

For Such a Time as This > Esther 4:1-17

4:1-3 The chapter begins with Mordecai weeping: he has found out about the decree to kill all of the Jewish people in the land. His response is to lament and to mourn. Many of the Jewish people in the capital join him.

4:4-11 Mordecai ends up going to the gate of the palace where he is noticed by Queen Esther's attendants. One of them – Hathach – finds out the details from Mordecai and relays them to the queen. Esther responds that she would risk death to approach the king without being summoned.

4:12-17 Mordecai calls Esther to be courageous when he speaks of both his rock-solid belief that the Lord is at work and also the fact that Esther may well have been elevated to be queen so that she could have a role in this specific situation. Esther responds by calling for a fast, after which she will approach the king – whatever the result may be.

Context: The entire story has been leading up to this point: Esther becoming queen isn't simply a fairy tale or a story of somebody rising to fame and riches. Rather, God has a plan to use this young woman to bring about His promises.

Aim: God gives people situations in life – circumstances, connections, influence – not so that we can try to leverage it for our own ends, but so that we would glorify Him.

Gospel: Christ's life defines courage – the courage to teach amidst opposition, the courage to die for a people who don't deserve it. His courage means that those who trust are saved.

Applications: Pray for courage and look to en-courage others.

Here is how I will apply these truths: _____

Announcements

1. Board members: remember that we have two meetings this month, both online – the second one will be August 17. There will be no meeting on August 10. We hope to resume our normal meeting schedule in September.
2. Our overseers met to discuss whether requiring face coverings was a step our congregation should take at this time. Throughout this entire crisis, our goal has been twofold: to keep to our mission of being and making disciples, and to make decisions based upon the advice of health officials. At this point, the Iowa Department of Public Health is not mandating the usage of face coverings, but they are recommending them: “A cloth face mask can help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Iowa. Protect yourself and your community by wearing a face covering when out in public and when social distancing is not possible.” Similarly, recent comments from the Woodbury County Board of Health are seeking to publicly recommend – but not require – face coverings. We believe that face coverings are one helpful tool in minimizing the chance of Coronavirus spread, and we also see them as one way to care well for each other. Yet face coverings aren’t the only tool, and they should not be seen as a symbol of how well somebody loves others. Therefore, though we are not requiring masks at this time, we continue to strongly recommend face coverings for those who are able to utilize them, particularly as you enter and leave the building. We will continue to monitor the situation and act accordingly.
3. We continue to emphasize the need for social distancing whenever you are in the building. As well, please remain home and enjoy the service online if you have a fever or cough, flu-like symptoms, or have been in contact with somebody suffering from Coronavirus within the past 14 days. The governor of Iowa continues to recommend that those who have an elevated risk from Coronavirus should avoid gatherings altogether, regardless of whether an individual or group wears face coverings or not. If you are in such a situation, use your own best judgment as to whether you feel comfortable joining us on Sundays. For any who choose not to, our service is available online and by mail each week – please make good use of these options.
4. We have made the difficult decision to not have in-person DiscipleQuest this fall. Instead, letters with Bible lessons, fun inserts, and surprises will be mailed out weekly. The hope is that we can resume in-person DQ sometime in January. Contact Terry Hinders if you are interested in being a part of this effort.
5. We have been working on a plan to resume Sunday school classes for children, youth, and adults in some form. Plans are still tentative, but we hope to offer classes in some form in October should the situation allow it. We’ll keep you posted as we get closer to that time.

Prayer

Lord, making plans these days is hard. Maintaining unity and patience with one another is hard. But these things aren’t too hard for you. We pray that you would forgive us when we aren’t patient with You or with each other. Instead, work through Your Spirit so that we would be good examples of Christ to each other and the watching world. Provide all that we need in this life – and make us thankful for it – so that we would keep our focus not on our own needs, but on the needs of others. Father, in all of this, teach us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let such things be evident in us as the fruit produced by Your Spirit inside of us. Our desire is that you would use this service as part of that process – You do the work, You get the glory, and make us glad to give it! In Christ, amen.