

**THE BIG IDEA: As followers of Jesus, we fight from victory, not for victory.**

The Take-Off

When I first saw The Hunger Games, I struggled with the entire concept.

I don't know if I'm supposed to give spoiler alerts for a movie that's over 3 years old, but there's a lot of killing that goes on in the movie, and most of it is by kids.

Again, bizarre and a lot to wrap your brain around while you're watching it.

But one thing I saw as the movie progressed was that there were 2 types of participants in the games: "I don't want to kill you but I will if I have to" and "Look! Weapons! Let's kill someone!!"

I mention all of this because as we spend some time in Esther 9 this morning, we're going to see some of that going on. This is the chapter that is the climax of the entire story, the day that everything has been building to.

It's the day when Haman had hoped to wipe out the Jews, and now the day that the Jews get to fight back, and it's interesting for sure, and a bit messy and controversial at times and for that reason it's largely left untouched by preachers and commentators.

But we believe the Bible is God's word, and we also don't believe that we should just skip over the tough parts.

What we'll see in Esther 9 is that the Jews took up arms, and I believe that we'll be challenged to be brave and take up arms as well.

But since that might sound a bit strange to some ("Wait, you mean Christians can fight? That sounds so unChristian?"), maybe the first thing we need to do is establish that God does indeed want us to fight

**1. There is a war raging**

- a. 9 months have passed since the celebrating at the end of chapter 8 to the clash in chapter 9
- b. Can I just state the most forgotten - and most obvious - truth: the gospel goes against our natural desires.
- c. I know that sounds odd, but look at 1 Corinthians 1:8
  - a. the message of the cross is foolishness to the perishing but power to us
  - b. what is the message, the gospel?
  - c. we cannot save ourselves, make ourselves better
  - d. we need a Savior
- d. So if we are people of the cross - people who embrace that foolish message - then it is inevitable that at some point, the message of the cross will be at odds with the message of a culture that sees the cross as foolish
- e. It doesn't make it easy, or make it feel good, but to act like we can fully embrace a Savior without at times being attacked just like he was is even more foolish, right?
- f. I think we've been lulled into this 9 month waiting period like the Jews here and it's tempting to think the day of reckoning won't come, but trust me, it's coming and it's coming fast
- g. I don't want to spend a lot of time here, but I do want to say that we have been commanded to fight.
- h. So the question is, "How do we fight?" and before we get to 3 specific guidelines, let me give you one overarching principle that will also be our Big Idea.
- i. As followers of Jesus, we fight from victory, not for victory.
- j. This is critical to understand, because that one word - from instead of for - changes everything
  - a. Colossians 2:15 clearly tells us that Jesus has triumphed over our enemy
  - b. Ephesians 6:10-18 clearly tells us that our enemy isn't done fighting
- k. So we are fighting, yes, but we are fighting to keep the victory, not earn the victory
- l. One key difference that makes is motivation
  - a. it's one thing to fight for something you've never had
  - b. if you've never had it, you could quit thinking that it's not worth the fight
  - c. but when you've had bad and been given good, you'll fight to keep the good, right?
  - d. It's what makes this picture so funny and yet so true - fighting from victory to keep brings out the mama bear more than fighting for victory to get [Show mama bear]
- m. The Jews fought from victory - they had the Queen, the Prime Minister and many other leaders on their side
- n. We'll see some dark stuff in Esther 9, but remember that fighting from victory instead of for victory means that killing is different than murder
- o. Someone tries to take your kids, you don't want to kill them, but they're not taking your kids, right?
- p. So, let me give you 3 guidelines in how we should fight when we fight from victory.

2. What does it mean to fight from victory?

- a. Just a quick glance at the cultural landscape would reveal that we've got a war on our hands, yes?
- b. Social injustices like ISIS, human trafficking and social issues like marriage, gender, abortion are front & center
- c. So, if we're going to have to fight (because if we don't, we'll pay the price), then how do we fight?
- d. Let me give you 3 guidelines from right here in Esther 9...
  - a. When we fight from victory, the end is never in doubt even when our end may be
    - i. we fight COURAGEOUSLY
    - ii. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18, esp v. 14 - no matter what it looks like now, it will look far better then
    - iii. Hebrews 12:28 - while we wait, we fight in faith for a kingdom that cannot be shaken
    - iv. Philippians 1:6 - we fight for a finisher
    - v. Matthew 10:28 - live on the right side of victory and you won't need to fear the defeated
  - b. When we fight from victory, we never have to take from others in order to take care of ourselves
    - i. we fight UNSELFISHLY
    - ii. 3 times in Esther 9 (vv. 10, 15, 16) it says that the Jews didn't take the plunder
    - iii. Again, it's one thing to fight in order to take, it's another to fight in order to keep
    - iv. Often, this could be what sets us apart - the motives of the enemy are selfish (what I want, what I need, give me what is yours to serve my desires), but our motives are in line with a God who loved the world and gave in response to it (John 3:16)
  - c. When we fight from victory, we're able to remember those who still feel defeated
    - i. we fight with HUMILITY
    - ii. The last half of Esther 9 talks about the establishment of the Jewish holiday called "Purim"
    - iii. It comes from the Persian word "pur" meaning lot
    - iv. It was a time set aside so that the Jews would never forget the way God had taken a day of tragedy chosen by lots (Esther 3:7) and turned it into a day of victory
    - v. But they didn't just celebrate THEIR victory, but used it as an opportunity to give to each other and "to the poor" (Esther 9:22)
    - vi. It isn't enough for us to have victory for ourselves, because God wants us to share that victory everywhere we find ourselves

The Landing

As we start to land this message, I want to highlight 2 verses in Esther and then make a pretty bold statement.

Hold your finger in Esther 9:30 and flip back to Esther 3:13

- in Esther 3, the word that was carried to the 127 provinces was one of destruction
- in Esther 9, the word that was carried to the 127 provinces was one of goodwill
- the difference was simply in who wrote the message

We have a message to carry - it is the good news of the Gospel, a message about a cross and a Savior - and there is goodwill and freedom in that message because of who wrote it - King Jesus - in his own blood on the cross

Will there be times that we will have to fight in order to carry that message? Absolutely.

But never forget this: our King has won, and we fight from that victory, never for that victory.

When we understand that, we realize that the most UNloving thing we can do is stop fighting for the Gospel, because as soon as we do, we hand the people we love - and God loves - over to a ruler who writes nothing but death and destruction.

While it's good to know we've won, it's not enough to sit back and hope we never have to fight.

There is an enemy, he has been defeated, and as long as he is able, he will fight.

So be brave, take up your arms, and having done everything to stand, stand.

Let's pray.