

SERMON
First Lutheran Church
Aitkin, Minnesota

Esther 4:1-17
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
December 9, 2018

Esther's parents died when she was young. Her cousin, **Mordecai**, took her into his own home to raise and protect. Esther was Jewish. Her people had been overrun by the Assyrians and shipped, in chains, into exile. Persia conquered Assyria and now Esther, her cousin and lots of Jews lived as a religious minority in the capital city of a sometimes-hostile Persian empire. Esther was a foreign alien, foster child, female, a nobody among nobodies.

Esther was fortunate that Mordecai protected her. But, then came the day that one of the Persian dignitaries spotted this beautiful young woman and brought her to **King Ahasuerus** to be one of his royal concubines. If all went well, she could end up as one of his wives. He even chose her to be queen, but **all** did not go well. **Haman**, one of King Ahasuerus' high officials, hated the Jewish people and convinced the king to order the extermination of all the Jews in Persia.

Mordecai learned of this and, knowing that Esther was in the palace of the king, figured she was the Jewish people's best hope for rescue from certain death. But, anybody who approached the king without invitation was subject to immediate execution. Are you getting any sense of how ruthless and arrogant people in power can sometimes be? Even Queen Esther faced death. First of all, she had managed to hide the fact that she was Jewish from the king. Secondly, even the queen could be killed for somehow questioning the king. What should she do? Should she claim her faith in God? Should she risk her life to save her people? This young, orphan girl never imagined that she might have the power to help anybody, let alone save her whole nation. Can God move through nobodies, powerless, even victimized people to bring about amazing rescue in this world? There is plenty of evil in this world. Can **you** or I stand against it?

Mordecai told Esther, "**Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your**

father's family will perish. **Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.**" Did you hear what Mordecai said?

1. **If you don't choose** to help God's people, **God will save them** in **some other way.**
2. Maybe God is bringing things into place specifically so that **you can do what God needs to have done.**

You heard what Esther decided to do. She asked for God's help. She asked for the support of God's people. And she went to ask the king not to kill her people. Our text ends there. Do you know what happened? The king spared the Jews. The king killed his wicked advisor. And the Jewish people survived once again.

And what about you dear sister or brother in Christ? How are things going in your world today? **Who knows? Perhaps you have come to this place for just such a time as this.**" Maybe God has plans for **you to help save someone.** . .

Ancient Persia - Esther, orphan, alien, woman - one person who stood against evil in the world for the sake of all the people. **The first Christmas** - Jesus, one little baby, born in a barn, soon to become a refugee, pursued by the wicked king's soldiers, born to die and rise again in the face of evil to save all the people. To save you and me. To bring everlasting love and peace to all people. **He was born in that place for you and for me. Today** - You or me, one person against evil in the world for all the people. Remember "**The Three Musketeers?**" "**All for one and one for all.**" Jesus came to gather you, me and thousands of others like us to bring life, hope and joy to all people, all children, your kids and mine, grandkids – in a changing climate, changing culture, changing church – same God - **Jesus and you and me.** And what about you dear sister or brother in Christ? **Who knows? Perhaps you have come to this place for just such a time as this.**" Who do you know who needs rescue today?

Millie Stohl, from my first parish in Outing, recently sent me a note. She sealed it with, "**In God We Trust.**" That's how she signs every note. The note said, "**You are needed where you are. As in the heavens each and every star fills appointed space so you fill that place where God has need. Oh, do not doubt – your hand held out to help a friend, your love to warm an empty heart, even**

your smile to light the dark. Walk in serene grace, you are needed in that place.” Who knows? Perhaps you have come to this place for a specific purpose.

Carol Tripp, your old fellow First Lutheran member, died this past year. We recently received a check and this note: “From the **estate of Carol Tripp** to go to the **alleviation of World Hunger** from First Lutheran Church - **\$20,000**. This is a partial amount from the estate as the rest of the gift will be given after the 2018 Income Tax season and the bills are paid.” Carol Tripp, was nursing home bound, barely able to speak for the past several years. Yet, Carol figured out a way to battle hunger and death even once she’d left this world. Fires, floods, refugees - **Who knows? Perhaps she came to this place for just such a time as this.**

From a **December 2018 Kiwanis magazine** article on Mister Rogers, “**But what many of us remember most about Mister Rogers is the way he made us feel. He spoke directly to us, like a friend. He was gentle. Soft-spoken. Honest. Kind. . . People think of him as a television innovator, as an early childhood expert, as a musician, as a scriptwriter, as a songwriter, as a performer, as a puppeteer. But what he cared about more than any of that is human kindness. . . Rogers’ background in television, religion (he was a Presbyterian minister) and early childhood education studies gave him a unique perspective and the opportunity to reach millions of children to spread his message of love and kindness and acceptance.” Mister Rogers believed and taught, “**There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind.**” Did God give us Mister Rogers? Is his message still true? Does God want you and me to help carry kindness on?**

Our synod sent out this message from the Website, “**Unfundamentalist**”: “**Do not be dismayed by the brokenness in the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.**” (L. R. Knost) **Who knows? Perhaps God brought you to this place for just such a time as this.** Here’s the good news. God will be moving to give **life, hope and joy** no matter what you say. God bless us as we watch for where God needs us and then marvel at what God can and will do when we say, “**Yes, Lord.**” Thanks be to God. Amen.

