# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“God’s Right Place at God’s Right Time”**

**Esther 4:13-17**

 **August 27, 2023**

Our Old Testament person of faith this morning is Esther, the Jewish orphan girl who became Queen of the Persian Empire and saved her people. Our story begins with Xerxes, the King of Persia, throwing an elaborate banquet. After he and his pals have had a lot to drink, he orders his wife, Queen Vashti, to be paraded before them. She refuses and as a result is banished. Since Xerxes needs a new queen, an ancient version of the Miss America pageant is held, only in Persia the young women are forced to participate whether they want to or not. One of those young women is Esther. Her parents have died and she is under the care of her older cousin, Mordecai. Esther is eventually brought to the king and he chooses her to be his new queen.

Then, we are introduced to the king’s closest adviser. His name is Haman, and the king has commanded that all are to bow down in honor to Haman. Mordecai the Jew refuses to bow down to Haman, and this infuriates Haman. He decides not only to find a way to kill Mordecai, but to exterminate all the Jews in Persia. Haman tells the king that there are a group of people throughout the empire who do not honor the king’s commands and advises that they be destroyed. Xerxes agrees, and a decree goes out that on a specific date in the future, all the Jews are to be killed – young and old, men and women and children alike – and those who kill them may keep their property.

When Mordecai learns of the king’s order, he tears his clothes and sits in ashes and weeps for his people. Word gets back to Esther that Mordecai is in mourning and, not knowing about the king’s edict, she sends a messenger to Mordecai to find out what’s going on. Mordecai sends her a copy of the king’s decree and begs her to go before the king and plead for mercy for the Jews. Esther sends word back to Mordecai that no one is allowed to approach the king without being summoned, and to do so is punishable by death. I invite you to turn with me to Esther 4:13-17 where we pick up the story

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: “Don’t think for a moment that because you’re in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?” Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “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 must die.” So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

The story continues. Esther goes to the king who receives her with pleasure. She convinces him to approve a second edict by which the Jews are allowed to protect themselves. Haman and those who hate the Jews enough to try and kill them are themselves killed. Mordecai takes Haman’s place as the king’s prime minister. Esther’s courage has saved her people from extinction, and in response the Jews have a great celebration, the feast of *Purim,* which is still celebrated by Jews around the world.

What do we learn from the story of Esther? We learn that God puts us in the right place at the right time, to serve him and to accomplish his will. As Mordecai points out to Esther, it is no coincidence that she has become queen. “For such a time as this” God has Esther in the right place so that at the right time he can use her to carry out his plan for his people. The same principle is at work in our lives.

It is not mere coincidence that you work where you do. It is not fate that you live in the neighborhood where you live. It is not by accident that you have met the people who are a part of your life. It is not by chance that you are here today as a part of this worshipping family of faith, whether you’re a first time visitor or a lifelong member of this church. God has a purpose for you here, and if you trust God that this is the right place for you to be and the right time for you to be here, you are ready to respond to the biblical call, “for such a time as this.”

What time is this in our church? It is a time of transition as I prepare to retire after 18 years as your pastor. It is a time of uncertainty as your new pastor has not yet been publicly identified, let alone come on board to begin his ministry with you. For such a time as this you are here. Will you trust God that he has you in the right place at the right time, ready to use you to carry out his plan for this church? “Who, me?” you ask. Yes, you. Not because of who you are, but because of who God is.

This is God’s right time for me to retire and for this church to be shepherded by a new pastor. At God’s right time, Jesus Christ came into the world, and at the right time and in the right place, on a cross, he died for our sin. Three days later he rose that you and I, who believe in him, may be forgiven and receive eternal life. We’re about to celebrate God’s right time around this communion table, and to thank him for sending his Son. I am convinced that there will come a day in the near future when we will look back on this time in the life of our church, and we will celebrate it as having been God’s right time, for me and for you.