The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 22 November 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.

A Time to Speak

Esther 7:1-6

This past week, I watched a short video clip in which a pastor's wife said these words about evangelism: "As a pastor's wife, one of my hottest takes is that evangelism is the *least* important work of the church, by a long shot. For those of you who don't have religious trauma, evangelism basically means spreading the Gospel. It means converting people to Christianity, telling people about Jesus. It is the mission that most churches have decided is their core purpose. And I'm not here to debate theology, or how you get into Heaven: we can do that in other videos, my friend. What I am saying, though, is there is far more important work to be done on this earth right now than telling people about Jesus. Full stop! My husband is a pastor; and one of the things that he has done, that I am so proud of him for, is he created a free fridge and pantry at his church. It's outside, open 24/7. It's mutual aid—take a food, leave a food, no questions asked, no judgment. So, if I make a chili, and I have a bunch of extra chili, I'm going to drop a Tupperware of chili at the fridge for someone who might want that…That is the work of the church. Feeding people, taking care of people…Church is a place to take care of our neighbours, full stop. Not a place obsessed with conversion. That's the work Jesus called us to do."[1]

To any true child of God, it is evident that this woman doesn't know the Lord. She has never repented of her sin, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. She clearly does not believe in the reality of Heaven and Hell, or in the absolute necessity of being saved from sin through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. If she did believe these things, she couldn't utter these blasphemous words. If she were a Spirit-indwelt believer, she couldn't possibly think that filling people's stomachs is more important than warning them of God's judgment, and telling them of God's gift of salvation. To deny that a church's number-one mission is to spread the Gospel, so that sinners can be saved from sin, death, and Hell, is to deny Christ. Yet, even though we know this to be true, how often *do* we speak the Gospel message to the lost? There is a time to sit down and eat a meal with lost people, or to buy food for the hungry, or to help those in need, or just be their friend (and we *do* do all these things); but there is also a time to speak!

Now, what does this have to do with the book of **Esther**? Well, over the past several weeks, we've been looking at the record in **Esther 5 and 6**; and we've seen that two times already, King Ahasuerus had offered to give Esther anything she requested. However, it wasn't the right time for Esther to state her request—*yet.* The first time, Esther requested that Ahasuerus and Haman join her for a banquet that she had prepared for them. Then, at the banquet, when Ahasuerus asked her, for the second time, what her request was, she requested that they join her for yet another banquet, which she would host the next day. I believe that on both these occasions, it truly was *not* the right time for Esther to speak. God was preparing to make His last few moves on the "chess board." The reading of the chronicles during the night, and the discovery of Mordecai's good deed, was one move; and the honouring of Mordecai the next morning was His next move. Everything was in place; and now, it was time for Esther to open her mouth and *speak* the message that would save millions of lives. The title of this message is ***A Time to Speak.***

Read Esther 7:1-6.

I. The timeliness of Esther's answer (vv. 1-2)

In our message from **Esther chapter 4** a few weeks ago**,** we saw that there is a time to mourn. There are seasons in our lives when it is appropriate, and *necessary*, to mourn—and especially to mourn over our sin, so that we can *repent* of our sin, and turn our hearts to the Lord. Well, just as there is a time to mourn, there is also a time to *speak.* Let's look at the **Ecclesiastes** passage that we looked at a few weeks ago; and then, we will look at a passage in **Proverbs**.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

Read Proverbs 25:11-12.

In the passage we've just read, Solomon is describing the beauty of words that have been ***"fitly spoken."*** That word ***"fitly"*** is translated from the Hebrew phrase *al-aphnau,* which literally means "at its seasons." A ***"fitly spoken"*** word is a word that is spoken in the right season, and at just the right time. It is a word that is spoken wisely, with the right tone of voice, and with the right attitude. Such a word, Solomon says, is like ***"apples of gold in pictures of silver."*** Apparently, Solomon was describing some kind of silver network basket, with golden apples in it. This is what wisely-spoken words are like to the ear of the hearer—even when they are words of rebuke. Fitly-spoken words are beautiful words.

Christian, take heed to this! Your relationships with family, friends, and everyone around you, could be greatly improved if you will only put this truth to practice. Husbands and wives, take heed to this! This is a truth that could strengthen your marriage, if you will put it to practice. You don't *have* to have all that friction with everyone around you. God commands every believer, as much as possible, to ***"live peaceably with all men"***; and God wouldn't command you to do something that is impossible to do. You may not consider yourself to be good with words; but you don't *have* to be a polished orator, or have the "gift of gab," to be a good communicator. In fact, God says that using *few* words, and speaking them those few words *wisely,* and in a timely manner, is good communication. **Proverbs 10:19** says, ***"In the multitude of words there wanteth*** [lacketh] ***not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise."*** In other words, the more you flap your jaws, the more likely you are to speak something foolish, that will cause trouble in your relationships. **James 1:19** says, ***"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."***

If you think that speaking wisely is a gift that only certain privileged people are born with, you are wrong. Many people are born with the "gift of gab." God has obviously wired us with different personalities. However, *wisdom* to speak godly words comes only from God. God gives wisdom *only* to those who seek it, and ask for it. **James 1:5** says, ***"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, which giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it***

<u>shall</u> be given him." **Proverbs 2:6** says, ***"The LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."*** If you desire wisdom as to how to communicate wisely with your loved ones and friends, then read God's Word every day, and ask God to show you, from his Word, how *you* can communicate wisely!

By the way, in **verse 12**, Solomon went on to describe not only a wise communicator, but a wise *hearer.* **(Read Proverbs 25:12 again.)** What makes a wise communicator "wise"? A wise communicator is wise because he knows how to speak in a prudent, godly way; and by the same token, a wise *hearer* is wise because he knows how to *listen and obey* what he has heard. When you put a wise reprover and a wise listener together, you have a beautiful thing. You have real communication. The fact is that *all* of us need to be wise communicators *and* wise hearers. Abraham is a perfect example. The LORD said of Abraham, ***"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD."*** Abraham listened to God closely; and he communicated the ways of the LORD to his family. Not only did he teach God's ways to his son Isaac, but he taught him how to be an obedient *listener.* Abraham had his son's *heart*; and he taught him how to *listen* with his whole heart. In fact, Isaac was such a good listener, that on that day on Mount Moriah, when Isaac willingly got up on the altar, God gave him the privilege of being a prophetic picture of Christ Himself. In **Psalm 40,** the Son of God, speaking prophetically through the pen of King David, described the attitude that He would have one day in the future when He would come down to earth to take on human flesh. He said, ***"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine <u>ears</u> hast thou opened….Then said I, Lo, I come…I delight to do thy will, O my God."*** Christ *listened* intently to His Father in all things; and so should we!

Now, Ahasuerus wasn't exactly the "poster boy" for listening to people. We're talking about the man who banished Queen Vashti because she refused to let a room full of drunken men ogle her. Ahasuerus was known for making rash decisions, in the heat of anger. Yet, even *he* listened to Esther when she appealed to him. Why did this pagan man, who didn't know the Lord, and who was known for his rash, angry reactions, listen to Esther? Was it because she was beautiful? No! *Vashti* was beautiful; but Ahasuerus didn't listen to her. The reason he listened to Esther is that she spoke with godly wisdom; and her words were spoken ***"fitly."*** She had bathed her meeting with the king with prayer and fasting for three days before she even attempted it; and then, she showed kindness to Ahasuerus, and even to her enemy Haman, by feeding them on two occasions. Then, during the dinner, you may be sure that she was praying intently for God to show her when to speak the thing that she *really* needed to speak. The time that Esther spent with Ahasuerus during those two banquets was vital in order to prepare Ahasuerus' heart to listen to her request. However, when the time was right, Esther *had* to speak. She *had* to open her mouth. Millions of lives were depending on her speaking.

So it is for us today. As Christians living in this church age, *we,* too, must speak: and the message that we must speak is the Gospel. There is, of course, a time to "break the ice," and build a friendship with someone, and go out with him for coffee, and help him with practical needs, should he have any needs; but there *must* come a time when you open your mouth, and speak the Gospel. How long should it be before you start sharing Gospel? For some people,

the time may be immediately (especially if you know that you probably will never see that person again). For others, it may require a little more time, as the Spirit leads you. For example, we are told, in **Acts 28,** about the time when the ship that was carrying Paul to Rome for trial was shipwrecked off the coast of Malta; and all 276 souls onboard that ship were miraculously saved from the storm. By this time, Paul was an old man; yet, as soon as everyone was on shore, what did Paul do? He helped to get a fire started, so that the prisoners and sailors could find refuge from the storm. He also met with the father of Publius, the chief man on the island, prayed over him, and healed him of his dysentery; and he healed other people on the island, as well. Paul first showed the love of Christ by helping people physically in any way that he could—whether by helping with a task that any ordinary person could do (such as starting a fire), or by using his apostolic power to heal people. Now, the Bible doesn't tell us much about what was *said* at Malta; but knowing what we know about Paul, we may be sure that it wasn't long before he opened his mouth and told people about Jesus and salvation. The fact that Paul prayed over Publius's father implies that he had already begun to talk about the Lord! Just as Esther knew that death would come to her people if she didn't open her mouth and speak, so Paul knew that *eternal* death would come to multitudes of people if *he* didn't open his mouth and speak the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do *you* have a grasp on this truth, Christian? Like Paul, do *you* have the attitude that ***"necessity is laid upon me"***—that ***"<u>woe</u> is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"***? Brethren, there *is* a right time to speak! Let the Lord give you a mouth, and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to gainsay, nor resist.

II. The humility of Esther's answer (vv. 3-4)

(Read Esther 7:3-4.) In this series of messages on **Esther,** we've focused a lot on *Haman's* guilt in trying to destroy God's covenant people, Israel. However, there is something that we mustn't forget: *Ahasuerus* was guilty, too! The edict to destroy all the Jews had been written in *Ahasuerus's* name, not Haman's. Yes, Haman *was* one who had written this law. This law *was* his brainchild. And yes, Haman *had* deceived Ahasuerus into believing that this "certain people" in his kingdom were dangerous criminals, who posed a threat to him. However, this doesn't change the fact that Ahasuerus was ultimately responsible. He was the one who had given Haman his signet ring, and had given him full authority to draft and seal this law in his name. Ahasuerus hadn't done any investigation. He hadn't asked Haman any probing questions as to *what,* exactly, these rebellious people had done to deserve to be obliterated from the face of the earth. He hadn't even asked for the *name* of this "certain people." He had simply let Haman sign this murderous decree in his name, with no questions asked.

Now, think about that. Could Esther have been angry at her husband for allowing this death sentence on herself, her family, and her nation? Yes, she could have! Esther *could* have allowed bitterness to arise in her heart: and even if she didn't show any bitterness during the banquet, her bitterness would have shown itself eventually. The Bible says, ***"Curse not the king, no not in thy thought…for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."*** Bitterness is a difficult thing to hide. Yet, do you detect even the

slightest trace of bitterness in Esther's tone as she addressed the king? Do you detect even the slightest hint that *Ahasuerus* was responsible for this travesty? No, you don't. She laid no blame on Ahasuerus (even though he *was* to blame). Once Ahasuerus realised which law Esther was referring to, he himself would realise that *he* was ultimately responsible for this travesty; yet, Esther didn't point out or highlight his guilt in any way. Do you hear *distress* in Esther's tone? Yes. But do you hear *bitterness* in her tone? No. What you hear, instead, is a quiet and humble spirit. Esther wasn't just *acting* humble: she *was* actually humble; and her *soft answer* was the evidence of her humility.

Read Proverbs 15:1.

When dealing with people, there are times when we need to use a firm voice—such as when parents are dealing with disobedient children. There are also times, when someone in authority is confronting sin, when harder words need to be used. (Christ and the Apostles often used hard words when confronting rebellion and hypocrisy.) However, Christians' words should always be seasoned with grace. If you are confronting someone about something that legitimately needs to be confronted, season your confrontation with a calm and soft voice, and do not say things that are exaggerations or half-truths (such as "you *always* do this thing"). This will only engender more anger in that person. Should someone be angry at you, do not return that person's angry words with angry or cutting words. Should the other person be clearly in the wrong, respond with a meek and humble spirit. It's amazing how quickly a person's anger can be deflated when you respond with humility, and with a soft, graceful answer. A humble answer will naturally be a "soft" answer. (Not *timid*, but a *soft*.)

Now, perhaps you're thinking, "This is some good life application, Pastor: but how do we know that Esther truly had humility? After all, she was speaking to an absolute despot—a man who could put her to death if she even looked at him the wrong way. She *didn't dare* lay any blame at the king's door; and she didn't dare show any bitterness on her face. She *had* to mask her feelings for her own life's sake, and for her people's sake." This is true, of course. However, you mustn't forget that Esther had spent three days humbling herself before the Lord in prayer and fasting. There is no question that she had been examining her own heart before daring to approach the king. Secondly, if she had *not* had a spirit of true humility, *something* bitter in her words, or in her tone, might have spilled out eventually—even if her bitterness were deferred toward someone else. Yet, Scripture gives us no indication that Esther ever showed such bitterness. For comparison, let's look at Jesus' parable about forgiveness.

Read Matthew 18:21-35.

In this parable, the man with the unpayable debt represents a sinner who is saved by the grace of Jesus. All this man's debt was forgiven, because he pleaded with his lord for mercy; and he didn't even have to repay it. Likewise, Christ can declare sinners "not guilty," because He has

paid our fine *for* us: and anyone who asks Him for forgiveness of sins will receive it in full. However, we also see, in this parable, that this same man failed to forgive a fellow servant of a much smaller debt; and when his lord heard of it, he delivered him to the "tormentors" until he would pay ***"all that was due unto him."*** This doesn't represent a saved person's *losing* his salvation because he got angry at someone; but it does represent a Christian's being tormented by guilt until he pays what he owes. And what does the Christian owe? Is it the old sin debt? No! (That debt has been paid in full by Christ Himself, on the cross.) What we *do* owe, however, is to ***"love one another."*** *This* is the message of the parable.

With this thought in mind, though, I would like to draw a secondary application from this parable. Look again at this servant's reaction to his fellow servant. Was he really angry at this servant who owed him money? Of course. However, he hadn't acted that way toward this servant earlier in the day. What had suddenly gotten him so riled up, that he lashed out so fiercely at this man? Evidently, the humiliation of everything he had just been through. The exposure of his sloppy bookkeeping, and financial failure, in front of the whole court; his near-brush with life-imprisonment; and his having to humble himself in front of everyone—all this had made him angry. He didn't show his anger to his lord's face, of course, because he was begging for mercy; but his anger *did* show up later, when he lashed out at this poor soul who owed him a little money. So it *could* have been with Esther—if she had not let the Lord control her feelings. She *could* have let frustration and bitterness spill out toward *someone*; and the king would have heard of it. But she didn't—because she had no bitterness.

You see, there is a direct connection between a humble spirit and a forgiving spirit; and likewise, there is a direct connection between a proud spirit and an angry spirit. The connection is that when you're angry and bitter, you're thinking that "I *deserve* to be treated in a certain way." This thinking is just the opposite of humility. Now, perhaps you're thinking, "But, Pastor, don't we *deserve* to be treated right?" Yes, we do (in a sense): but consider this. Think of Christ Himself. No one was ever more mistreated than the Son of God was mistreated. He didn't deserve *anything* that He suffered in His arrest, trial, or crucifixion: yet, as a Man, He humbled Himself, and did not vehemently assert His rights as the sinless Son of God. Similarly, Esther didn't assert her own rights, or the rights of her people: instead, she asked for mercy. She was even willing to be made a *slave,* if the king would be so gracious as to save her people's lives. She said, ***"If we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage."*** In other words, "If we had been sold into slavery, I still wouldn't have bothered you about it, O king (although your kingdom would have suffered a huge loss of revenue from all the taxes that *wouldn't* be coming in anymore from the Jews who had lost their prosperous businesses)." That's literally what she was saying! Everything that came out of her mouth was very wise, because it was put in her heart by the Spirit of God; and it sprang from a heart of true humility.

You know, it's easy for us to assert our rights, isn't it? I was reminded of this fact just this past week. I had been on the phone for four hours, waiting to speak to an agent at my bank; and all that time I had to listen to some mind-numbing rock music, which I utterly despise. Finally, I talked with a lady who didn't speak English well; and she told me that she couldn't help me

with my particular issue, and that I'd have to ring another number. I'm not sure what my voice sounded like as I responded to her; but I have a feeling that it didn't sound completely humble. I *know* that the words I said after I got off the phone weren't humble! And guess what I happened to be doing just before that phone conversation? I was writing this part of the sermon! Ouch! (That's the thing about being a pastor. God often puts me to the test about the very thing I'm preparing to preach about, just to remind me that I need to practice what I preach!) Humble yourself, Christian, in the sight of the Lord: and He will lift you up!

III. The directness of Esther's answer (vv. 5-6)

(Read Esther 7:5-6 again.) When Ahasuerus heard that someone was designing to murder his queen and all her people, he was furious; and he indignantly asked who had presumed in his heart to do this. It was now time for Esther to speak. Speaking plainly and concisely, she used the words *tsar* ("adversary"), *oyev* ("enemy"), and *ha'ra ha'zeh* ("this wicked one") to describe Haman. This is what Haman was; and it needed to be said.

Now, is there any application in this for us today? Yes, there is. Just as Ahasuerus needed to hear that there was an enemy sitting right next to him, so *sinners* need to hear that there is an enemy at hand. As we proclaim the Gospel, we *must* warn people that there is an enemy afoot, and that eternal life, or eternal death in Hell, depends on how they respond to the warning. In fact, there are *several* enemies they need to be warned of; and the foremost enemy is Satan.

Read Ephesians 6:10-12.

Brethren, we must always remember that *people*—"flesh and blood"—are not our real enemy (though they may rail against us, oppress us, or even kill us). Our real enemy is Satan and his demons; and they *must* be exposed. Satan is out to steal, kill, and destroy every soul that he possibly can; and people need to be warned about him. Now, you'd *think* that it would be easy enough to tell people, "It's the devil's fault." However, it isn't as easy as you'd think. For one thing, anyone who speaks about Satan in today's world is looked at as **mentally deranged.** When you start talking about the devil, you open yourself up to ridicule! (Unless, of course, you're an actual Satan-worshipper—in which case it's "A-O.K." to talk about Satan. In my home country, more and more local governments are inviting local warlocks to open their legislative sessions with a prayer to Satan!) Secondly, speaking against Satan is no light thing. The phony T.V. pastors who rail against Satan, and challenge him to fight them, and use all kinds of tough talk, have no idea whom they are dealing with. Even Michael the archangel didn't rail against Satan, but said, ***"The <u>Lord</u> rebuke thee."*** Any Christian who has experienced spiritual warfare knows that when you start exposing the enemy, weird things often start to happen. Satan does *not* like to be exposed; and he will fight back! Perhaps many Christians are afraid to name Satan as the enemy, because they know that there is unconfessed sin in their own hearts—and that if they talk too loudly against him, he just might obtain

permission from the Lord to *attack.* We don't need to *fear* the enemy; but we do need to keep our hearts right with the Lord, so that when we expose Satan's evil works, we can do so with a clean conscience, and with the confidence that God will protect us.

Secondly, sinners need to realise that *they* are *God's* enemy!

Read Acts 13:6-12.

Christian, there are times, in sharing the Gospel, when we must be very direct, and let people know that they are God's enemy. *God* is not *their* enemy: He wants to save them. However, *they* are *God's* enemy. They have offended a holy God by their sin; and though He is willing and ready to save them, His wrath is nevertheless hovering over them. That is why Jude said, ***"And of some have compassion, making a difference. And others save with <u>fear</u>, pulling them out of the fire."*** Now, are they sinning in *ignorance*? In a very real sense, yes. However, ignorance is no excuse. Sinners must be told that they are fighting and opposing God. Even saved people sometimes need to be told that they are *acting* like God's enemies when they are living with unconfessed sin. In **James 4:4,** James says to *Christians,* ***"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."***

Now, there is yet one more enemy. Sinners also need to realise that they are their *own* enemy.

Read 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

My friend, if you have never received God's gift of salvation, you are in the devil's snare—and you don't even know it. *Satan* is your enemy; but you are also your own enemy. You are opposing *yourself* by not heeding God's call to repent of your sin and believe on Jesus; and the total lack of peace in your heart is the proof. You can be rescued from Satan's grasp; but this will not happen until you humble yourself before God, acknowledge the truth that Jesus paid a debt that you cannot pay, and *ask* Him to save you, and be your Lord. If you will come to Christ on His terms of simple repentance of heart and faith in Him, He will save you today.

Conclusion: My friends, there is a time to speak! Christian, are you speaking the words that people need to hear—the words of salvation, and the Gospel? Are you speaking in a timely manner, with godly wisdom and humility? Are you speaking directly, and exposing the enemies that need to be exposed? If not, let the Lord put a fire in your soul to open your mouth for Him! If you are not saved, don't put off salvation any longer! Now is the day of salvation! The Lord is speaking through His Word. Hear Him!

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0XWkSkmB3I