

Series: Living in Exile; *Sermon:* **Celebration and Honor**
delivered by **Josh Moody**, senior pastor, *on* February 21, 2021

Bible text explored: **Esther 9:20–10:3** (context: Esther 8:1–9:19)

⁹²⁰And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, ²¹obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, ²²as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

²³So the Jews accepted what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. ²⁴For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. ²⁵But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, ²⁷the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, ²⁸that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

²⁹Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. ³⁰Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth, ³¹that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. ³²The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

¹⁰¹King Ahasuerus imposed tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. ²And all the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? ³For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people. [ESV]

Review and application:

1. How was the “grand reversal” for the Jewish exiles solidified with the reverting of the traitor Haman’s property to the crown, and with Mordecai succeeding him as prime minister? (See *Esther 8:1-2*.)

What counter-measure to Haman’s already published decree did the king encourage Queen Esther and Mordecai to take? (See *Esther 8:8* and *11*.)

How was the “grand reversal” completed? (See *Esther 9:1*.)

2. How had the casting of lots determined the date-setting for the decreed slaughter of the Jews? (See *Esther 3:6-7*.)
Why was this a futile exercise? (See *Proverbs 16:33*.)
So why was the festival established by Esther and Mordecai (*Esther 9:24* and 26, above) called Purim?
3. What factors—medical, economic, political, *etc.*—have made current months seem more like an occasion for lamenting than for celebration?
But why should rejoicing be a hallmark of real Christianity?
4. Why (*9:21, 27, and 31*) was celebrating Purim made an annual obligation?
Why should all believers, like C.S. Lewis, be “surprised by joy”?
(See *Philippians 4:4*.)
5. What traits (*10:2-3*) made Mordecai popular?
How is honoring those who deserve honor an antidote to a celebrity culture?
6. Do you agree that conspiracy theories are actually too small?
(See *Psalms 2:1-4, 12*.)
So what should be our stance in light of the empty tomb?
(See *Matthew 10:26-27*.)