Story of Esther September 29, 2024

Today’s Scripture reading from Esther speaks of the hanging of a character (Haman) and leaves us wondering why this story is in the Bible – so perhaps it will help if we look again at this story and fill in some of the seeming missing pieces.

The story of Esther is one of drama and providence, but more importantly one that reflects God’s divine intervention.

Esther was a Jewish orphan girl who was raised by her cousin Mordecai and who became the Queen of Persia.

Important to realize that at this time in history, the king had absolute power over the people and even over his queen.

Story begins with king Xerxes having a great banquet to show off all his great wealth and also to show off his queen Vashti’s beauty. Queen Vashti however would not be part of the king’s plan and refused to appear as his beauty toy.

This resulted in king Xerxes deposing her as queen and had a number of beautiful women in a beauty contest to become the new queen. Esther won the favor of King Xerxes and became the new queen.

The story then introduces another character names Haman who was very influential in the king’s entourage but was actually quite evil. He hated the Jewish people and particularly Mordecia who sat at the gate and refused to acknowledge him for his influential position under the king.

Haman made a plan both to get rid of Mordecai and to wipe out all the Jewish people. He convinced the king of his plan to exterminate the Jews and he had a 75 foot gallows built to have Modecai hanged on.

 Now, there are several happenings that are pertinent to this story of Esther: 1) Mordecai had discovered a plot that was being devised to assassinate King Xerxes and he advised Esther who in turn told the king and the plot was eliminated. 2) Mordecai heard about Haman’s plans to kill all the Jews.

Mordecai went to Esther and asked her to use her influence with the king to stop Haman

Two problems here 1) Esther was a Jew herself and 2) No one, not even the queen, approached the king unless invited. The penalty for doing so could be death.

This is where the main theme of the story is reflected. Mordecai challenged Esther (Read Esther 4:12-14)

When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

***For such a time as this***

Esther’s response

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” (Esther 4:15-16)

So with such courage, Esther planned a great banquet where she invited both the king and Haman and that is where today’s reading comes in. Esther tells the king about Haman’s plans to have the Jews annihilated, and the tide turns against Haman and the king had him hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.

The saving of the Jews as depicted in this story of Esther is still celebrated today as a Jewish festival called Purim.

This story is an important one that should speak to each one of us as we seek the Lord’s will for our lives. Where has God placed us or in what circumstances are we living that we should ask ourselves: “***What plans does God have for each one of us for such a time as this?”***

Was starting Christ the Redeemer Church God’s calling for such a time as this? I sincerely believe it was.

 “Why are we different as a church?” Sometimes I’m afraid that we forget what we are about.

*Individually, there are many things in our daily lives that maybe we should* be exploring as possible opportunities for God to work through us.

The Jewish story is also our story – first as there have been and still are many attempts to wipe out the Jewish people, the world would also like to stamp out Christianity.

There are many occasions in our lives when we are faced with choices – do we go along with the ways of the world or do we take a stand in the courage of our convictions and say: “We are standing for the truth of God’s Holy Word and God has placed me in whatever circumstances ‘FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS’?