

She risked it all to do what was right. To follow Christ we will have to take some risks. To walk by faith and not by sight we will have to take some risks. We will have to risk being rejected. We might have to risk not fitting in. We might risk influence, but doing what is right is always the right course.

3. Have an attitude of thanksgiving. That is although we don't know why we might be in a certain situation we can be thankful. We can say to God I don't know why I am in this situation, but I want to be used by you and I am grateful that you have given me this opportunity.

4. Finally, we can have an attitude of transformation. That is we can believe that God is still transforming lives. First of all God can transform our lives no matter where we find ourselves. The first transformation that occurs in any location is the change God is going to do in our lives. It is not until God changes us that God can use us to change others. Know that wherever you are God is going to change you and God can use you to change others.

Corrie Ten Boom is famous for her resistance against the Nazis during World War II. Her home became a "hiding place" for those Jewish people, as well as others in the resistance movement. All but one of those their family hid would survive the war and one died of old age. Corrie's family was arrested and in the political camps some were released and some died in captivity. One who passed away was her sister Betsie. It was Betsie who found herself in this horrible place who said at her death there is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still. Corrie was finally released from the prison and later would discover that she was released as a result of a clerical error. In response she would say, "God does not have problems but only plans." Later in life when she was teaching in Germany she came face-to-face with a former prison guard who was known for his harshness. She wrote she was not sure she could forgive him, but she took his hand and there we stood former guard and former prisoner... I have never felt God's love so intensely.

It was also Corrie Ten Boom who said, "never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

Where are you? You are here. Wherever you're here is and whatever that means for you today, whether it is a time of certainty or uncertainty, please know God is with you and God has a plan to use your life. Right here and right now.

For such a time as this, in this place, in this moment of life... God has something for you and for me.



You Are Here

Esther 4

TRINITY PULPIT

There are many large malls in America like the Mall of America in Bloomington Minnesota, but it is not the largest in the world. In fact, it is not in the top 10. The top 10 can be found in places like the Philippines and China. In China there is one that is 659,612 square feet. The Mall of America however is our closest shopping centers like these massive ones. The Mall of America has 40 million visitors every year and 11 to 13 thousand employees during the year.

I don't know if you have been there before but it like other large places, such as Disney World, other amusement parks and even hospitals and large cities thankfully have one thing in common. They are the IDEO marker. Those wonderful signs that say simply "You are here." Now, in many cases, that does not solve our problem at the time. We might know that we are here, but we still might not know where we are going and how to get there. But, knowing you are here is an important part of the puzzle.

This brings us to one of the great stories of the Bible and the story of the young orphan girl who becomes the Queen of Persia, Esther. We know much about similar stories in the Bible. We know about the boy sold into slavery that becomes the one in charge in all of Egypt and saves his people. We know about the boy who is snatched from the river and becomes the Prince of Egypt, only to be banished and then returns as the great deliverer of his people. We know of the boy who is taken into captivity and rises to be in charge in Babylon. Esther is a similar story. It is the unlikely story of a young woman who becomes the Queen and saved her people. It is one of those great stories of God's providence and God's provision. It is a story of being in the right place at the right time. Maybe we should say it is a story about being in God's place

in God's time. That is what Mordecai says to Esther. Who knows, Esther maybe it was for such a time as this you have come to your royal position.

Let's recap the story of Esther. Esther is part of the families that remained in Persia after the exile of God's people. Many had returned back to Judah, but not all families went back after the exile in Babylon. Some remained and it seems that Esther's family was one of those that remained. We always have to remember that in Babylon people went and made homes and had families and lived their lives. During that time, Persia came to power and Xerxes was king of Persia. Xerxes was a great a mighty king. He ruled the Persian Empire from 486 to 465 B.C. Xerxes, we are told in the first chapter of Esther, in his third year of reign through a huge celebration for his empire.

He invited all of the leaders politically and militarily to Susa, his capital, for a feast that would last 180 days. While this feast was going on for all the men, his queen Vashti was also having a feast for the women. At the end of the 180 days the King decided to have Vashti come and be paraded before the men to show her beauty to all he had invited. He instructed her to put on her crown and come and essentially be placed on exhibition.

However, there was one problem to the King's plan. When Vashti heard of the plan, she refused to come and be paraded before the others. This angered the Xerxes and inquired from his advisors about what he was to do in response to the Queen. The leaders determined that something had to be done. The Queen could not be allowed to have her own mind and make her own decisions. She could not be allowed to essentially disobey her husband. In fact, they concluded that if she was allowed to disobey the King's request, then women



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throughout Persia would follow her lead and simply say when their husbands made a request of them “the queen did not do as the King asked, so why should I?” This could not happen. In Chapter 1 they conclude, “There will be no end to the discord and disrespect.” So Vashti is deposed and not allowed to enter into the King’s presence again. The search begins for someone fitting to replace her.

There is a major search for the next Queen. After the search is made there were hundreds of young girls brought to the King’s harem in Susa to be prepared to be the one who might be the Queen. Esther was one of those young virgin girls. Esther was an orphan who had been adopted by Mordecai. When Esther was brought to Susa, Mordecai followed. In fact, Mordecai would spend his time inquiring about what was happening to his niece through out the whole time she was in Susa.

We are told that for a year Esther was prepared for her time with the King. She was given beauty treatments and instructed in regards to her audience with the King. Interestingly, much like Daniel in Babylon, everyone who was impressed with Esther and that included King Xerxes. When Xerxes saw Esther he was impressed with her more than any of the others. Then the magical moment happened. Xerxes makes Esther his queen. The story is the Cinderella story. The young Jewish girl who has been orphaned has become the Queen of the Empire.

The story of Esther is one of those incredible stories of the one who should have been no one, who became someone, the very one that God chose to use. The Bible is full of how God raises up those who should have been forgotten to do something that will be remembered.

There is another plot in the Esther story and that is the story of Mordecai. When we think about Mordecai we think about a man who was faithful and did what was right in every situation. When Esther orphaned he takes her to be his daughter. When she is taken to Susa as part of this national beauty pageant, Mordecai follows her and continually is asking about her and making sure she is being treated well. When Mordecai hears of a plot to kill the King he speaks and gets involved and the King is saved and Mordecai is remembered and also honored at the end of the story. When Mordecai hears of the King’s intent to kill all of the Jewish people in the Empire, it is Mordecai who intervenes and encourages Esther to be bold and courageous in her role as Queen.

Esther’s story is of one who is experiencing incredible changes in life and at first is not sure why. Mordecai’s story is of one who is faithful in each and every moment as life changes.

So, how does God use them both to save God’s people? There is a man named Haman who becomes the second in charge in Persia. He is promoted to be the leader by Xerxes. He is promoted to such a position that everyone would bow down before him as he passed, that is everyone but Mordecai. The fact, Mordecai would not bow down before Haman angered Haman. So, much so that Haman wanted to take his revenge against Haman. Haman even hatched a plan to have Mordecai hung and built a gallows for that purpose. Ironically, Haman would be the one who would die at that very gallows. However, Haman did not only want to take Mordecai’s life, he also wanted to kill all of the Jewish people who were still in Persia. Why such hatred?

This is where a little history helps us. Haman is referred to throughout the book of Esther as Haman the Agagite. Agag was the King of the Amalekites and 500 years earlier they had been at war with Israel. King Saul had defeated the Amalekites and was to have killed Agag, but chose not too. This failure caused God to turn from Saul and ultimately to his demise and David’s ascent to the throne. Ultimately it would be Samuel who would kill Agag. Now 500 years later the anger, revenge and hatred between the two nations continued. Time had passed but Haman had not forgotten. It might be true that Mordecai also had not forgotten, since he alone would not bow down to Haman. Whatever the case, Haman’s hatred for Mordecai was intense and it was more than personal, it was against the whole people.

Haman convinced Xerxes to issue an edict to put to death all of the Jews in Persia, unknowing that his own Queen Esther was also a Jewess. When the news began to spread of this edict the Jewish people began to grieve. They put on sackcloth and ashes and entered a time of great uncertainty.

This is where our text today picks up the story. Mordecai reveals the plan to Esther and Esther is encouraged to take advantage of her role as Queen. Mordecai encourages her with those great words “who knows for such a time as this you have come to your royal position.”

Esther, of course, does the brave and courageous thing. The story is one of the great turns of events in the Bible. Esther has come to be Queen because

the first Queen would not come a feast. Now Esther would throw her own feast and invite the King and Haman to expose Haman. One Queen would not come when asked by her husband and now Esther would summons her husband, not something you were to do. In fact, she says this is unlawful and I might perish. Yet, after prayer and preparation she would make the request of the King. Xerxes would come to her feast as well as Haman and when Xerxes learns that Esther is a Jewess, the edict is rescinded and the story of course ends with Haman being put to death and Mordecai being raised to the position that Haman had occupied. God’s people had been saved.

Esther is another of those wonderful Old Testament stories that reminds us that God delivers and keeps His people. Just when things are the darkest and just when it seems there is no hope, God raises up those who God uses for His purpose and glory.

What are some lessons we can learn from the orphan made queen and from her faithful Mordecai?

First, we are reminded that God places us in places and situations where God can use us for God’s glory. There is an old saying in Real Estate that there are three important factors and they are location, location and location. I think it is also true of our spiritual lives. Understanding our surroundings, where we are, who is around us, and what is our location in life.

Esther is an example of someone who found herself in a place she could have never imagined and with a life she could not have imagined and for much of that time without the purpose she could have imagined. It was not until Mordecai encouraged her that she knew the purpose of her high standing.

Life can take us to places and situations we could never imagine. Sometimes they are places of high standing and sometimes they are the lowest of places emotionally, economically, vocationally and in regards to relationships. Yet, no matter where life seems to take us, becoming aware of our location and how God can use us in that place is of vital importance.

In Joseph’s story you may remember that after being sold into slavery and spending a life filled with ups

and downs, he finally is in charge of all of Egypt and comes face-to-face with his brothers who sold him into slavery. Yet, Joseph does not take revenge. He accepts the events of his life as God’s presence in his life. He would conclude what you meant for harm God has meant for good.

There are some simple questions we can ask ourselves to determine where we are and what God is doing. Why do I live in this city, neighborhood, or on this street? Who are my neighbors? Am I here by happenstance? Does God have a purpose for me in this location?

YOU AND I ARE HERE!
RIGHT HERE IN THIS PLACE,
IN THIS CHURCH, IN THIS
COMMUNITY, CITY AND
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FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS.
THIS IS OUR TIME. HOW
SHALL WE RESPOND?

Why do I have this job? Who is working around me? Who can I influence every day?

What can I do in retirement? Is it for me or is it for God? What can God do with me now that I have some more control over time? Who is in my family? What about my children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Why has God placed me in this location at this time in my life?

You and I are here! Right here in this place, in this church, in this community, city and nation. We are here for such a time as this. This is our time. How shall we respond?

Let me suggest four attitudes for responding to God here and now:

1. Have an attitude of openness. Esther was open to God. She did not know at first why her life had brought her to the palace but she was open to hearing from Mordecai and when she realized the situation she was open to being used by God. We might simply pray today “Lord I don’t know why I am here or why I am in this situation or location in life, but I am open to being used by you.” What wondrous things God can do when we open our lives to the work of God. We like Isaiah might simply say “Lord Here I am...send me” Let us be open to what God is doing in our lives right where we are.

2. Have an attitude of courage. Esther knew that now that she was open to God she was going to have to be courageous. Her actions could have meant the end of her life or at least her influence. She could have been simply put to the side like the first queen.