

September 18, 2005
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
"Now What?"
Esther 4:13-17 NLT

Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not mention the name of God. However, it is filled with Divine providence. Everyone know the story of Esther? The king of Persia invited all his princes and officials, he invited military officers and other big-wigs to a banquet so that he could show off the wealth and glory of his empire. When that banquet was over, the king gave a special banquet for all the palace servants and officials. After he had been partying for several days, the drunken king order that his queen, Queen Vashti be brought out to display herself to his drunken guests. She was very beautiful and he wanted to show her off too, probably in a immodest and indecent way. Courageously she refused. Good for her!

This really ticked-off the king and he immediately consulted with his advisers as to what should be done about it. His advisors said, we have to do something about this right away, for when our wives hear about how the queen spoke to the king they will start treating us the same way. So they decision was to banish the queen forever from the kings presence and choose a another queen. So a search was made of the entire empire to find someone beautiful for the king. Esther was one of these beautiful young ladies and she was the one that pleased the king the most, and so he made her the new queen. Esther was Jewish but she didn't tell the king that.

Esther's mother and father had died and so Esther was adopted by her cousin, Mordecai, who raised her as his own daughter. Now, at that time the king's most trusted advisor was an egotistical man by the name of Haman. He hated Mordecai because Haman demanded that people bow to him as he passed by but Mordecai, a devout Jew, couldn't do it in good conscience. In rage, Haman sought revenge, not only on Mordecai but the entire Jewish population of the empire. So, he persuaded the king to issue a decree permitting him to kill all Jews and seize their property and the King agreed. When Mordecai learned about this he requested Esther's help.

At first Esther was not willing to help because of the danger involve, and she sent her excuse in a message to Mordecai. We take up the story from there:

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Mordecai sent back this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that you will escape there in the palace when all other Jews are killed. 14 If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. What's more, who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?"

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will

do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I am willing to die." 17 So Mordecai went away and did as Esther told him.

Of course the end of the story is that Esther was able to save the Jews and to this day the Jews celebrate that every year during a Jewish Holiday called Purim (which means *lots* because lots were cast by Haman to determine the month and day to destroy the Jews).

Esther was most likely a teenager who became a queen through an incredible series of events (that some may call a coincidence – I call it a coincidence when God acts but chooses to remain anonymous...at least for a while). When the king was tricked into signing a decree to wipe out the Jews, the only person in the world who could influence the king to save the people was Esther. But not even the queen could just walk into the presence of the king without being invited to do so. The king could choose to put someone to death for that (aren't you glad we don't serve a King like that? Because of Jesus, God lovingly welcomes and invites us to come into His presence at any time without fear). When Mordecai sent word to Esther urging her to go to the king for mercy and plead for the people she must have asked, "How did I get myself into this predicament? Why me? And now, what do I do – now what!" To do nothing meant the death of her people. To go to the king could be the cause her own death. A decision had to be made. It was her "Now what?" moment.

Esther's story is our story.

First we may suddenly find ourselves in circumstances beyond our control. When we do, we may, like Esther, come face to face with the need to make choices. Many of these choices may be moral choices. What is the right thing to do? It may mean the loss of comfort, popularity, or even life. We may hesitate, like Esther did. Will we choose against what God wants, to the threat of our very souls? Are you in a situation beyond your control? Are you asking yourself, "How did I get here? Why me?" Realize that you are not asking the right question. The right question is, "Now what?" What are you going to do? How can you use this difficult situation to best serve God and others? Are you going to let God use you to turn this problem, weakness, grief into an opportunity to do something wonderful for God and others?

Secondly, Esther's story is our story because we Christians are also in a position to save people slated for death. There are people without hope and without God in this world and may be separated from hope and God forever. You have the message of hope. You know that their life can be changed if they knew Jesus. God wants to use you. God has you where you are in this era, in your position, at your job, in your neighborhood in your school, in your sphere of influence "for such a time as this." (Acts 17:26 NIV) "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." Like Mordecai told Esther (v14), "If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance ... will arise from some other place, but ... who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?"

God is calling you into a revolution that began 2000 years ago by Jesus. It is a revolutionary call to fight for the heart of humanity. Our weapons are faith, hope and love, but this war is still a dangerous one. The cost to participate is nothing less than everything we are and everything we have. You are called to a radical commitment and devotion to Jesus. Fighting for the heart of our King must become your all-consuming passion. "If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance ... will arise from some other place" (God will use someone else), but God has put you here "for just such a time as this." Don't miss your calling. Don't live to just count your days here on earth. Rather make your days on earth count. Your question needs to be, "Now what? I want to follow you Jesus, now what? What do you want me to do?"