

Esther – Wisdom is Greater than Zeal

Matthew Vander Els • 2024-03-24 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Proverbs 26:4](#) • [Proverbs 26:5](#) • [Esther 1:12](#) • [Esther 3:1](#) • [Esther 4:14](#) • [Esther 5:2](#) • [Esther 7:3](#) • [Esther 7:10](#) • [Esther 9:1](#) • [Esther 9:22](#)

Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Happy Purim. You could have bet money on what the topic would be today—probably would have got it. I'm going to speak about the story of Esther and why it is so important and what lessons the anonymous author wanted to portray through writing such a unique type of story in the scriptures. But first, let's start off with a word of wisdom from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs chapter 26, starting in verse 4. That is good wisdom. Amen? I mean, if someone's going to be foolish and try to come at you in conflict, try to rail you down. Listen, recognize the scenario. Recognize that maybe this conflict is not worth investing real estate in your mind, in your heart. Just move on. Be the bigger person, right? It's wisdom. Thus saith the Lord, the word of God.

The next verse, verse 5, says: "Answer a fool according to their folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes." So this is wisdom. Because when you're in a conflict and someone's being foolish and being overzealous and just trying to rail you, you need to stop that. You need to respond. You need to brick wall them. You need to defeat the argument. Answer a fool according to his folly, or else he'll think he's right all the time. Someone has to stand up to him. Someone has to show him how he's wrong. It's wisdom.

I love it when the Bible is so black and white. This is the beauty of the Bible. And the beauty is that it's not an instruction manual. It's not a divine checklist that the more checks you check off, the more righteous you are. In actuality, it's a library of texts that were carefully put together to tell a story that promotes cultivating wisdom so that you can be a world changer. The word is meant to be meditated on, not simply referenced. Meditation, wisdom. How do you actually participate in the world while being an ambassador of God's kingdom?

The Paradox: Which Verse Do We Follow?

And so the question comes: which is it? Is it verse 4 or verse 5? Do you answer a fool as the Bible says, or do you not answer a fool? Which one do we choose?

And so when we come to the book of Esther, we realize it's a story that takes place in ancient Persia after the Babylonian exile. I remember when the Babylonians took over Judea. They took the Judeans captive—the ones that were still alive—and led them back to Babylon where they lived in exile from their land. But Babylon was conquered by Persia, and some of the Jews returned to Judea to try to rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the temple. But many, many Jews remained in exile. They had homes, they had lives, they had families. It's easier.

Esther in Context: Jews in a Foreign Land

And in this story, we are introduced to two Jews that remained in Persia: Mordecai and his niece Hadassah, who were living in a very secular, very pagan, very corrupt system. I believe this story was circulated to bring a sense of hope to the Jews that remained in exile. The point of the story and how it's crafted encourages us: while you're out in the world, while you're out in a society that really is against everything your faith stands for, learn to navigate it so you can actually make an impact.

Because how do we navigate such a thing? And the story of Esther is brilliant. It's engaging. There are twists. There are turns. Lots of irony, ambiguity. And there's one word that was trying to come to my mind: comedy. It's a comedy. The story of Esther is meant to be a farce comedy, specifically.

A Story for Exiles: Learning to Navigate

And when you read it, we'll see some examples. It's like, did that really just happen? And then you turn the page, and it's like, a six-story-tall stake to impale somebody? Seriously? What? Just really awesome. But almost—that's the story. It keeps you engaged. What you think is going to happen next doesn't. And it's here to address the problem that plagues many of us: How do we actually navigate the world around us? How do we navigate this culture, this society that we find ourselves in? How do we navigate it and become productive in maintaining our commitment to serve God, our commitment to be holy, and our main level of faith that we have.

And you know, sometimes in all our holy zeal, we like to wield the sword of truth without the hands of empathy and grace. You look up in a secular society and you're committed to a holy kingdom, but behold, someone in the world is doing something wrong or they're living a sinful

lifestyle or they're making bad decisions or maybe they just pulled out in front of you, and you tell them about God and what God is going to do to them if they don't repent. Or maybe you're looking for an opportunity to show your passionate dedication to God. So when the right circumstances present themselves, you rise up to defend God against those people.

And that sword even gets sharper on the Internet and social media. We don't know nothing about that. The zeal to live out new creation right now, which is what we're called to do: live as if we were back in the garden and view everybody as they partake in their journey back to the garden, whether they realize it or not.

But the reality is we still have to go outside. And while living out the kingdom ethic impacts the world, it's still the world outside right now. It's still very secular, which is not a bad thing necessarily. It just means there's a lot of things that aren't religious. But other things are unethical and moral and unjust. And if we are called to be holy, how do we live in an unholy world without compromising our faith?

I wish the Bible was an instruction manual and we could just turn to page 400, precept number 36, and there it has the answer, black and white. It's not that simple. And that's the key theme of the book of Esther.

The Vashti Incident: When Kings Act Like Tyrants

The story starts with a drunken festival that the king is hosting with all of his pals. And he sends out seven eunuchs to escort his wife to come before him. He's like, hey, babe, hadn't seen you in a while. I got all my buddies here. Come over here and show off how pretty you are in front of my friends. Her name was Vashti, and Vashti refused. Yeah.

Now, the king in the story, who is a bumbling idiot throughout the story, he gets angry. She didn't do as I say. Roar. And here's what takes place in [Esther 1](#), verse 12: "But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger. Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of the law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times."

He actually went and got seven of the most elite lawyers in Persia, and they gathered around. This is a man who was so insecure in who he is that when his wife did not come when she was called, in his mind an injustice had been committed. So he calls together the elite lawyers to try to decide: How do we serve justice for this unspeakable transgression?

So Vashti was banished, divorced, exiled. And then the king declares that he needs a new queen. So now every beautiful virgin in the entire Persian empire must be herded into the king's harem. This is one of those times when you're reading the story and you're like, what? All of them, like a city full of them. Trains, planes, and automobiles to the king. I don't know how they all fit.

The Great Beauty Contest

Not only that, but each of them must take a year away from their family and friends to dedicate themselves to preparing for a contest in which one of them will have a night in the royal bedroom. And based off that, the king is going to choose his new queen. We'll call it a beauty contest. Every virgin in Persia must come, prepare for a year, and participate in a beauty contest with the king. It's not a kid's book. Surprise.

So Mordecai and his niece Hadassah get the decree. Mordecai says to her: listen, we've got to cover your name. Change your name. We don't want them to know you're Jewish because the Judeans were, of course, the minorities, which means most people probably didn't like them. So let's hide your identity. We're going to change your name to Ishtar—Esther, as we say it. A popular name in Babylon. And so Esther gets in the taxi or whatever and goes to the royal harem. Out of the entire empire, she ends up winning the beauty contest with the king.

A Scandalous Story

Has anyone ever realized how scandalous the story of Esther is? It makes you uncomfortable. Daughters, who do you want to dress up as? Esther! Esther! A lot of people have been critical of the book of Esther because of how scandalous. Martin Luther, he said, I wish it wasn't even in the Bible. I don't think it should be. Take it out. Cut it out. Martin Luther did not like it at all. Lots of people did not like this book.

So Esther wins the contest—held and hosted conveniently by the king himself—and she becomes queen. There's a huge banquet, and it's just crazy. This is how the story just explodes from the start. Around when this was happening, Mordecai, her uncle, was at the king's gate and overheard two of the king's guards planning to assassinate the king. Oh no—what do we do? What's going to happen next? Well, Mordecai tells Queen Esther, and she strategically reports it to the king and gives credit to Mordecai: "You saved the king's life. His name is Mordecai. He's a good man."

Mordecai's Unrewarded Heroism

Mordecai. Remember his name, King. And after the investigation, the two guards were impaled on poles. They were executed for wanting to kill the king, and Mordecai saves the day, and everybody goes, yay, he's the hero, right? I wonder if the king is going to honor Mordecai. Do you believe Mordecai deserves to be honored? Yeah? I think so. If he saved the president's life, I mean, a pizza, something, right? And so, lucky for us, we turn the very next verse. Turn the page, and this is what the very next verse says in [Esther 3](#), verse 1. It states, After these events, King Xerxes honored. Here we go. Our boy's going to get honored. Mordecai's going to get what he deserves. He deserves to be lifted up. He deserves to be honored. He saved the king's life. Yes. Next verse. After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman, son of Hamadathah, the Agagite. Oh, we're doing that. Okay. The king elevated him, giving him a seat of honor higher than all of the other nobles. Sometimes we take the story for granted when we grow up with it, but imagine it's your first time reading it. The king, what? Who is this guy? And why is Mordecai not being honored? All right, he saves the king's life, and the king honors this nobody.

Mordecai's Refusal

Here we go, verse 2. Mordecai refused. No. It appears Mordecai is upset. Maybe he's upset because an injustice has occurred. I mean, you saved the king's life. Not even a gift card to Starbucks was given to you just to say thank you. Esther, are you sure you told the king that it was me? Are you sure? Yes, I did. Following these events, the king elevates a completely new, out-of-the-blue character in the story of Canaanite descent, the ancient people that were enemies of Israel. And this man named Haman, he gets elevated to the top under the king. And then the king decrees that everybody needs to show him honor, give him a salute. That's bowing down. Give him a salute. Huh. And Mordecai refuses the king's order. I'm not going to bow to you. Nope. How dare you?

This is how the Hebrew version of Esther reads. The Greek version has an extra verse in there that says he didn't bow down to him out of reverence for God. I bow to no man but God. So that's a neat thing in the Greek. But in the Hebrew, it just seems like he's upset, which is kind of neat, right? The Hebrew version doesn't give him that grace of making Mordecai look like a righteous guy in this verse.

A Disproportionate Response

So Haman is the bad guy, and he's so insecure about who he is that he gets so upset that he goes to the bumbling king and gets him to sign a law that all the Jews are going to die on a certain day because one guy didn't give him a salute. You see, when you turn the page, you're like, what? This is so absurd. So over the top. Such a disproportionate response. And so this law says that all the patriots of the kingdom, the patriotic Persians, on this day of the calendar, can kill all the Jews and take their stuff if they want. So again, remember how I mentioned that this is kind of like a farce comedy the way it's read? It's filled with explosive details, right? And even comedic exaggerations.

A Catalog of Destruction

Here's an example in verse 13 after this decree goes out. And the letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to annihilate and kill and destroy all of the Jews, both young and old, women and children. What? So you're going to annihilate them, and then you're going to kill them, and then you're going to destroy them. Everybody good? It's just, what? And now there's panic. Esther's character really comes into focus. See, with Esther, we have a young girl who is forced into a tumultuous situation, with a year of training to try to impress the king, and when it's her turn, she has the opportunity to take whatever she wanted for her one night with the king, but she declined. She was not greedy or selfish. She said, "Whatever the head eunuch recommends, I'll take with me."

Esther's Discernment and Boldness

Upon hearing the plot to assassinate the king, she reacts with an appropriate measure to save his life. But she also is intentional about leaving Mordecai's name with the king to give him credit, which later gets Mordecai honored in the story. Finally, Mordecai pushes her to go before the king uninvited to ask him to reverse this law that he put into play. So she goes before the king uninvited, believing she's likely going to die. And in this scene, the king now does something unexpected. Remember, we've already had this type of scenario in the story. It was a little bit different because before there was a queen who had a meeting with the king that she was invited to, but she refused and was banished. And now we have a queen who is about to have a meeting with the king, but she was not invited.

Will she get banished or killed? Certainly, right? But the king does not kill her. He smiles at her, lifts his scepter towards her. And then she just walks in and hasn't even said anything yet, and he says, "I'll give you half of my empire"—just way over the top, right? Okay, she's pretty, I guess. What do we do with this story? What is going on?

Esther's Strategic Banquets

So, as part of her strategy, she invites the king to a banquet, something that occurs a lot in the story of Esther. Remember, the story starts off with two banquets of the king, and then later we have two banquets of Esther, and we have two banquets of the Jews in chapter 9, two days next to each other. Yeah, there was Vashti's banquet, Esther's enthronement banquet, and I think a banquet possibly or a feast for Mordecai as well. Lots of parties in Esther. And so Esther invites the king and Haman to several banquets as part of her strategy in the story until finally she positions herself close to the king while putting Haman in a vulnerable position. And she tells the king about Haman's plot, and then Haman is impaled on a stake that is as tall as a six-story building.

I give this summary to point out four main characters in the story and one of the themes that Esther is trying to tell us. Vashti, the first queen. Mordecai, the faithful and zealous Jew. Esther, the discerning yet timid Jewess. And of course, Haman, the insecure Agagite. Four characters who all responded differently to the situations and surprises in the story.

How We React to Pressure

See, sometimes, how many of us are passionate? One, two, three, right? Some of us are passionate that way. Maybe you love passionately those we have close to us. Some of us maybe fight passionately, right? Usually they go together, right? Some of us just love the grip of holding the sword. And sometimes we justify how we react in situations. Has anyone ever overreacted? Yes, Lord. And you just don't even want to bring it up because it's so cringe when you think about it? Sometimes we justify how we react to situations.

Many times when someone tries to control us or demands something of us, we feel that and we resist. Sometimes we get a little peeved. Sometimes we're angry at someone, so we react with our emotions, with these big emotions as Ben, Evie, and I call them. Sometimes we have weak confidence in our faith, and anything secular or foreign threatens our very Christian identity. It makes us uncomfortable. So we react with such a disproportionate level of zeal so that everyone knows where I stand, that I believe in God and I believe in the Bible and I'm not like them over there.

The Consequences of Overreaction

Have we ever acted disproportionately or overreacted to a situation? Yeah, lots of times. Maybe a knee-jerk reaction. We didn't think it through before we said something we wish we could

take back. And when we overreact, does it ever end well? Generally not. Did it affect only you when you overreacted? Think of a conflict. Did it affect only you? Sometimes our actions don't just affect us, do they? They affect our families. They affect our community. They affect our friends. They affect our churches, our schools, our government, our nation. Every action carries consequences.

And it's something two or three characters here had to learn the hard way. See, Haman reacts disproportionately to Mordecai. Let's face it. He didn't give him honor. He didn't salute him. So he built an impalement stake six stories tall to impale this man. He didn't even know who this man was. And he got the king to sign a law to kill all the Jews because the guy didn't bow down to him. Overreaction. And this sets off a chain of events that not only get him killed on the very impalement stake that he built, but it also affects other people. All of his sons were killed. All of his friends and supporters were killed. All because he overreacted to someone not saluting him.

Vashti's Refusal and Its Ripple Effect

Vashti. She was called to the king's presence. Her reaction was a refusal. It was a knee-jerk, rash decision. There's not even a faux apology letter. You know, that's how we handle it in the South. "I'm so sorry, my apologies, but I'm not going to be able to make it because my stomach hurts or whatever." Not even a simple "Sorry, dear, I'm tied up." Not even a letter. Just his servant saying she refused and gave the king a royal hand gesture too. She was banished. But because of her actions, all the virgins in Persia were rounded up into trains, planes, and automobiles, brought to the king's palace to be secluded for a year. And even after that year, if they didn't become queen, I don't think they could go home. They're in the harem. They're now permanently kept as concubines.

Because of her unwillingness to appropriately respond or to respond wisely, an entire generation was sent to the king's harem with this as their fate. Mordecai, a good man, knows how to navigate the city. He knows how to navigate the culture, the people. He's in, he's out, hangs around the king's gates. He's that close in familiarity. Has good ethics, good morals, cares about people. He heard the guards talking about how they were going to kill the king, so he wisely handled it. He didn't just call him out. No, he went through to make sure it was handled wisely.

Disproportionate Reactions

But when the king makes a law to salute a new official, Mordecai, like Vashti, acts disproportionately to the situation. Just like Vashti, he refuses. No dialogue given, same type of pattern. No reasoning. The guards have to make up a reason. Oh, it's because he's a Jew. But Mordecai never says anything.

And as a direct result of Mordecai's actions — and some would say, and rightly so, that you can't be held responsible for how other people act and react — he can't be held responsible for the reactions of Haman. And it's true. But the way Esther is written, it's not trying to tell you what's right or wrong here, black and white, just and unjust. It's actually kind of making fun of it with the type of literature it is, how explosive it is.

The Whole System's Corrupt

Because the law in Persia is an absolute farce in and of itself, right? The king makes laws for things that don't matter, and he makes laws for whatever people tell him to. And then he makes a law that says he can't undo laws forever. And now he has to make another law that someone's trying to speak into his ear to make him offset and overset the other law. The whole system's corrupt.

So it's not about the law and what's right and wrong in the system of government. No, no. And that's the point.

Wisdom Over Black and White

In the real world with real people and real conflict and real situations with real horrors and trauma and sadness and real idiotic kings, in the real world, it's not black and white. And we can say it is, but that's what Esther is telling us. We can say it's black and white, but you won't succeed or survive if that's your worldview about everything, especially other people.

Because Mordecai disproportionately reacted to Haman, it endangered all of his people. All of his people must die now. And it's not about making the right call or who's responsible. It's about having the wisdom to see what's going to take place if I act a certain way. Who cares if it's your responsibility or not your responsibility? Use wisdom. You can still control it.

Esther, this young girl, through no fault of her own, is thrown into the very grown-up situation that she's in, has to endure separation from her friends or family to compete for the king's favor, all because of another person's action. This young woman is left with the mop to clean up everyone else's mess, but she's humble.

Humble and Strategic

She does not show her pride like the feather of a peacock, as Vashti and Mordecai did. She's strategic in how she tells the king of the assassination attempt. She's strategic in how she went about handling the Haman situation. She does not just run into the king's court screaming truth, which she could do. And you would say, "It's true." Haman's plotting to kill us all, king. But that's not an appropriate reaction in the formal setting of the king and the culture, is it? Even if she's telling the truth, it won't protect you from the consequences of delivering it.

And the kicker is those expectations are relative to the culture that they lived in. So Esther chooses in one regard to show the priority of her request by breaking one protocol and coming into the king's court uninvited. But also she has an understanding to be wise. So instead of calling Haman out right there, she invites the king and Haman to several banquets until again she's in that position where she can throw Haman under the bus.

Mordecai ends up being elevated all the way up to the top. She's queen, everybody's happy, her people are saved, evil is vanquished, and there's the story.

The Better Way

Mahatma Gandhi was a revolutionary under British colonization of India. The colonial rule of India was filled with injustice and violence by definition. And Gandhi knew what was right, at least in this regard. This was not right. They shouldn't be here siphoning the resources off our country back to their empire and oppressing us. And he could have reacted. He could have joined the underground resistance and freedom fighters that would plot different ways in guerrilla warfare to attack the British soldiers, maybe hide some bombs there, do drive-bys, murdering soldiers at night. He could have reacted that way.

But would that have worked? No, they'd just shoot him. Done. Forgotten about. Sometimes the response to conflict that we want to give, sometimes the response that we feel is justified isn't. Or even if it is, it's not going to bring forth the solution that's needed. So Gandhi instead thought of a better way of getting rid of the British Empire. Instead of killing them, the better way was to annoy them. Nonviolent resistance, which would get the world's attention and leverage political pressure back on the British. And it was smart and it was wise.

Navigating Culture with Wisdom

Can you imagine Joseph going into Egypt telling them that all of their gods are false and their pharaoh is just some dude like everyone else and how they need to repent because God's going to fry them? No, that wouldn't have ended well for him at all. He was an Egyptian. He became an Egyptian. He became part of their culture. He was able to navigate the culture as a member of it, but that doesn't mean that his obedience to God was sacrificed.

When the incident of Potiphar's wife happened, Joseph understood where the line was. Obviously, obviously there's a line here. I'm not going to do it. But he was able to navigate culture up to that point. And from that point, he was placed in prison, which is how he gained favor from Pharaoh and became the ruler of Egypt in the end, by navigating with wisdom. Joseph's journey was successful due to his humility, his empathy, his grace and wisdom.

He embraced the parts of secular culture that allowed him to navigate it with wisdom. And other parts, he rejected.

Knowing When to Draw the Line

And the wisdom comes in knowing when to draw the line in the sand and when to not. Because the goal of a soldier of Christ, and an image-bearer of God, is not to seclude yourself behind walls and fences away from the world you're called to reach.

The Hard Homework of the Bible

And so, which is it? Which is it? Do we answer a fool according to his folly, or do we not answer a fool according to his folly? That's the hard homework of the Bible, because it's not always black and white when you need to take the sword of truth out and decapitate somebody with it and when you need to keep it sheathed to navigate something more wisely. And that's exactly what I believe God has called us to do, and I believe that's exactly what the book of Esther is encouraging.

Think Before You React

Think before you react. Think of everyone else. Think of the reputation of the family members of God around you. Think of yourself. What consequences are going to come in the way I react or handle this situation? And it may not even be a consequence that impacts you, but it'll impact someone. Choose wisely.

Next time that you want to react rashly, consider your goals. What is it that you want to happen? What needs to happen? Acting rashly is selfish and inconsiderate. By definition, did not consider. What's your goal? What isn't your goal? And before you react, take those into account. Take those into account. And happy Purim.

The Blessing and the Celebration

So please stand. Please stand as we conclude services as worship. If you need prayer for anything today, guys, we have a prayer team on either side of the stage during the last worship set that we have. So we invite you to come up for prayer, or if you need to pray for someone else, please take advantage of that. We're about to kick off our Purim celebration, so prepare yourself, which is going to be awesome. And yeah, do we have a worship? Oh, I wasn't sure. It's a festival day, right? So maybe the banquet and the festival is out there.

Alvina Mulcano, our Father, our King Father, we thank you for this opportunity to come back to your word and the heart of your word and to realize that it is constantly speaking new life into us on a daily basis. That your spirit would continue to work within us to allow us to stop, to consider, to use wisdom and discernment. When we react, when we respond to situations, especially those of conflict, that we would remember that we don't simply represent ourselves, but we represent others and remember what our goal is in whatever conflict we're in and what is the wisest way to get there. We thank you, Father, for the celebration and this reminder. In the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

Sing Shema with us. Shema Yisrael Adonai. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. In the name of our Sar Shalom Yeshua HaMashiach. Shabbat Shalom family.

A Small Request

Now I need everybody to sit down because I have a couple of announcements. You make yours and I'll make mine. Okay, as we get ready to transition into our Purim celebration, we just have a small request. So we want to make sure that all things go smoothly and stay organized with the food line and that everybody gets to partake. So we ask that all children eight and under please be supervised as they go through the line. So again, if you have lovely children ages eight

or under, please make sure that you are with them from start to finish through the line so that all goes well and we can party party and have a good time.

Honoring the Gonzalez Family

Thank you so much. I have one more thing. One more thing. So some of you may know, but some of you may not, that today is the Gonzalez family's last official day as worship leader of Founded in Truth Fellowship. The Lord is leading them out into an amazing adventure. They're going to be on the road most of the time. Right. So you will see them incrementally throughout the year and definitely at Sukkot.

But I wanted to express some deep gratitude to Jay. And I think the whole fellowship needs to be involved in that. So thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you for your love, for your friendship, for your leadership. It has been a beautiful ride these last few years and grateful, grateful to the Father for how he has done that and just wanted to honor you in that way this morning.

So you guys be sure to love on them a little extra. They may be with us in congregation, maybe one more. No? Okay, this is your last chance. Make the most. So yeah, just wanted to say thank you and blessings. And it's going to be awesome. Christy is going to keep bringing it like she always does. And I'm so, so proud of you guys. And it's just been an amazing, amazing journey. And thank you all for worshiping as a body and keep pressing in, keep pressing in. Don't stop. So love you guys.

Expanding Our Worship Team

All right. So one last thing I just want to put a bug in the ear. I will say it's a loss. It's not a complete loss. He's not dying. But we are going to be in need of expanding our worship team over the course of the next little while. So that's falling to me, and I'm grateful for the opportunity and the blessing and the honor that it is.

If you have a very specific gift I'm looking for—a gift in playing worship keys, a gift in playing acoustic guitar—that's where I want to start. I need you and I want to talk to you. So that's my general announcement. There's a love for that and a desire for that and you've been given a gift for that. And you know who you are because I'm speaking to you and you already know who you are. Find me, okay, and we'll begin talking.

Closing in Prayer

So now go find your children and be orderly in how you find them. And do we have any other words that need to be spoken before we go out? Can I just pray over the food? Or Matt, am I good to go?

Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for this season. We thank you for this celebration. We ask that you would continue to be honored as we celebrate together. I thank you for the nourishment of the food that has been prepared. And we thank you for hearts that are full.

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