ESTHER: Doing Good in a Hostile World:

Oct. 26 (Fall Festival): Such a Time as This: Esther 4:1-14

**1 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. 2 But he went only as far as the king’s gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. 3 In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.**

**4 When Esther’s eunuchs and female attendants came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king’s eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.**

**6 So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.**

**9 Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, 11 “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”**

**12 When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”**

I. ASSESS YOUR TIME: “**find out what was troubling Mordecai and why**” (v5)

 A. Knowing the times is important. The top counselors for Xerxes were people who knew the times they were in.

 1. Esther does some research. She sends Hathak to talk with Mordecai and find out what is going on and why.

 2. She wants to know both the facts as they are and the reason things have come to this.

 B. Knowing the times includes knowing both DANGERS and OPPORTUNITIES.

 1. Every time has its dangers. Some of these dangers can only be faced with measured force and determined resolve. Esther knows the dangers of her time.

 2. Every time has its opportunities.

 C. We are to be “redeeming the time because the days are evil.”

 D. I hear perpetual complaints about our time, this time that we live in here in these United States. \*\*\*A friend of many years pulled me aside at a Wal-Mart this week to let me know that the world is going to hell in a hand basket, that we live in wicked times.

 1. You may lament your time if you desire to do so. Esther certainly could have lamented the time in which she lived.

 2. The lament has the potential to sidetrack you, to prevent you from getting the job done.

 3. The lament about your time may not be as accurate as you think it is. It may be that your time is no better nor worse morally than other times in human history.

II. AVOID EXCUSING YOURSELF: “**But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king” (v11)**

 A. Esther has not been in to see the king for 30 days. She does not know how he will feel about her barging into his presence without an invitation. She could be executed.

 1. This danger might prevent her from going to the king on behalf of her people. She might excuse herself because of the risk.

 2. The danger her people face is real but unexpected—a Development that Could Not Be Anticipated. She might excuse herself because she feels unprepared.

 B. Do Not Excuse Yourself By Seeing the Danger of Your Time: “such a time.”

 1. That would mean that you are laboring in your life under a false impression—that your time is particularly wicked. It would also mean that you have misjudged your own time and its potential for good.

 2. It may mean that you are looking for a way to excuse yourself from the assignment that God has given you.

 C. You have come to this moment in history by divine plan. In other words, you are under DIVINE ASSIGNMENT to be present in the world today.

 1. This is true despite the difficulty of the time.

 2. This is true despite the personal danger you are in.

 D. Do Not Excuse Yourself By Claiming Uncertainty: “who knows”

 E. The GOVERNMENT IS NO PLACE TO HIDE when action is required of godly men and women. “**“Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape” (v13)**

 1. “Let the government do it,” is too common a refrain from God’s people.

 2. The government will not be the source of salvation for individuals or for this culture. That will come from the righteouse influence of the people of God.

III. AFFIRM GOD’S ACTIVITY: “**For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place” (v14)**

 A. This TIME IS LIKE ANY OTHER IN THIS REGARD:

 1. God is at work in this time.

 2. You can join him.

 B. Mordecai is certain that God will deliver his people.

 1. God is in control.

 2. God will not abandon his people.

 3. God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

 4. You can be certain that God is active in this day and time regardless of the difficulties, wickedness, or danger.

 C. You can be part of the problem of your time.

 1. God’s activity in your time is beyond question.

 2. Esther can be part of the problem. She can be silent. If she says nothing, avoiding disclosing her true identity, she thinks she might be spared the dangers of her time.

 3. You can be silent, too. You do not have to speak out on behalf of the innocent and vulnerable. You got your piece of the pie. Why worry about anyone else? As long as the world blows up after they have put you peacefully into the grave, what do you care?

 D. God’s unlimited resources: “from another place”

IV. ACCEPT YOUR ASSIGNMENT: **And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (v14)**

 A. Mordecai and Esther have DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENTS

 1. Mordecai has the wisdom to know the time, but he does not have the POSITION to influence the king.

 2. Esther has the POSITION to influence the king, but she needs the guidance and encouragement of Mordecai.

 3. These two will work together to bring deliverance.

 B. Think about the POSITION GOD HAS GIVEN YOU. See your position as God’s gift not only for you but for others who need your godly influence.

 C. Consider the possibility that you have achieved your position of influence, not for personal gain, but for the advance of the Kingdom of God in your time.

 D. Make the DETERMINATION TO ACT in Your Time

 1. Make the Costly Decision to Disclose Your True Identity, to identify with the people of God though they may be despised.

 2. Make the Costly decision to speak out for the innocent. This is risky business in any culture. Those with no voice, with no influence, are often overlooked and under-resourced. They cannot put pressure on the king, the government. It remains for you, righteous person, to lift your voice on behalf of the widow, the orphan, those in danger. Just as Esther lifted her voice and took the risk, so you must do the same.

Conclusion: A time of confusion and uncertainty is an opportunity for witness by God’s people. **Bewildered City (Esther 3:15): The couriers went out, spurred on by the king’s command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.**