

Ever heard the term "influencer"? It's usually someone on social media who "influences" the rest of us to buy or do certain things. 2,000 years ago, Jesus called His people to be "salt" and "light" which means to be influencers in a world that needs God's grace and love. Few have been a bigger or better influencer than Esther. Join us as we begin a six-week study of Esther and discover, through this amazing woman, how we can be influencers for the Kingdom of God today! Part one begins Sunday, January 15 with "A Role She Didn't Seek."

**+ CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION +**

*LSB 578 THY STRONG WORD*

sts. 1–3

- 1 Thy strong word did cleave the darkness;  
At Thy speaking it was done.  
For created light we thank Thee,  
While Thine ordered seasons run.  
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!  
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!
- 2 Lo, on those who dwelt in darkness,  
Dark as night and deep as death,  
Broke the light of Thy salvation,  
Breathed Thine own life-breathing breath.  
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!  
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!
- 3 Thy strong Word bespeaks us righteous;  
Bright with Thine own holiness,  
Glorious now, we press toward glory,  
And our lives our hopes confess.  
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!  
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!

*(The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.)*

**P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**P** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**C** **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

*(Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.)*

**P** Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

**C** **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

**P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

*LSB 578 THY STRONG WORD*

sts. 4, 6

4 From the cross Thy wisdom shining  
Breaketh forth in conqu'ring might;  
From the cross forever beameth  
All Thy bright redeeming light.  
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!  
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!

△ 6 God the Father, light-creator,  
To Thee laud and honor be.  
To Thee, Light of Light begotten,  
Praise be sung eternally.  
Holy Spirit, light-revealer, Glory, glory be to Thee.  
Mortals, angels, now and ever Praise the holy Trinity!

Text: Martin H. Franzmann, 1907–76

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*SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY*

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace through all our days; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## + SERVICE OF THE WORD +

### *OLD TESTAMENT READING*

Esther 1:1—2:17 NIV

<sup>1</sup> This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: <sup>2</sup> At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, <sup>3</sup> and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

<sup>4</sup> For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. <sup>5</sup> When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. <sup>6</sup> The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. <sup>7</sup> Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. <sup>8</sup> By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

<sup>9</sup> Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

<sup>10</sup> On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and

Karkas— <sup>11</sup> to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. <sup>12</sup> But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

<sup>13</sup> Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times <sup>14</sup> and were closest to the king—Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memukan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

<sup>15</sup> “According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?” he asked. “She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Memukan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. <sup>17</sup> For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.’ <sup>18</sup> This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

<sup>19</sup> “Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King

Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. <sup>20</sup> Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

<sup>21</sup> The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memukan proposed. <sup>22</sup> He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household, using his native tongue.

<sup>1</sup> Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. <sup>2</sup> Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. <sup>3</sup> Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. <sup>4</sup> Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

<sup>5</sup> Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, <sup>6</sup> who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. <sup>7</sup> Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as

Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

<sup>8</sup> When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. <sup>9</sup> She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

<sup>10</sup> Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. <sup>11</sup> Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

<sup>12</sup> Before a young woman's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. <sup>13</sup> And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. <sup>14</sup> In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

<sup>15</sup> When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who

was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. <sup>16</sup> She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

<sup>17</sup> Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** **Thanks be to God.**

### *GOSPEL READING*

Matthew 5:13-16 NIV

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the fifth chapter.

**C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

## *GOD OF THE WOMEN*

sts. 1, 3–5

- 1 God of the women who answered your call,  
Trusting your promises, giving their all,  
Women like Esther and Mary and Ruth —  
Give us their courage to live in your truth.
- 3 God of the women long put to the test,  
Left out of stories, forgotten, oppressed,  
Quietly asking: "Who smiled at my birth?" —  
In Jesus' dying you show us our worth.
- 4 [Women only] God of the women who ran from the tomb,  
Prayed with the others in that upper room,  
Then felt your Spirit on Pentecost Day —  
May we so gladly proclaim you today.
- 5 O God of Phoebe and ministers all,  
May we be joyful in answering your call.  
Give us the strength of your Spirit so near  
That we may share in your ministry here.

Text: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

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## *MESSAGE: "A ROLE SHE DIDN'T SEEK"*

Esther, God's Influencer, part 1

## *NICENE CREED*

- C** I believe in one God,  
the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth  
and of all things visible and invisible.

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only-begotten Son of God,  
begotten of His Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light,  
very God of very God,  
begotten, not made,  
being of one substance with the Father,  
by whom all things were made;  
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven  
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary  
and was made man;  
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.  
He suffered and was buried.  
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures  
and ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of the Father.  
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and  
the dead,  
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord and giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and  
glorified,  
who spoke by the prophets.  
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,  
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,  
and I look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the life ✝ of the world to come. Amen.**

## *OFFERING*

*LSB 857 LORD, HELP US WALK YOUR SERVANT WAY* sts. 1–2, 4–5

- 1 Lord, help us walk Your servant way  
Wherever love may lead  
And, bending low, forgetting self,  
Each serve the other's need.
- 2 You came to earth, O Christ, as Lord,  
But pow'r You laid aside.  
You lived Your years in servanthood;  
In lowliness You died.
- 4 You bid us bend our human pride  
Nor count ourselves above  
The lowest place, the meanest task  
That waits the gift of love.
- 5 Lord, help us walk Your servant way  
Wherever love may lead  
And, bending low, forgetting self,  
Each serve the other's need.

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr., 1923–2007

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## *PRAYER OF THE CHURCH*

**+ SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT +**

## *INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNION*

### *LORD'S PRAYER*

**C** Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.

### *THE WORDS OF OUR LORD*

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

*PAX DOMINI*

LSB 163

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C** Amen.

*AGNUS DEI*

LSB 163

**C** Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;  
grant us peace.

*DISTRIBUTION*

*LSB 547 THE LAMB*

1 The Lamb, the Lamb,  
O Father, where's the sacrifice?  
Faith sees, believes  
God will provide the Lamb of price! **Refrain**

**ref** **Worthy is the Lamb whose death makes me His own!**  
**The Lamb is reigning on His throne!**

2 The Lamb, the Lamb,  
One perfect final offering.  
The Lamb, the Lamb,  
Let earth join heav'n His praise to sing. **Refrain**

3 The Lamb, the Lamb,  
As wayward sheep their shepherd kill  
So still, His will  
On our behalf the Law to fill. **Refrain**

**ref Worthy is the Lamb whose death makes me His own!  
The Lamb is reigning on His throne!**

4 He sighs, He dies,  
He takes my sin and wretchedness.  
He lives, forgives,  
He gives me His own righteousness. **Refrain**

5 He rose, He rose,  
My heart with thanks now overflows.  
His song prolong  
Till ev'ry heart to Him belong. **Refrain**

Text: Gerald P. Coleman, 1953

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### *LSB 727 ON EAGLES' WINGS*

1 You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,  
Who abide in His shadow for life,  
Say to the Lord: "My refuge,  
My rock in whom I trust!" **Refrain**

**ref And He will raise you up on eagles' wings,  
Bear you on the breath of dawn,  
Make you to shine like the sun,  
And hold you in the palm of His hand.**

2 The snare of the fowler will never capture you,  
And famine will bring you no fear;  
Under His wings your refuge,  
His faithfulness your shield. **Refrain**

**ref And He will raise you up on eagles' wings,  
Bear you on the breath of dawn,  
Make you to shine like the sun,  
And hold you in the palm of His hand.**

3 You need not fear the terror of the night,  
Nor the arrow that flies by day;  
Though thousands fall about you,  
Near you it shall not come. **Refrain**

4 For to His angels He's given a command  
To guard you in all of your ways;  
Upon their hands they will bear you up,  
Lest you dash your foot against a stone. **Refrain**

Text: Michael Joncas, 1951

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## *BENEDICTION*

LSB 166

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**C** **Amen.**

*LSB 825 RISE, SHINE, YOU PEOPLE*

sts. 1, 3–4

- 1 Rise, shine, you people! Christ the Lord has entered  
Our human story; God in Him is centered.  
He comes to us, by death and sin surrounded,  
With grace unbounded.
- 3 Come, celebrate, your banners high unfurling,  
Your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.  
To all the world go out and tell the story  
Of Jesus' glory.
- 4 Tell how the Father sent His Son to save us.  
Tell of the Son, who life and freedom gave us.  
Tell how the Spirit calls from ev'ry nation  
His new creation.

Text: Ronald A. Klug, 1939, alt.

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