"For Such a Time as This"
October 25, 2026

Esther 4:12-17

The book of Esther begins by painting a portrait of a king who is both foolish and narcissistic. King Ahasuerus of Persia throws a party that lasts for six straight months. And sometime in the middle of that party, the king decides he wants his wife, Queen Vashti, to parade in front of his drunken guests for their entertainment.

When Queen Vashti refuses to degrade herself in the manner the King requires, he decides to banish her. And then the King proceeds to engage in an empire-wide search for a new queen to take Vashti's place. Sort of like a massive royal beauty pageant put on to satisfy the King's own ego and pleasure.

Esther, a beautiful Jewish orphan, who was raised by her cousin Mordecai, winds up winning this beauty pageant, of sorts, when she is chosen by the King. All the while, however, Esther hides her own secret. The fact that she is Jewish.

At this point in the Biblical story, Haman enters the scene. The true villain in the Book of Esther, Haman is one of the King's most trusted advisors. A conniving man in the inner circle who has the King's ear and the King's trust, Haman sits at the King's right hand eager to drum up his own evil schemes under the guise of the King's permission.

One day, Haman is angered by Mordecai because Mordecai declares his allegiance to the God of Israel rather than bowing down to him. In fact, Haman is so incensed by Mordecai and this perceived slight that he decides he is going to wipe out all the Jewish people living in the kingdom. Undoubtedly an insecure man with an overinflated sense of self. The kind of man who can be truly dangerous when he sits in a seat of power or has unfettered access to someone in power.

In any case, Haman approaches King Ahasuerus with his grandiose plan to have the Persian army annihilate all the Jewish people living in the land and plunder all their goods while they're at it. And somehow, the King buys into Haman's evil scheme. Which means Haman must have been quite persuasive. Or the King shares Haman's passion for destroying all the Jews in his land. Or perhaps the King trusts Haman so implicitly that he goes along with the plan and doesn't really think through the details or the consequences.

In the aftermath of his decision, the King sends out a decree across the land to slaughter all Jewish people. The one thing the King does not realize is that if and when Haman's plan is carried out, the King's newly chosen wife will be among the many Jewish victims who will lose their lives at his hands.

Esther's cousin Mordecai, on the other hand, understands all too well what's at stake. And he seeks out Queen Esther to let her know clearly what is about to happen. At first, Esther is hesitant to intercede, knowing that no one, not even the queen, is allowed to enter the King's throne room without an invitation. Under the penalty of death, no less.

It doesn't take long for Esther, however, to come to terms with how much it will cost her and her people if she can't find a way to stop her new husband. Which brings us to this morning's Scripture lesson and the pivotal moment in the Book of Esther. Will Esther rise up and fulfill Mordecai's request in spite of her own fear and the immense risk involved? Will Esther step up and act boldly in order to save her people?

The entire storyline hinges on Mordecai's poignant speculation in this morning's Scripture lesson. *"For if you indeed keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise 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."*

One can only imagine how much pressure Queen Esther felt. The magnitude of the decision resting squarely on her shoulders. The widespread genocide that would result if she chose not to take any action. Failure to act was not a viable choice for Esther. Yet choosing to act was extraordinarily perilous at the same time…

There's something appealing about this story for all of us who extol the virtue of personal responsibility. While the story of Queen Esther needing to step in to save her entire race of people may be an extreme example, there comes a point in all of our lives when we have to choose what to do and what not to do. Even if it's hard. Even if it's not glamourous. Even if it's dangerous. From time to time, God presents each one of us with opportunities to take action on behalf of people who cannot take action for themselves.

To her great credit, however, Queen Esther realized she did not have to take on Haman and the King without help. Meaning before she ever reached out to the King, Esther reached out to her own community. She went back to her own roots…to the people who had raised her and nurtured her and helped shape her identity. And Esther asked her people across the land to do two things.

Fast for three days straight with no eating or drinking during the day or the night. And pray fervently while they were fasting. Meanwhile, Esther promised her people that she would fast and pray in the same manner she asked of them. And by the time the three days of fasting and prayer were over, Esther was motivated enough to go and ask the King to reverse course.

As much as you and I might value personal responsibility and the ability to make hard decisions when called upon, Esther recognized something equally significant. Communal responsibility. The power of a community to lift us up and give us strength and carry us forward when we're not sure we have enough wherewithal to do it alone.

Yes, in the end Esther had to execute the plan. She alone was the one who had to follow through and walk into the King's chambers and talk the King and Haman out of their evil scheme. But after three days straight when all her Jewish people prayed for her and inspired her and gave her courage. By the end of those three days, Esther had a groundswell of support and momentum behind her pushing her forward to carry out her mission in spite of the risk involved…

You and I have never taken it upon ourselves to fast for three days straight as a congregation. But every single Sunday morning and at various points throughout the week, we take time to pray together. Asking God to listen to us and lead us. Knowing God gives us opportunities all the time to take meaningful action on behalf of people in the world who need strength and compassion and perseverance and justice and support to make it through the living of their days.

When I think of the faithfulness of Esther's community long ago, I think of the faithfulness of this community here at Wapping Church. When we gather as a congregation, we give one another strength to do really hard things in our own individual lives. When we gather as a congregation, we combine our resources to feed the ones who are hungry and clothe those who need warmth and comfort those who are grieving and welcome those who are lost and looking to find home again.

When we gather as a congregation, it looks a lot like the big dinner we held in our Community Room on Friday night. A meal created for the South Windsor community, served by this Wapping church community so that friends and strangers can share a meal at communal tables. None of us could put on a meal like that for all those people without the support and hard work of those around us willing to share the effort. In the end, however, you and I bear some communal responsibility for our brothers and sisters, knowing we are in this together.

Whether it's a Community Dinner or a Foodshare distribution in the parking lot or a drive to collect jars of peanut butter and jelly for MACC or a group of people sorting food over at Midwest Food Bank or people dropping off cans and bottles to support scouting groups in Northeast Hartford or youth groups doing mission work in rural and urban settings up and down the East coast or children collecting VBS food for the South Windsor Food Bank. In so many ways, Wapping Community Church gives life and hope to others.

We are all about community. It says so right in our name…Wapping Community Church. We are people who understand the same thing Esther's community understood long ago. When we pool our time and our energy and our financial gifts and our skills and our devotion and our prayers. And when we call on God to work with us to encourage and multiply our efforts. We can accomplish much more as a whole body of Christ than any of us could hope to do on our own. In fact, there's very little we can't accomplish for such a time as this. Amen.