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Esther 1-2:10; 3:1-4:17; 8

“I am too young and, besides that, who would listen to someone from a minority?”

One of the most fascinating stories in the entire Bible is the story of Esther, the young Jewish girl caught up in a squabble between a powerful king and his queen. The story of Queen Esther illustrates how God places people into history and then uses them to fulfill His purposes.

The story of Esther has its beginnings at the time of Xerxes, a powerful Persian king whose rule followed that of Darius, the Persian king identified with the prophet, Daniel. It was customary for kings in those days to hold banquets lasting many days. Prior to holding a particular banquet, the Bible tells us, this king invited all the important leaders of his country to his palace in Susa and displayed his wealth and power. The banquet that followed lasted for seven days – and there was no shortage of food and drink. The servants were instructed that each guest should have what he wanted, how much he wanted, and served the way he wanted. At the end of seven days, the king and his guests were in high spirits.

While this was going on, the queen, Vashti, held her own banquet for the women. When Xerxes demanded she appear before his group in her royal attire, she refused. This angered and embarrassed the king and he sought advice from his cabinet on how to handle the matter. At their suggestions, the queen was deposed and permanently banned from the palace.

Later, however, Xerxes regretted his hasty action. Those who attended the king noticed his regret and proposed a search of the entire kingdom for the most beautiful women, one of whom was to become the new queen. The king endorsed this plan. This is where Esther came into the picture. She was a beautiful, young orphan brought up by her uncle, Mordecai, who had forbidden her to reveal her Jewish ancestry. After she completed her preliminary requirements, she was brought to the king. The Bible tells us, *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.* Esther 2:17 NIV

Among the leaders in the king's court was a proud man named Haman. He was enraged by Mordecai's refusal to bow down and pay him homage. Haman was so angered by this action he sought to kill not only Mordecai, but all the Jews throughout the kingdom. This action distressed Mordecai so much that he sought the help of his niece, Queen Esther. He asked her to intervene. Esther knew that seeking an unasked audience with the king could cost her life. She told her uncle just that.

In Mordecai's mind, however, the problem was so serious he asked Esther to put aside all her personal concerns and put the welfare of her Jewish people ahead of any danger which might befall her. He reminded her of the dire consequences, the annihilation of an entire race, if she refused to take action. And then he followed with the words, *“And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”* Esther 4:14b NIV

With the help of prayer and fasting not only by herself and her court, but the entire Jewish community of Susa, Esther gathered the courage to seek an audience with the king. In dramatic fashion, Haman's plot was revealed and the Jewish community was saved from sure and complete destruction...this through the efforts of a young queen, a member of a minority group within the country where she was living.

Mordecai's words to Esther, "*And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this,*" have implications for us today. No longer is Canada a "churched" society.

"Churched" people are now in the minority! Polls within our country suggest that Canadians are religious, many believe in a supreme being, but at the same time, refuse to become members of the church. We Christians have a royal position—a position given us by a good and gracious God who loves us with an everlasting love. We know God wants us to live in a way that would draw others to Him. And we know He has placed us where we are. So, what are we to do—those of us in the minority who seek the Word of God within the four walls of our churches? Are we to leave His love within those four walls? God would want each of us to use all that He has given us to proclaim His love to those around us who do not know Him. After all, He said to His disciples and us, "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...*" and then followed that with His wonderful promise, "*...and surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

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Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes speaking Your word of grace is so difficult. Many would not listen and others laugh at us when we do. Give us the power to be bold in our proclamation of You. We ask that by the Holy Spirit's power, You would enable us to be faithful Christians, living the kind of life that would draw others to You. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

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