

## **“Incredible Heroes of the Faith” – Esther – Esther 4:1-17**

I want to begin with a fictitious and humorous obituary – sounds like an oxymoron, right? Today, our church was saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our most valued members, their name is “Someone Else.” Someone Else’s passing creates a vacancy that will be very difficult to fill. Someone Else has been with us for many years and for every one of those years, Someone Else did far more than a normal person’s share of the work. Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, or a meeting to attend, one person was always looked to, “Let’s ask Someone Else do it.” Whenever leadership was needed, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results; “Someone Else will get it done.” It was common knowledge that Someone Else was among the most generous givers in our church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed Someone Else would make up the difference as they usually did. Someone Else was a wonderful person. Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone! We wonder what we are going to do without Someone Else!

The Jewish people in Esther’s day also wondered what they were going to do. They wondered if someone else was going to come to their rescue. The Jews in Esther’s day had been threatened with extermination. An evil man, named Haman had been given the King Xerxes’ signet ring and therefore he had the authority to have all the Jewish people destroyed, killed and annihilated. A date for this destruction was chosen by casting lots, and the decree that was written as a law of the Medes and Persians, was irrevocable. Can you imagine how hopeless and helpless the Jewish people must have felt at this point?

Yet in the midst of all this, God was not sleeping. In God’s all-knowing plan, He determined that He would put one person in a position to make a difference when this horrific plan would be put in place. That person was Esther. Let’s listen to her story...

The story of Esther takes place during the exile, or what some people call the Babylonian Captivity, around the year 479 BC. The Book of Esther was written years later, shortly after the Jews returned to their home land. The Jews were rebuilding their cities and towns. Life was a struggle and their faith was shattered. The Jews didn’t know what to believe. Esther was written to give the people hope and to explain how God was still a part of their lives.

Life as a Christian in America is good for the most part, but that doesn’t mean that we are immune from sickness, grief, broken relationships, dashed dreams and a bruised faith. The story of Esther shares with us some timeless truths of which we need to be reminded.

When tragedies strike, we are tempted to shut down. We can become paralyzed with fear, like a deer caught in a car’s headlights. We can hold a pity party and fall into a hole of despair. We can become confused and disorientated.

In chapter 14 verse 3 we see that this was the reaction of most of the Jews. There was great mourning, fasting, weeping and lamenting. The people laid in sackcloth and ashes. There was little hope and a lot of despair.

Mordecai acted. He dressed in sackcloth, but he did so in front of the king’s palace. He attracted attention and communicated the unjust action to the people of the community.

Mordecai also tried to get the attention of his niece, the Queen, and challenged Esther to act sooner than later. He sends this request through Esther's servant Hathach.

At first, Esther doesn't want to act. She fears what the repercussions might be for her personally. She knew it meant death to go before the King unannounced, even for the Queen. Mordecai perseveres and Esther is finally persuaded to enter into the king's presence. **Read v14** – "for such a time as this," one of the great speeches of the Bible.

There are not great miracles in Esther's story. God doesn't appear to her in a burning bush, nor does God send an angel to speak to her. There are not plagues or crossing of the Red Sea. No one walks on water and there is no blinding flash of light or voice from heaven.

God is only seen indirectly in story of Esther. God's name is never mentioned. Some people wanted to take the book of Esther out of the Bible because it doesn't contain the name of God. God's presence is assumed, though, throughout the story.

God is working behind the scenes and is the cause of several coincidences.

- By coincidence Esther becomes queen after queen Vashti upsets the king.
- By coincidence Mordecai overheard the plot to kill the king and thus saved the king's life.
- By coincidence Mordecai learned of the plot by Haman to massacre the Jews.

Then he used the courage of one person to save His people.

The story of Esther also reminds us how God 500 years later, sent His Son, one man to redeem the world. He came as a servant, not a King. He was sinless, but took the place of sinners, me and you, and the world. And in what seemed the two most unlikeliest places in the world, on an executioner's cross and a garden tomb, God broke the curse of sin which was death, and brought us the victory over sin, death, and the power of Satan, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

In reflecting upon this story of courage in Esther, there is one point of application I would like us to come to grips with: Each one can make a difference. You can make a difference. In an overpopulated world, it's easy to underestimate the significance of one person. There are so many people who have so many gifts and skills who are already doing so many things that are so important, who needs me, right? Ask someone else.

The truth is, every one of us is a unique creation of God. You are the only you in all the world, and I am the only me there is. We are the only one with our exact personal convictions, our personality, our skills, our appearance, our touch, voice, style and our sphere of influence. God doesn't want me to be anyone else; He made me to be me, and He made you to be you. And God continually works things out in a way that He brings us to a place where He needs us to employ our unique selves in His story.

God brings us to those moments when we have been called for "such a time as this." It is in those moments when we can really make a difference. I don't know what your special hour or task is, or when or what it will be. Your "such a time as this" might be a ministry or need or a person in our church family. The possibilities are unlimited. Or your "such a time as this" might be a need or a person in the world. Again, the possibilities are unlimited. But don't let the options and possibilities overwhelm you.

Let me end with this classic illustration: "Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the rising of the sun, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that it was a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean. He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?" The young man paused, looked up, and replied, "I'm throwing starfish into the ocean." "I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the wise man. He replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

The wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!" At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "I made a difference for that one."

Just like that young man, and just like Esther, one person can make a difference. Will you make a difference or will you just hope that someone else will do it? In Jesus. Amen.