The Impact of a Godly Woman

Esther 4:13-17

Good morning! This morning we are going to take a break from our primary book of study to acknowledge all of the women that are in our lives including the mothers in the congregation. It is important that we do this because it is the way in which the women of God have remained faithful to the gospel over the years that has led to generations of children and young people coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Today we are going to look at the account of Esther in the Old Testament and use her life as an example of what impact a Godly can have in the world today. My purpose in doing this is to thank God for the gift of women and also to acknowledge that it is through those who have come before us that we can boldly say that we have a relationship with Jesus Christ today. I would like to give you a quick review of what is happening in the book of Esther and then share with you four ways that Godly woman have an impact in the world today.

Before we begin our look at the four aspects of a Godly woman as recorded for us in the book of Esther, let us begin by reviewing the account of Esther so we understand the passage we are about to read in the proper context. The book of Esther takes place during the exile period of Jewish history. It most likely took place between the return of Zerubbabel and Ezra when the temple and the walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt. The king of Persia was throwing a party and had many of his close friends and advisors there. When he summoned his wife Vashti to come out so that he could show her off she refused to come. This made him angry and embarrasses him so is sent her away and divorced her. He then had all the virgins of the city of Susa come to the palace so that he could choose his new wife. He chose Esther because of her beauty. Esther’s cousin, who had raised her, was name Mordecai and he was a well-respected leader in the Jewish community. When he refused to bow for one of the king’s officials, whose name was Haman, Haman became so angry at Mordecai that he began working on a scheme to kill Mordecai as well as all of the other Jews in the Persian kingdom. Haman was able to convince the king to sign a law that would order for all Jews to be killed. When Esther found out about it, she decided that she needed to use her position to help out her people. The passage we are about to read is when Esther makes this decision after receiving counsel from her cousin. Please read with me Esther 4:13-17 “Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not imagine that you in the king’s palace can escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, liberation and rescue will arise for the Jews from another place, and you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, “Go, gather all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants also will fast in the same way. And then I will go in to the king, which is not in accordance with the law; and if I perish, I perish.” So, Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.”

In the passage we have just read we find that there are four characteristics of a Godly woman that are shown by the actions of Esther. A Godly woman acknowledges that just because she is a follower of Christ this does not mean she will not face trials or challenges in life, A Godly woman realizes that God puts all people into positions where they can be used for His purposes, A Godly woman lives and models her life based upon her convictions and a Godly woman always puts others first.

In verse 13 Mordecai tells Esther that just because she is in the palace that will not lead to her being treated any differently than any other Jew. In saying this Mordecai was reminding her that everything that happened to her people would happen to her as well. A Godly woman realizes that her situation is not unique and her life will be filled with challenges and trials just like everyone else’s. This has been the major teaching of the Apostle James that we discussed when we began the studying the epistle together several months ago. Rather than looking at the trials that are being faced with despair and gloom, a Godly woman embraces the challenge and looks for a way to honor God in that situation. The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, encourages his readers with these words regarding challenges and trials “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that at the revelation of His glory you may also rejoice and be overjoyed.” To recap what Peter is saying, we should not be shocked that living in obedience to Christ will result in persecution of tough times. This is not an unusual thing to happen to us. However, we should use those challenges and trials as a way to help us develop endurance so that we can face them with joy. That sounds very similar to James doesn’t it? Esther took the opportunity she had to use her position to make a difference in the lives of others. She did not use her place in the palace to find a way of escape, rather she put herself directly in the line of fire. Godly woman are willing to put themselves into tough situations and face persecution for doing what is right.

The second characteristic of a Godly woman is that she realizes that she has been put into the situation she has been put in order to fulfill God’s purpose for her life. Every woman that is with us today has a purpose to their lives, but the calling that each of you have might be a bit different from others. One example is to that not all women are called to be mothers. Some are called to help raise the children in the church and serve as a mentors to families who are going through the challenges of raising children. Also, not all women are called to be married. In my previous congregation we had a woman who has a life filled with public service who has said many times that she does not feel at this time of life that God is calling her to be married. She is taking the skills and talents God has given her to serve others in whatever way He may guide her. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, writes in chapter 8 verse 28 “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” This verse is clear that every life created by God has purpose and a calling that He has placed upon that person. When someone heeds their calling and show that they love God by following His commands that person will experience the full blessing of God. Esther used her influence to do what she felt God had placed her in the palace to do. After consulting with Mordecai, she came to the conclusion that if she did not do what needed to be done, she would be dishonoring God. A woman of God will heed His calling on her life and do what He has called her to do. Knowing what that calling in requires prayer, consulting with others and allowing the Spirit to speak and guide you in the direction He wishes you to go.

The third characteristic of a Godly woman is that she directs her life according to her convictions. A conviction is a belief that guides the decisions that you make in your life. Living your life according to your convictions is not an easy thing to do and might cause you to lose something that you value whether that be friendships or even your life. Esther had a strong faith in God that made her take the responsibility of stepping out in faith even though the action that she would take might cause her to lose her life. What Esther did is like what Joseph did when he was in Egypt and his master’s wife tried to seduce him. Rather than give in to the temptation he chose to do what was right. That conviction of doing what was honorable to God caused him to be thrown into prison for several years. The Apostle Paul said to the church in Philippi that when someone lives according to their convictions and puts God first they will be given the strength to do those things (Philippians 4:13). As we consider the topic of convictions I must take a moment to explain something to all of you that I know has been a hot topic of conversation in this congregation over the past year. If you are not aware the United Methodist Church had their annual conference in North Carolina a couple of weeks ago. At their conference they approved a measure that allows gay and lesbian clergy to be ordained in their churches and the measure also allows churches to perform same sex wedding ceremonies meaning that the church would be affirming and approving those so-called marriages. God is the creator of marriage, so any union other than a man and a woman is not a marriage in the eyes of God, so these unions are not marriages according to God. Our congregation stepped out in faith last July and chose to withdraw membership in the United Methodist Church. This decision was not made hastily, but the movement towards the affirmation of LGBTQ+ lifestyle within their clergy was becoming more apparent. This vote at the conference has made their position on sexuality very clear, which is not in line with the teachings of Scripture. Our congregation will not perform same sex weddings, nor will we allow the ordination of any pastor who affirms the LGBTQ+ lifestyle. Scripture teaches that any pastor called to ministry is held to a standard of doing his best to live in obedience to Scripture and to the fact that all who sit under his teaching are his responsibility. James tells us that teachers will be held to a higher standard by God, so the church cannot allow a pastor to live a lifestyle in rebellion to God while at the same time proclaim God’s Word. If you are curious as to why Nankin Church left the UMC these are two of the primary reasons. This is very sad to see and we will continue to see in the future that many churches will have to step out in faith and take a stand on the Word of God. I hope that we will continue to pray for all the churches who are contemplating this decision and that we will also pray for the leaders of the UMC to return to obedience to the Word of God. Just like Esther may we continue to stand on our convictions, love others and live in honor of God to the best of our ability.

Finally, the fourth characteristic of a Godly woman is that she will always put others first by being willing to risk her life for the well-being of others. Jesus taught that the greatest form of love is putting the lives of others first by being willing to lay it down for them. Esther said that she was willing to perish if needed so that the Jews would be saved from the king’s order. Our celebration of mothers today gives us the opportunity to celebrate the women in our midst who have given of their time and energy to raise up children. Even those women who do not have children have played an essential role in setting the example for the children to follow. God has blessed us with the gift of women and when He did so in the Garden of Eden He did so because He knew that man would be incomplete without a helper that would be suitable for him. As we conclude our time together today let us say a special prayer of thanksgiving for all of the women who have touched our lives whether they be our mothers, sisters, daughters, wives or friends. Please join me in a word of prayer.