction—Amazing turn of events

I. What an amazing turn of events for this one man named Mordecai—please follow me.

- Let's remember how it began—
 1. Mordecai was living in exile, deported from his beloved homeland, with all of his family probably killed when the Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem.
 2. Now, deprived from his country, deprived of most of his family, except for his orphaned niece, trying to make ends meet in a foreign land with unfamiliar people and unfamiliar language, with strange foreign customs, to say life was difficult would be an understatement.
 3. But, if life could not get any worse, it did for Mordecai, as he learned that he, along with all of his Jewish people, would be completely destroyed, killed and annihilated on a single day, on December 13th, because of a new law.

- **Esth 4:1**—“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done (the new law), he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.”
 1. He tore his clothes; covered his head with ashes; and the only sound he could make, were the unpleasant noises of wailing loudly and bitterly.
 2. He had absolutely no interest in looking nice and attractive before the people.
 3. He had no desire in furthering his career or fulfilling the vision for his life.
 4. All he could do was go around the city making the most bitter and disturbing noises, because his heart could not bear the overwhelming misery that life had poured unto him, again.
 - So, if anyone wanted to know what a miserable life looked like and sounded like, then they need only to look and hear Mordecai.

This man, who has embodied life's lowest and most miserable state, NOW, in our passage, we find him in a whole different, new status.

- **Esth 8:15**—“When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and purple robe of fine line....”
 1. He no longer stood outside the king's gate, wailing loudly, for he now stood in the king's presence.
 2. He no longer dumped ashes on his head, for he was wearing a large crown of gold.
 3. Gone was the sackcloth, as Mordecai was wearing royal garments of blue and white.
 - Oh, how different than what he looked in ch. 4:1, to here, in 8:15.

- Not only did his personal wardrobe change, his public persona had a whole different image.
 - **Esth 9:3-4**—“And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.”
 1. The high honor that Haman once carried, now it belonged to Mordecai.
 2. Even the people in high places were fearful of him, so they were very eager to help the Jews, if only, to please Mordecai.

II. But, this story of redemption was not only about one person, for it encompassed a whole nation, all of the Jews, all of God’s people.

- Remember, when the first law was decreed in January?—People of other nations would NOT have wanted to associate themselves with the Jews.
 - Even some of the once close friends of the Jews, would have probably made sure to place a distance between them, so that when the day of destruction came, none of them would be near, and suffer the unfortunate fate of the Jews.
 - So, as the first decree was read on January 13th, I am thinking that the Jews would have become a very isolated community, **no one** from the outside would want to get near them, lest they might get destroyed by the company they kept.
 - Talk about bad company ruining them, that’s what the Jews were to the people, bad company.

But couple of months after the initial law, a most unusual and bizarre thing happened.

- **A new law was written on March 23rd**—completely overturning the old law, giving the Jews the upper hand to destroy the people, who intended to destroy them.
 - Oh, the chaos, the confusion, the excitement and the horror, the new law must have stirred in the hearts of all the people.
- **Since January 13th**—the people who despised the Jews would have probably made their feelings well known, by gleefully announcing loudly and arrogantly, how they were going to get rid of the people they despised so much.
 - And if anyone told them how cruel that was, they would just say, “We are only following the law that our King has decreed for us—it’s the law,” they would say.
- And of course, since January 13th—no Jew would have dared to venture outside of their home, and even inside their homes, they would have probably sat at the dark corner of the house, with their heads between their legs, lamenting, sobbing, aching, hurting, questioning, challenging, arguing, but all, to no avail.
 - So, the community that once thrived with people mingling and enjoying each other’s company, now was divided, some boisterously threatening, and others cowering to become a shadow, if only, they could make themselves invisible.
- **Within a matter of two months and ten days however**, those who were envisioning the absolute satisfaction of getting rid of the people they despised, it was “they”, who now

went into hiding; and those who once hid themselves from the eyes of others, were now walking tall in public, for all to see.

- What an incredible turn of events—the hunters became the hunted; the would be destroyers will become the destroyed; the arrogant will become the cowards; and the lowly will become the exalted.
 1. From January 13th to March 22nd—the enemies of the Jews were happy.
 - They were probably salivating at the thought of completely and mercilessly getting rid of these despised people, the Jews.
 2. But from March 23rd to December 12th—the Jews would walk with their heads held high.
 - It would be the Jews who would now be happy, and the enemies would now feel the misery and the sickening fear of destruction to come.

In many ways, this was very similar to the worst crime humanity ever committed.

- The intention was to destroy the Creator and Author of all creation, but amazingly, it became the greatest news humans beings could ever receive.
 - Men tried to kill their God, but God’s death turned out to be an eternal life-giving fountain, that could save the worst of criminals, that could save the most undeserving of evil people, that truly could save even the forgotten people.
 - The same day that the Devil tried to ruin the Life-giver, became the day where the ruined souls would receive the greatest gift, the key to enter into an abundant eternal life in God’s everlasting kingdom.

Destroy sin

Esth 9:5-6, 16—“The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.... Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king’s provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder.”

- The command and the picture were gruesome—that is, destroy and kill the enemies.
 - So, how many were killed?
 1. From ch. 9:6—we see on 12/13, 500 were killed in Susa.
 2. In 9:7-10—we see the 10 sons of Haman killed and impaled on poles.
 3. In 9:15—we see on 12/14, 300 more were killed in Susa.
 4. In 9:16—we are told that 75,000 were killed throughout the king’s provinces.
 - So, in total, 75,810 were killed in two days, from December 13th and 14th.

Friends, don’t let God’s gentleness blind us from His fierce judgment, for when God intends to destroy His enemies, He means it.

1. **Gen 7:24**—“Only Noah was left, and those with him (his family of 8) in the ark.”
 - This means, every single human being on the face of the earth were killed; the entire population on earth was killed, except for these 8 people and their children.

-
2. **Ex 12:29**—“At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well.”
 3. **Numb 16:49**—“But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah.”
 4. **Numb 25:1, 9**—“While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,... those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.”
 5. **1Cor 10:8-10**—“We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.”
 - Remember, the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).
 - God is not acting ruthlessly unjust; because **this is** what true justice looks like, when the wages of sin needs to be paid.
 - Do you remember the people who marched for justice, did you know, not only the police who acted sinfully, but the people who marched were also guilty before God’s justice, so if God should have poured His justice to all, then every single one of them, both the police and the marchers for justice, should all have been killed, for the wages of sin is death?

Returning to our story, just as Haman would have shown no mercy in killing the Jews, so the Jews were commanded to show no mercy when they came to destroying their enemies.

- When the day of destruction came, the Jews did not hesitate; they attacked and killed all the enemies that intended to kill them.
 - **Deut 19:21**—“Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”
- The question we can ask here is, where’s forgiveness?
 - Are we not called to forgive, as Christ has forgiven us?
 - **Eph 4:32**—“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
- Then, couldn’t we say that the Jews here were not acting like true God’s people, for they certainly did not forgive their enemies, as they were forgiven by their God.
 - So, if we were talking strictly on forgiveness, then it is clear, the Jews did not forgive, even though they were forgiven people.

But, this passage, along with many of the OT passages that speak on destroying the enemies mercilessly, must be interpreted, **NOT** on the basis of forgiveness, **BUT the focus should be on how to approach our sinfulness.**

1. Just like in circumcision—the skin must be cut off from the body, to show us, that our sins are meant to be completely cut off from our lives.
2. Similarly with the water of baptism—the water symbolizes the complete washing and removal of the dirty sins in us—Jesus’ blood washes away all of our sins completely.

- Imagine this—
 1. If our forgiveness was not complete—if it left a few traces of sin, what would happen to us in God’s judgment?
 - None of us would be safe.
 - Those few traces of sin would condemn us to eternal wrath.
 2. Let me give one more application—Mike and Marie, what if your baby is washed from her sin only partially, and not completely?
 - Would that be ok with you?
- So, when God orders His people to completely destroy, and leave no trace of the enemies, God is calling out to His people, to completely destroy sin.
 - **Deut 7:1-2**—“When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them **totally**. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.”
- God says, “destroy them totally,” not a trace to be left behind.
 - Why such fierce judgment?
 - **Deut 12:30**—“And after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.’”
 - Did you see?—God knows if the sin is not completely destroyed, then His people will be ensnared, to want to do the same.

Esther’s repeat petition

Esth 9:13-15—“If it pleases the king,’ Esther answered, ‘give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day’s edict tomorrow also, and let Haman’s ten sons be impaled on poles.’ So the king commanded that this be done. And edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman. The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.”

- When we understand that the killing of the enemies is the killing of our sins, then it is easy to understand, why Esther would ask the King for another day of killing.
 1. It wasn’t because she enjoyed the massacre.
 2. It wasn’t because she hated the people.
 3. It was because **she hated sin**, and sin need to be completely destroyed and removed from our lives, and if that took another day of destruction, then that was what she would want to do.
 - Did you hear?—If one day of killing our sins is not enough, then we must find another day to be sure that we can kill sin completely, destroy completely, eradicate completely.

-
- For many of us, our problem is that we are soft when we need to be firm, and at times, stubbornly strong when we need to be gentle.
 - So, when it comes to dealing with our sins, we can become too soft, too passive, too understanding, too gentle, not obedient enough, when God commands us to completely destroy and hurl it far away, so that it can never return to us.
 - On the other hand, on many occasions, we are not that demanding, not that exacting, when it comes to dealing with our sins, are we?
 - **Matt 5:29-30**—“If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”
 - Isn’t this a frightening Scripture to meditate and obey?
 - Did you know, the point here is not amputation, but to cut away completely anything that leads us to sin?

The frightening part of all this is, that even if we should amputate several body parts because we keep falling into sin, still, would that completely cut away our sinful hearts?

- No it really wouldn’t, which is why, Paul bitterly lamented on how helpless he was.
 - **Rom 7:24**—“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”
- Why did Paul find himself so wretched and miserable and subject to death?
 - **Rom 7:19**—“For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.”
 - Paul says, the natural state of our hearts is—the good we should do, we don’t, and the evil we shouldn’t do, we do; what a hot mess we are, aren’t we?

Jesus’ payment

After Paul lamented of his helpless state, he found his answer.

- **Rom 7:25**—“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
 - How could Christ be the answer to life’s most miserable and helpless state?
- May I remind us again, how unlike us, sinners, Christ truly is.
 1. He was sinless; even though He was tempted in every way just like us, and yet, unlike us, He never surrendered, never submitted, never fell and gave in to sin.
 2. Jesus never committed sexual or lustful sin.
 3. He never got drunk or lost control of His emotion and got angry for the wrong reason and spoke out of anger or hatred or out of malice or ill intent or unjustly.
 4. He never gave in to greed or to coveting or to jealousy or to selfishness or self-centeredness.
 5. Jesus never committed any sin with His words; He never committed any sins with His thoughts or imagination or intention or motivation or emotions and feelings; He never committed any sins with any of His acts or deeds or words.

- Because Jesus lived this perfect, holy, blameless life, He became the sinners' Substitute, and paid the heavy price for our sins, which we never could.

You know, in our world, when a person pays a higher price than what the merchandise is worth, we would consider that person a fool or reckless, especially if he knew, that he was over paying, and still, he did it anyway.

- From our worldly standard, we certainly can call our God, a reckless fool, because He knowingly paid a much, much higher price for what He was purchasing.
 - Under the price tag of this world, the cost of sin had the highest price, actually, even if all the treasures of the world were gathered and used as payment, still, it would not be enough to pay the high price that the sins of the people accumulated.
 - This high un-payable price of sin is what makes our sinfulness so daunting, because we know, we don't have what it takes to pay off our sins.
 - That's why, we feel the power of guilt of our sins; that's why, we condemn ourselves and have such a hard time forgiving ourselves and others; the anger, the doubt, the insecurity, all of these sins we know they deserve a greater condemnation than how we treat it.
- But what makes Jesus' payment for our sins so recklessly foolish is, because of the price He would willingly and knowingly and foolishly pay.
 - You see, He paid the price of INFINITY for a finite price.
 - While it is true that even if all the treasures of this world were gathered and paid for our sins would be insufficient, **the price of infinity that Jesus paid for our sins** would be so much greater, that even if all the sins were piled together, they would be like a penny to the richest person ever.
- Do you understand, when the Infinite God, Christ Jesus, died, to pay the price for our sins, He was paying the payment of infinity for our sins?
 - In other words, Christ's offering for the sins of the people was so abundantly rich, that the price paid could cover all the debt of all of the sins, which is why, even our future sins that we have yet to commit, are included in His payment for our debt.

Our response

I shared this before, but allow me to explain again—the 2 different kind of cards I carry.

1. One card is the Credit Card—and though it allows me to buy whatever I want at the moment, it is very deceiving, because it really didn't pay for my purchases.
 - I actually go into greater debt, whenever I purchase anything with this card—this is such a reflection of our world, upfront, it appears as if we are getting the goodies, but it only deepens our debt.
2. However, I carry another card, my Starbucks Card—and for this card, whenever I use it, I never have to pay for what I just purchased, because this card is already filled with money, and so for all that I purchase, it is truly already paid in full.
 - Now, some of you might think, a Starbucks Card can only hold a few hundred dollars for coffee, whereas the Credit Card has a limit far exceeding that.

- But, **what if** my Starbucks Card could hold trillions of dollars and is accepted at every possible businesses and hospitals—then you know, I can use this card anywhere, and never run out of money, and the best thing is, I will never be in debt, because the money in my card far exceeds what I can possibly use.
- That is the kind of card Jesus has given to us in The Forgiveness Card (God's Word)—it is loaded up so full, trillion of dollars, that no matter how much I use, I cannot possibly outspend God's extravagant generosity, that's how rich His forgiveness is for us in Christ Jesus.
 - Let me say this simply—I cannot out-sin God's extravagant forgiveness.
 - **Rom 5:20**—“... But where sin increased, (what happens to grace?) grace **increased** all the more.”
 - **Rom 5:20**—“... But where (my) sin increased, (God's) grace **increased** all the more (in me).”

Esth 8:15-9:19 The Forgiveness Card (GCC—11/13/22)

- **Esth 4:1**—“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.”
- **Esth 8:15**—“When Mordecai left the king’s presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and purple robe of fine line....”
- **Esth 9:3-4**—“And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.”
- **Esth 9:5-6, 16**—“The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.... Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king’s provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder.”
- **Gen 7:24**—“Only Noah was left, and those with him (his family of 8) in the ark.”
- **Ex 12:29**—“At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well.”
- **Numb 16:49**—“But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah.”
- **Numb 25:1, 9**—“While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,... those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.”
- **1Cor 10:8-10**—“We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.”
- **Deut 19:21**—“Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”
- **Eph 4:32**—“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
- **Deut 7:1-2**—“When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.”
- **Deut 12:30**—“And after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.’”
- **Esth 9:13-15**—“If it pleases the king,’ Esther answered, ‘give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day’s edict tomorrow also, and let Haman’s ten sons be impaled on poles.’ So the king commanded that this be done. And edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman. The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.”

- **Matt 5:29-30**—“If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”
- **Rom 7:24**—“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”
- **Rom 7:19**—“For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.”
- **Rom 7:25**—“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
- **Rom 5:20**—“... But where sin increased, grace **increased** all the more.”
- **Rom 5:20**—“... But where (my) sin increased, (God’s) grace **increased** all the more (in me).”

Responsive Praise

Hymn — When peace like a river attendeth my way (it is well with my soul)

Michael — will you select songs about God’s amazing love (and forgiveness) for us?

Prayer Time (Rep. prayer — Tammy)

1. Prayer — for our families, especially our children
2. Prayer — for our nation leaders — President Joe Biden, Governor Tony Evers, and Mayor Daniel Bukiewicz
3. Prayer — for our worship

Church News

1. Welcome
2. Thanksgiving Sunday is next week (11/20) — our worship will be a joint bilingual worship with LCC, in their sanctuary, @10am.
 - We want to invite our members to pray and encourage to offer two offerings.
 1. A Thanksgiving Offering - to our God in an envelope (please be sure to use our church’s envelope or write GCC, to distinguish from LCC’s offering).
 2. A Thanksgiving Offering - for our First Responders of our city.
 - We will bring our Offerings to the front, during our worship.
3. Sunday Worship for the remainder of 2022
 - 11/20 — Thanksgiving Worship with LCC @10am (followed by lunch)
 - 11/27 — Worship @ 9am (followed by Devotion Time @11am)
 - 12/4 — Worship @ 9am (followed by Congregational Meeting & church clean up)
 - 12/11 — Worship @ 9am (followed by Christmas Fellowship)
 - 12/18 — Worship @ 9am
 - 12/25 — Christmas Worship @ 9am