

Perhaps - Esther 4

1. Perhaps – Faithfulness in Uncertainty

There are many who seem to be filled with uncertainty and doubt about the status of the world today. Sometimes I am among those– I look around at what is happening in our country and wonder what in the world I am supposed to do. How am I to respond to the injustices we are witnessing?

2. Uncertainties

I've sat with uncertainty more times than I care to admit, reading unbelievable headlines, watching injustice after injustice play out in front of me and in the rest of the world and thinking that there isn't anything I can possibly do to make a difference. Thoughts swirl through my head such as, I'm just one person; my voice won't be heard. My actions can't be great enough to make any real difference. In the middle of those thoughts though, there's a whisper...perhaps...perhaps ...

My mind wanders to the story of Esther. Esther the Jewish orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, who becomes queen. Esther and Mordecai who save the King from death. Mordecai who learns of Haman's plan to enact genocide among all Jewish people and with Esther's help, performs God's will to save them.

3. Esther

In chapter 4 – Mordecai and the Jewish people are in great distress and are lamenting. Esther learns of Mordecai's lament and offers him clothing so that he may remove his sackcloth, his physical signal of lament. Mordecai sends word back to Esther pleading for her to go the King, ask him to have mercy on their people. Esther replied to Mordecai:

4: Esther 4:11

¹¹“All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that, if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law: to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days.”

5. Holding Back

In this moment she's holding back and does not want to risk her life to make this plea to the king. Esther's response is relatable. She is most likely living a good life in the palace. She is removed from the lament that the Jewish people, who are her people, are feeling in this moment and she is only surviving this world by hiding her Jewishness.

How often do we act in the same manner? Many of us are safe and protected, comfortable, the injustices happening on the news aren't on our doorsteps so perhaps we can just look the other way. Our families aren't being torn apart. Our tables have food. Do we really need to worry so much about what's happening outside of our homes?

6. Called to do more

Friends, we are called to do more.

Mordecai could've taken Esther's answer and just had faith that God would find another way to deliver the Jewish people from this genocide - but he sees the divine workings in Esther's life and has more to say to his adopted daughter.

7. Esther 4:12-14

¹² When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, ¹³ Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, 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."

8. Faith and Choice

Mordecai has the faith; Esther has the choice. Mordecai knows that even if Esther says no, God will deliver the people from this atrocity. He knows that God is faithful and will provide.

IF Esther says no to this plea to go to the King her consequences are grave. Staying silent will not save her. Even if her and her family didn't literally die in the genocide, she would lose her community, her people. All of her family would be separated from her. This sort of death, or separation from community is one that few can fathom.

9. Perhaps

The latter part of verse 14 offers an alternative call from Mordecai – Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this. Mordecai recognizes how Esther's life has prepared her for this moment and is challenging her to accept this call to do what is right and act faithfully to God. Mordecai, who has become like a father to Esther is encouraging her to act boldly and have courage. He is guiding Esther in this moment of uncertainty. Esther hears Mordecai, someone she loves and trusts telling her that this is her time, her call, that she is no longer able to be idle, she must do something. She hears the whisper of perhaps.

10: Esther 4:15-16

¹⁵ Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

11. Esther's Decision

Esther goes to the King uninvited and gains the king's favor. She hosts two banquets with the King and Haman. During the second banquet she bravely reveals Haman's plot to kill all of the Jewish people. The king was enraged and ordered the death of Haman and honors Mordecai by giving him his signet. Esther chose to act. She chose to listen to Mordecai's plea and go to the King. Instead of death, Esther and the Jewish people lived because she was willing to put her life on the line.

12. Your Call

Esther heard the call of God through Mordecai and answered courageously. Will you answer your call as bravely as Esther did? Will you step out courageously in faith to do kingdom work?

Perhaps your role is to be a voice of wisdom, encouragement, and faithfulness like Mordecai reminding the Esther's in your life that God is calling them to act courageously. Who are you encouraging to be faithful? Who are you raising up to be the hands and feet of God in this unjust world?

13. Your choice

Maybe we don't feel like our calling is as great as Esther's. Maybe we don't see our influence and encouragement being as strong as Mordecai. But we are being faced with choices each day. People are starving, families are being separated, people are choosing fear and hate. We have a choice how we respond to the world around us. We have a choice in how we choose to listen to the Holy's call on our lives. We can live in a place of uncertainty and fear and denial, or we can choose to be radically different and accept that perhaps we were made for such a time as this. Perhaps we are the ones called to make a difference.

So what will you do? Will you serve your community? Will you feed the hungry? Will you stand with our undocumented neighbors and help keep families together? Will you speak against the hate that is being spewed into every corner of our lives? Will you be a safe space for those who have no safety? Will you choose to love all of your neighbors? God will remain faithful and will deliver those suffering with or without your help. But like Esther, there will be consequences for those that choose not to act. Are you ready to accept the fate of inaction?

Each of us has a choice to make – will we sit idly as we witness hate and injustice, or will we respond as we are commanded by our creator because perhaps, perhaps we were made for such a time as this.

Reading from Clarissa Pinkola Estes¹- <https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=2195>

14. We Were Made For These Times – Clarissa Pinkola Estes

I'd like to leave you with an excerpt from Clarissa Pinkola Estes who I think offers some insight into our call to be courageous and faithful to do the kingdom work that begs our attention –

“My friends, do not lose heart. We were made for these times. I have heard from so many recently who are deeply and properly bewildered. They are concerned about the state of affairs in our world now. Ours is a time of almost daily astonishment and often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters most to civilized, visionary people.

You are right in your assessments. The luster and hubris some have aspired to while endorsing acts so heinous against children, elders, everyday people, the poor, the unguarded, the helpless, is breathtaking. Yet, I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is that we were made for these times. Yes.

For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement.

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good.

What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take everyone on Earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.

Pause

15. Legacy

¹ Awakin.org, “We Were Made for These Times, by Clarissa Pinkola Estes,” <http://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=2195>.

When we are faced with doubts about what we can do, I beg you to remember the legacy we follow. A small group of rabble rousers welcomed the outsider, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and challenged empire. And it is precisely because of their faithfulness and courage that we are gathered here today. They had challenges too, because when you go up against the Roman Empire, you lose. And truthfully, they did lose, they were killed for going against oppressive powers. But even though they knew that death would likely be certain, they carried on, faithfully fulfilling their call. And so, just as they were faced with difficult choices of social isolation, unsureness, and even death, just as Esther was, we too are faced with a choice to lean in or look away.

16. Perhaps

So, friends, when faced with the injustices around you do not be discouraged. Lean into the Holy's call. God has been at work preparing you to be courageous and faithful. Perhaps, you were created for such a time as this.

Let's pray