

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 11 October 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

“For Such a Time as This”

Esther 4:1-14

This past summer, as I was speaking with my good friend, Pastor Gene McKinley, he told me a story that a mutual friend of ours, Dr. S.M. Davis, had related to him during his visit to Ireland a few years ago. Dr. Davis told Bro. McKinley about a time when he preached at a Russian Baptist church in the state of California. During that visit, he was struck by that church’s zeal for the Lord. Many of the believers in this church emigrated to America after the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 90’s; and they have enjoyed relative freedom for several decades now. I say “relative” freedom, because religious freedom in the state of California is now disappearing quickly, as the state is sinking into cultural and political Marxism. Nonetheless, they’ve enjoyed a much freer and more prosperous life than they had before.

Now, when believers who had grown up in an oppressed country migrate to a free country, and are suddenly surrounded by freedom and material prosperity, it is easy for them to lose their “first love” for the Lord, little by little. However, such is not the case with this Russian church. Their zeal for the Lord has *not* cooled down. They still maintain the level of vigilance that they kept when they were undergoing severe persecution. One thing that particularly struck Brother Davis is the fact that in this church, *every man* that is a church member, if he be a teenager or older, preaches in rotation. Every Wednesday evening, two men preach, for 15 to 30 minutes per person; and then, every man in the church *critiques* those two brothers’ preaching one by one, while the whole congregation listens. But that’s not all. The pastor himself then preaches; and then there is the usual time of fellowship. All in all, the service easily goes on for three hours. For them, this is normal. This is what they did in the days of the old Soviet Union—even after a long day’s work. Russian believers also had to figure in lots of extra time before a church service even began, so that they could trickle in secretly, one by one, to avoid detection by spies.

Why does this Russian church pour so much effort into training all their men to preach? Because in the old Soviet days, a church’s pastor could be arrested and hauled off to a prison camp at any time; and other men had to be prepared to lead the congregation. To this day, they still train their men to preach, because they realise how quickly their freedom could be taken away from them. Brethren, would *we* be willing to do this? Do we consider it important to come out on Sunday evening once per month to hear *our* men preach (let alone on the other three Sunday evenings of the month, to hear the regular teaching from God’s Word)? Are we preparing ourselves in mind, heart, and spirit, for a time when we might *not* have a full-time pastor to stand behind a pulpit, and preach God’s Word? Are we like the men of Issachar in Old Testament times, who **“*had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do*”**?

This morning, we will be learning about a man who understood the times in which he lived: and he was prepared not only to do what *he* should do, but to motivate *others* to do what they ought to do. If you’ve been with us in the past seven weeks, you know who this man was: it was **Mordecai**. Today we will see how *his* faith provoked Esther to exercise faith. The title of this message is **“For Such a Time As This.”**

Read Esther 4:1-14.

I. Mordecai's anguish over the edict (vv. 1-4)

For about ninety years, Mordecai's people had been in captivity—first to the Babylonians, and then to the Persians. Through those long decades, the Jews had learned how to “get on” and prosper in foreign lands, even though many of their Gentile neighbours hated and envied them. Mordecai himself had grown up in captivity from infancy, and had risen to a place of relative prosperity as a lower-level official in the king's gate. During his long life, he had seen times of joy and deliverance; and he had also seen much trouble. However, *nothing* (not even the destruction of Jerusalem, when he was about eleven years old) could compare to the trouble that was now about to befall his people. When Mordecai heard the news that all Jews everywhere were to be destroyed on the 13th of Adar, he was filled with deep grief. He put ashes on his head, and wore rough sackcloth, and went wailing around the city. He wasn't the only one, either. All over the empire, Jews were doing the same thing.

Brethren, there *is* a time for weeping and mourning for the believer. For the believer, life isn't all fun, cotton candy, and rainbows. God doesn't promise you non-stop happiness after you get saved: in fact, He promises that ***“all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*** God gives believers true *peace, hope, comfort, and soundness of mind*, even in the midst of deep sorrow. However, this doesn't change that fact that there *are* “seasons of distress and grief.” We who know Christ need to be prepared for those long, hard seasons, by walking *just as closely* with the Lord during the good times as we do during the bad times.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-4.

Read Psalm 30:1-5.

Folks, the question is not whether we will go through times of grief. Seasons of grief *will* come to all. However, the way a *lost* person grieves, and the way a *Christian* grieves, are two radically different things. (At least, they're *supposed* to be radically different.) That is why Paul said that Christians should ***“sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”*** The world has no true hope; and the way they grieve *reveals* their lack of hope.

How *does* the world deal with grief? **One of the ways the world deals with grief is (ironically) by *partying*.** Instead of dealing with their grief, they *run* from it. They try to drown out their sorrows by drinking, doing drugs, and partying—or simply by keeping the

good times and holidays rolling. This is what Paul was talking about in **1 Corinthians 15:32** when he wrote, ***“If after the manner of men [in other words, “if, like ordinary, worldly men”] I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.”*** What Paul is saying is, “Remember when I was in the city of Ephesus, and that angry mob, like a pack of wild dogs, nearly tore me limb from limb, because of my faith in Christ? Why do you think I went through all that? If I were a lost man, having only the vain, empty ‘hope’ that lost people have, do you really think I would have been willing to go through that suffering? Why would I have been willing to lay down my life, if I *didn’t* have the sure hope of one day being resurrected from the dead, and of spending eternity with the Lord in Heaven? What would it profit me? If I were a lost man, with no hope for eternity, then I would do what the *world* does. I would say, ‘Let’s eat and drink, for tomorrow we die! Party it up, lads, because we have nothing else to live for!’”

This is exactly the kind of vain hope that most of the people of Jerusalem had in 586 B.C., when the army of the Babylonians was besieging the city. Instead of mourning, fasting, grieving over their sin, *repenting* of their sins, and turning to God for help, they instead did what the heathen do: they partied it up! They did whatever they could do to fortify the walls of Jerusalem; but after that, they feasted and revelled, as though the armies of Babylon were *not* stationed just outside their walls. They refused to deal with reality!

Read Isaiah 22:9-14.

How else does the world deal with grief? **Many try to deal with grief by “coping.”** They try to structure and rebuild their lives by their own efforts. Many use supposedly scientific techniques to deal with stress (such as Eastern meditation, or Yoga). (In reality, these practices are nothing but invocations to demons, to come in and influence your life.) Many people try to process their emotions—sometimes by redirecting their anger into something “constructive,” and sometimes by outright *venting* their anger. Nowadays they even have “scream therapy”—a “therapy” in which you literally scream out loud, to vent your anger. (By the way, this is just the opposite of what the Lord says to do. Part of the ***“fruit of the Spirit”*** is ***“love,”*** *not* anger—and ***“temperance,”*** *not* “lack of self-control.”) Many people try to shield themselves from “threatening” and “toxic” people (in other words, anyone who might disagree with them), by finding a “safe space”—a kind of “virtual reality” world (whether in physical space, or in digital space). They seek for a little imaginary world in which no one can confront them about anything (such as their sin), and where they can express themselves in whatever way their heart desires. In essence, it is yet another way of “escape” from reality.

Now, there is yet another way that the world deals with grief. Many people deal with grief by **facing it head-on, pulling themselves up** “by the bootstraps,” and **living for some honourable purpose**. They say, “You’ve got to believe in *yourself*”; and so, they choose a reason for living that suits them. Some decide to conquer their grief by setting out to “make

the world a better place.” Their hope is that they will have died accomplishing something for their family, or for humanity. However, any hope *other than* hope in the crucified, risen Jesus—the Jesus who died for our sins, and rose again—is a *false* hope, which leads to eternal destruction. There is no other God than the God of the Bible, and no other Jesus than the Jesus who has revealed Himself to us through His prophets and Apostles, in the Scriptures.

Now, make no mistake about it: a false hope *can* be powerfully motivating. People who are building their lives on a false hope can *appear* to have their lives together, and *sincerely believe* that they have their lives together. They might even be doing something noble, such as improving or saving people’s lives (whether by serving as a doctor, nurse, firefighter, police officer, first responder, teacher, charity worker, or some other profession that helps others). Yet, if a person *have not Christ* (the *true* Christ), that person is building his life on sinking sand. Jesus said that everyone who does not build his life on *Him* is like a foolish man who **“built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”**

You see, these three ways of dealing with grief (partying, coping, and “believing in yourself”), have one thing in common: they are all built on *self*, instead of on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is completely absent from these purposes for living; and any “hope” that is *not* built on Christ is a false one. My friends, Jesus *is* our “Safe Space.” Jesus is the Hiding Place. Jesus is the “Cleft in the Rock.” Jesus is the Rock in whom you can hide. Jesus is the Anchor. Jesus is the sure Foundation on which you must build your life. Jesus is the Shelter in the time of storm. Jesus our Refuge, and High Tower. Jesus doesn’t just help you to survive. He isn’t just a coach to cheer you on, and help you get through the rough spots in life. Jesus *is* Life! He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the Joy of living. He doesn’t just help you “cope”: He gives you life more abundantly! He is the living Hope for all who all who place their faith in Him. If you have not placed your faith in Christ, what are you waiting for? He died for your sins, and rose again from the grave, conquering death for you, so that you might be saved. Run to Him, and believe on Him! There is no hope outside of Him.

Read Ephesians 2:11-13.

We’ve seen how the world grieves. How, then, should the *believer* grieve? Well, as we’ve already seen, there *is* a time for mourning and sadness, when a hard time or calamity hits. God created us with emotions; and it’s not wrong to cry. In fact, in a limited way, crying can help us to heal. However, Christians don’t have to despair, as the world does. As Paul said, **“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”** For the believer, mourning can be turned into joy. There *is* a condition, though, for a

believer's mourning to be turned into joy. To have joy, you must mourn *for the right reason*. Weeping over our *circumstances* is natural, and to be expected; but what we really need is to weep over our *sin*. God wants to use trials in our lives to purify us, and to draw us *to Himself*, in humility and repentance. In **James 4**, James wrote, ***“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”***

In **Daniel 10**, we are told about a time, in the third year of King Cyrus, when the prophet Daniel mourned and fasted for three whole weeks. Why was he mourning? The Bible doesn't tell us specifically: but it was, most likely, because he had just gotten the news that King Artaxerxes of Persia had ordered the rebuilding of the Temple to cease. When Daniel heard this, it was a calamity to him; and he knew what he ought to do. It was time to pray and fast: and you may be sure that as he prayed and fasted, he was confessing the *sins* of himself and his people. That is what he had done two years earlier, right before the Jews were given permission to return to the land. As Daniel thought about the captivity of his people, he cried out to God and said, ***“We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.”*** Joy came to Daniel later; but *mourning over sin* had to come first. Jeremiah realised this truth, too.

Read Lamentations 3:1-4, 14-24.

In the book of **Lamentations**, Jeremiah was weeping bitterly because of the destruction of Judah. His country had been decimated by King Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed; and the people of Judah had been uprooted from the land, and scattered into other countries. To all outward appearance, it *seemed* that God had forsaken Israel forever. It *seemed* that all hope for Israel was lost. As for Jeremiah's personal life, he was reviled and hated by his own people. For decades he had cried out to them to repent and turn to God; but they only mocked and persecuted him. Even now, the people refused to acknowledge that *God* had brought this calamity upon them as the punishment for their sin; and they still refused to listen to any of the messages that God gave to Jeremiah.

Yet, as Jeremiah thought about his ***“affliction,” “misery,” “wormwood,”*** and ***“gall,”*** he suddenly made a surprising statement. He said, ***“Therefore have I hope.”*** Now, this doesn't seem to make sense, does it? Jeremiah was filled with affliction, misery, wormwood, and gall; therefore, he had...“hope”? How could this be? Here's how. You see, as Jeremiah thought about his affliction, and as he saw how hopeless his circumstances were, he suddenly remembered that his hope lay not in his circumstances, but rather in the ***“LORD's mercies.”*** When he thought on the LORD, he realised that if it *hadn't* been for the Lord's mercy, Israel would have been *completely* destroyed. He remembered God's promise that even though

Israel would be scattered because of their sin, He would *preserve* them, and would bring them back to their land again in the future. Most importantly, Jeremiah undoubtedly remembered God's promise that He would one day provide a *Redeemer* to take away our sins. As he thought on God's promises, his hope was revived; and through his tears he said, "***The LORD's mercies...are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness...I will hope in him.***" We who know Christ as Saviour have the same unconquerable hope that Jeremiah had, because we have the same merciful God that Jeremiah had. We have a hope that cannot be destroyed, even when everything around us is crumbling. We have a *living* hope, because our hope is in a *living Saviour*.

Jeremiah mourned over the calamities of Israel, *and* over Israel's sins; and so did Daniel. You may be sure that *Mordecai* was weeping over Israel's sins, too—and for his own. You may be sure that Mordecai was examining his own heart. He had done right in not bowing to Haman; but was there some sin in his heart (pride, for example), for which God was chastising him? Could it even be that some hidden sin in his heart had occasioned the suffering of his entire nation? (Our sins *do* bring consequences on others!) Surely this thought must have crossed his mind. Any true believer *should* be in the habit of praying, "***Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.***" Oftentimes we *casually assume* that everything is right in our relationship with God, when we are actually blindsided by sin in our hearts. There *must* be repentance before there can be joy.

However, after that season of mourning—*after* we have had that needed time of grieving over a loss, *and* after we have searched our hearts, and have repented of sin—we can then get up in the strength of the Lord. In **Nehemiah 8**, we are told that after the Law of God had been read to the people of Judah, they wept, because they saw how far short they had fallen of God's holy standard. However, after they had mourned properly, the Levites encouraged the people not to grieve any longer, but to break their fast, and to send portions to those in need, because, they said, "***the joy of the LORD is your strength.***" There *is* a time for mourning and confession; but after we have drawn nigh to God, and joy is restored, it is time for *action*.

II. Mordecai's advice to Esther (vv. 5-14)

(Read Esther 4:5-14.) As Mordecai went around the city wailing and mourning, the news began to get around. Mordecai was known in the palace, because he was an official in the king's gate; and the news got to Esther of what her uncle was doing. Now, apparently, Esther hadn't heard anything about Haman's decree to destroy the Jews. This shows that she didn't

“get out” much! The palace was her world; and in that world, she didn’t have normal lines of communication. In order to talk with her own husband, she had to be summoned by him, through a chamberlain; and in order to communicate with Mordecai, she had to communicate through a chamberlain. When Esther heard about her uncle’s mourning, she had no idea *why* he was mourning: all she knew was that it was not proper for an official to go near the palace with ashes on his head. And so, she sent a new set of clothing for him to wear. However, he wouldn’t take it. After a couple more messages back and forth, she finally got the news: Haman had sold all the Jews in Persia (which was, essentially, all the Jews in the world) to be murdered! But that’s not all Mordecai said. Mordecai had a command for Esther. He commanded her to go to the king, and to make a petition to spare their people. (If Hatach still didn’t know that Esther was a Jew, he obviously knew now.) Now, can you imagine Esther’s shock? First, she was shocked to hear about the decree to butcher her people. Secondly, she was shocked to hear that her uncle was commanding *her* to go into the presence of the king. Going to the king without being summoned was like signing your own death warrant.

Now, Mordecai knew very well that his cousin’s life would be greatly endangered if she walked into the king’s throne room without being summoned. Esther reminded him of this fact: but he already knew it. He knew that this could mean instant death for her. However, Mordecai also knew that the bizarre circumstances that had led to Esther’s becoming the queen of Persia could not possibly have been coincidental. He was absolutely certain that *God* had made Esther the queen; and since *God* had put her in that position, He surely had put her there for *this exact time and situation*. He now realised that this must be the *main mission* of Esther’s life—the one big task that God had raised her up to do!

By the way, it’s important to remember that it had been **five years** since Esther had become queen. During those five long years, it probably had seemed to Mordecai that Esther had been wrongly stolen away from him, and put into a pagan king’s harem for no good reason. I’m sure that he had prayed to God countless times and asked, “Why, Lord?” But now, it was obvious. God had put her there *“for such a time as this.”*

That’s the way it is in *our* lives, too, brethren. God puts us into particular situations, and at specific times, so that He can use us for a special purpose. I can testify that God has done this in my life more times than I can remember. But here’s what we need to realise: **God doesn’t have to use us.** He can use whomever He wants, whenever He wants, to accomplish His will. Mordecai was spot-on right. In essence, he told Esther, “Look, Esther, if you are afraid to open your mouth, God can raise up deliverance from some other quarter. *You* may miss your opportunity to save your people, if you choose to disobey God; and your disobedience may cost you *your own* life. But God *will* use someone else, if *you* refuse to be used. God *will* preserve His people, as He has promised. The only question is, ‘*Will you* let God use you?’”

Get this into your heart, Christian: **God doesn't need you.** He's God. He can accomplish His will however He pleases. He does, however, choose to use people who are *willing to be used*. Esther chose to be a willing vessel, even if it should cost her life; and because she humbly submitted herself to God, to be used in any way He wished, God used her to save a nation.

Now, what made Mordecai so sure that Esther should go in *immediately* to the king, without being summoned? Wouldn't it have been wise to wait a little longer, and to pray that God would put it in *Ahasuerus'* mind to summon her? After all, they still had time on their side. It would be nearly a year before the decree would be carried out. Why couldn't Esther wait a little longer, and see if the king *would* call for her? Wasn't Mordecai being presumptuous and reckless? To us, it might seem so. Yet, when we look at how things actually turned out, it is clear that if Esther *had* waited, she would have missed the narrow window of opportunity that God was opening to her. The strange and uncanny events that prepared Ahasuerus to see Haman for the wicked man that he really was, and to have mercy on the Jews, happened very rapidly, within a matter of a few days. Everything had to fall into place right on time, according to God's plan. The time to appeal to the king was *now*, just as Mordecai said. Yet, how did Mordecai know this? **He knew it because God gave him the wisdom to know it.**

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.

Brethren, we have been called to live not by sight (as we did before we were saved), but by *faith*. God has given believers the *mind of Christ*, by which we can discern His will, and make wise and godly judgments. True believers are led by the Spirit of God; and when the Spirit speaks, we must obey, even if it may cost us our *lives*. However, God doesn't force you to obey His will. If you are saved, you *have* the mind of Christ, by which you can know His will; but will you *yield* to His will? When His Spirit speaks to you through the Word (and through your silent time of prayer), will you heed His call? Will you yield your life, and *lay down* your life, for Christ's sake? Are you willing to be used at ***"such a time as this"***?

Conclusion: In closing, I would like to tell you a story of a Scottish pastor who lived in the 1800's. His name was **George Matheson**. As a child, he had impaired vision, which grew steadily worse through his teen years. God called him to the ministry, and he went on to graduate with high honours from seminary; but all the while, he was drawing closer and closer to complete blindness. Eventually, he did go completely blind; and this was a cause of great mental anguish for him. However, the thing that *really* caused him grief was the fact that the woman to whom he had been engaged to marry rejected him, and broke the engagement. She had told him, "I do not wish to be the wife of a blind preacher."¹ Ouch!

Years later, when Matheson was 40 years old, those cutting words came back to him like a dagger, while he was at his sister's house to celebrate her wedding. As he sat there that evening, he was filled with

anguish; but then, some beautiful, comforting words came to his mind, from out of nowhere. He had never had any natural gift of rhyme or rhythm; yet, it was as though an inner voice were speaking. Within five minutes, all the words came to his mind, without his labouring to construct them. He didn't even have to retouch them, or correct them. It just came to him complete.² The words went like this: “**O love** that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. **O Light** that follow'st all my way, I yield my flick'ring torch to thee; my heart restores its borrowed ray, that in thy sunshine's blaze its day may brighter, fairer be. **O Joy** that seekest me thru' pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow thru' the rain, and feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be. **O cross** that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee; I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be.”

Have *you* laid down your life to Christ? Have you run to Christ for salvation? If not, surrender your heart to Him today! Believe that what He did on that cross is all you need to be saved; repent of your sin; and *personally surrender* your life to Him. If you are saved already, but are not walking closely with the Lord, draw near to Him today! Mourn over your sin, and repent of anything that is between you and the Lord; and then, with the joy of sins forgiven, arise, spring into action, and do the will of God!

¹ Kenneth Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990), p. 49.

² *Ibid.*