

ONCE UPON A THRONE
“Esther, the available agent”

We continue in our sermon series: *Once Upon a Throne*. This week we will look at the life of Esther. Though there are scriptures below to follow through the week, there is some advantage to simply reading through the book of Ester in its entirety. There is some debate among scholars to the historical accuracy of Esther. Many believe it is mostly novella, while others believe the Hebrew text should be considered with equal weight to other historical records. I am one who feels there is a significant difference between “historically accurate” and “true.” There is great truth in the book of Esther, and it is timeless. Esther is born into great difficulty, compounded by a society in which such a person would find very little favor, much less power and the position to save a generation of people. That said, Esther makes herself available to a great work, risking her own life, modeling for us what is often required to be agents for the Divine. I invite you to spend the week in this beautiful story of faith and social inversion. May the Spirit guide you to your own truth in this text and where in your life you might find new ways to honor a faithful God. Leslie Coates

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: “Esther: the available agent.”

Daily Prayer

Esther C: 14-25, 14:4-9

“My Lord, our King, You alone are our God.

*Please help me, for I am alone and I have no one else
but You to turn to; my life is in danger.*

*As a child I was always told by the people of the land
of my forefathers that You, O Lord, chose Israel
from among all peoples and designated our fathers
from among all their ancestors as a perpetual heritage,
and that all of Your promises to them were fulfilled.*

*Now, however, we have sinned in Your sight
by worshiping the gods of our enemies,
and You have delivered us into their hands
because You are just, O Lord ...*

Do not forget us, O Lord.

*Be present to us in the time of our distress and grant me courage,
O King of gods and Ruler of every earthly power ...*

*Save us by Your power, and come to my aid,
for I am alone and have no one but You on whom to depend, O Lord.”*

Amen.

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, July 5, 2021 Esther 1:10-21

Our story begins with the Queen Vashti refusing to humiliate herself in front of King Ahasuerus and his drunken fellows. We do not know for certain the fate of Queen Vashti for this open rebuke of the king, but we can assume it does not end well. She is no longer the Queen. Though today's lens, she does a good and righteous thing by refusing the King. We must be careful when applying all our own ideas upon an ancient text, but even within the context of the story the King has had too much to drink and thus his request is implied to be out of line. To the purpose the story of Esther, if it were not for Queen Vashti's refusal, Ester would never be given the opportunity to move into the role. If Esther were never Queen, then the salvation of the Jewish people in the story would be impossible. Sometimes, our hard decisions can mean very little good for our own life, but could easily set in motion the will of God. Are you willing to do what is right, unrewarded or even punished, in order to advance the kingdom of God?

Tuesday July 6, 2021 Esther 2:1-18

Let us be clear, this is an unpleasant text for the modern reader. In gentle retellings of this story, Esther win a "beauty contest" and thus the crown. The truth is, Esther is given over the king's harem and given one night with the king to prove she can please him better than all others in the competition. This is a vile set of circumstances. That said, the story offers a strong case to the effect we are not subject to our circumstances alone. We can make ourselves available to the will of God from anywhere. If Esther, in such a despicable situation can be an agent for good, what is possible for us?

Wednesday, July 7, 2021 Esther 4:10-17

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me. - Martin Niemöller (1892–1984)

Thursday, July 7, 2021 Esther 6:1-12

The story of Haman is a fascinating narrative to follow through the book of Esther. If the Greeks would have written the story, Haman would have been the central tragic figure. He is a man of great success and power who lets one matter of displeasure spiral into his own undoing. How often are we the same? In the midst of all your blessings, do you ever let one comment on social media, one rude driver, one personal or professional slight completely unravel you? Yeah, me too. Today, let us pray together to heed the warning offered through Haman's story in the book of Ester.

Friday, July 8, 2021 Ester 8:3-17

Esther and Mordecai work together, with permission of the king, to write a decree to counter the unchangeable decree earlier crafted by Haman. Haman had orchestrated a legal day of genocide against the Jews, and the law was considered unchangeable once written. Esther and Mordecai write a new decree giving the Jews permission to gather and defend themselves from the planned genocide. Purim, the Jewish holiday, is a two day festival honoring the end of the violence at the end of this story. What actions might you take today to put an end to violence and destruction in our world?