

Calvary United Methodist Church
August 18, 2019

QUEEN ESTHER: TRUSTING GOD
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

Children's Message:

Matthew 10:18

I invite our children to come forth for the Children's message. I see a few in the house. Come on up. Good to have you all here this morning. I hope you are having great days. It is going to be another hot one, but today is going to be a picnic day here at the church. I hope some of you have the privilege to come.

I am going to be telling you a little story about a very powerful woman in the Bible. She saved a lot of lives, changed a lot of lives and she has taught us that sometimes there are things we just have to take a stand for.

The scripture says: Because of me you will be taken to stand before governors and kings. You will tell them and the non-Jewish people about me.

The reason this story is so important is that it tells us what we can do to help other people. Have you ever seen anyone that fell off a bicycle or had an accident, something like that? No? You have. And what did you do when you see someone like that? Do you go try to help them? Yeah. Most of us, if we look around, we can always see something. When you start school, someone has a whole pile of books and their book bag breaks or something and they are all over the floor, we can laugh and walk by or we can say: can I help you?

This woman was a powerful woman. Her name was Esther and she was placed in a time when she was in a position to save a lot of people, but it was risky for her. It was very risky. And sometimes if we think: geez, something could happen to me. We don't always want to go out and help other people because, well, I'm in a hurry to go somewhere to have fun or I don't want other people to make fun of me, and so we don't always do the right thing.

But this Queen Esther became a very powerful woman in the king's court. She had a very sad story in her life because when she was just a very young girl her mother and father died and so she was raised by her uncle. In those days things were quite different than they are now. There was a very powerful king named Xerxes and he had not one but many wives in those days. We don't do that anymore. He had hundreds of wives. But anyway, you couldn't just go see your husband just because he was the king. He was a very powerful man and she had to make a request that she could go in to see him and in order to do that, it took a lot of risk because if he didn't want to see her, she could get into trouble. There are places like that today. You can't just go every place you want because some places you'll get into trouble.

This man was so powerful, he had all this part of the world that we know today, those who are

adults will see this again in a little bit, but Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, part of it, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. He was the boss man of all of that area. And someone didn't like this Queen Esther's people. She was a Jewish princess. And they didn't want the Jews to be around anymore and so they planned evil against them. And a man made a decree that if you saw him that you had to bow down and worship him. Well, we know we don't bow down to other people, because God said that we should worship God alone. We don't have other gods. That's just the rule that God made. And so some of these people that were the Jewish people of the time, they were the family of Queen Esther. And her uncle who raised her came and said: Did you hear what the king signed? He signed a paper that if you don't bow down before this man Haman he is going to take all of their lives. That would be a pretty evil thing, wouldn't it?

So, as it was, this wonderful princess said: I am going to pray and pray and pray to see what God wants me to do and she prayed and she said: I am going to go in to see this King Xerxes even if it would be dangerous to me. So she went in and he had this scepter and if he reached it out to you and you would touch it, you were able to talk to him. Not that wouldn't happen in a lot of our households today either. Someone would probably get whacked by a scepter if they did that. But in those days, she had to have his permission to talk. And she told him about this man that wanted to kill her and her family and her friends and he was very angry. And he said: who in the world would do this? And she told him about this man named Haman and the king was very mad and called him in. And he got in trouble, but because she did the right thing to save her people, her uncle, Mordecai got Haman's job because the king was so mad that he got rid of him and all those other evil people.

So, the lesson here today is: sometimes we have to do things even if it costs us a little something. If you know the right thing is to do the right thing, then you have to do it, even if it might sometimes be a risk to you. And that's not easy. Sometimes someone needs help and you think maybe your other friends won't like that or maybe other people won't like that, but you all will be in situations where you have a chance to help other people, to save other people. When you start school this fall there will be a lot of chances. Someone might not know math and you could help them with math or science or English or a subject or running and show people how to do things that they don't know how because...have you ever needed help? If you help others, guess what? They will probably help you because friends do that with one another.

So our lesson today is remember that when we are in trouble and facing hard times, listen to your heart and do the right thing because when we pray to God, in your heart if you are saying: I should go help that person, you are probably already on the right path.

So, I thank you for coming up and I hope you'll remember: Do the right thing. Pray to God and listen to your heart because you will do the right thing to help other people.

There are some snacks for you here. Have a wonderful week and God bless you.

Message:

Esther 4:13-16

Do or die, I am going to do what God is calling me to do. It's hard to imagine the face of power that these women were in. I had invited you and I still invite you if you haven't to read this whole book of Esther to see the hand of the Almighty God, that she was placed. She lost her parents at a young age. Her uncle Mordecai was raising her. The king like all those powerful kings was hunting for many concubines and she was such a beautiful person, probably again a peasant, brought in to the king's palace. Only had the right to go to the king if the king called for her, not for her to call to the king. And if you went against the king's will, he could simply just have you executed. Similarly we had Ruth a couple of weeks ago, willing by God's hand to leave her country with her people, going with her mother-in-law Naomi, losing her husband, losing all and had the privilege to come back home: Wither you go I will go, wither you stay I will stay. I am yours because I am going to do the right thing.

When we seek God about what it is we ought to do in our life, we will know it is just not our will. They did something then that we are not accustomed to: fast for three days, don't eat or drink for three days, in prayer. It is not about weight loss, it is about making God your focus not the desires of this world. Pray to God to lead you, what it is you ought to be doing. And if we seek God in our employment and in our relationships and our finances, in every single aspect of our life, we seek God, we will be walking in God's desire for our life and not our own versus our own opinions and thoughts and desires that as we all know from life experience aren't always in the best of interest of our own lives. Short term satisfaction doesn't always have happy long term effects.

What is the destiny of God? So, I'm asking today, where is it that you look when you are going through your struggles? When you are looking for your hopes and dreams, especially for younger folks, are you saying: God, what is it that you have for my life? Where is it that you want me to go? How should I use my talents and my skills and my abilities to make myself happy, yes, but to bring your Kingdom in its fullness that we can be all that God would want us to be?

Having a call isn't something that pastors alone have. We should all have a call for life. What is it that God wants from me and for me? A lot of us tend to live on popular opinion and you know what? Everybody has one. That doesn't necessarily make them right. There is a difference between having an opinion and having an informed opinion. And in terms of your own like, well, I'd love to be a brain surgeon. Well, Jeff, that's not going to work out. You have to know math and science a little better. Right? You can't just want and you can't just wish. You have to examine your life, your heart, your program and who you are and all the gifts that God has given you to be who it is that you are to be.

These women and all of us always have that choice to simply say: Why me? Why in the world would I pick us, leave my country, lose my spouse, go through all these hardships and you still want to do what to me, God? Why is this happening?

We see this lived out in daily lives. I go to hospitals where people shouldn't be as sick as they are and they are. I see people who lose loved ones at very early ages. I see people who have heartache and financial issues, even though they are responsible because of the effects of people around us, the world around us and because of sometimes our own bad decisions. And a part of these lessons, I think, the women would ask us and God would probably say: Why not me? Should all the problems fall on somebody else?

If you are like me, you have asked both of these questions. You know, you say: Gee, God, I've tried to be a good guy. I've tried to seek your way; I've tried to do the right things. When things don't go right, why? And when we ask this other question: why not be? God says: because I have a plan that you don't understand, Jeff. I have a plan that you are never going to understand.

It's pretty easy for most of us to be happy when all things are well, but this trusting in God in the chaos and the storms of life where it takes a little more trust. When you look at people of God going from Moses to the desert, going through their years and years of slavery. Going through the torment. Going through their terrible lives and you look around the world at the people who suffer and they are still praising God. It's like: Lord, I don't know why I am in the midst of this trial, in the midst of the brokenness. Why did...you know today 200 people at my job were left go. Why, God? Why is it that I have tried to do my best in this relationship and it is just not working? Because we can't control other people and relationships. We can only trust God that no matter what we are going through, God is with us; God is with us in those tough times.

To trust God in the light is nothing, but to trust Him in the dark, that's faith. In the good times it is so easy to say: Oh, I just praise God. Everything is good. My relations work, I've got everything right, our home is doing well, my business is going well. It is all good.

And sometimes we don't even praise God. We say: I've had the best of luck. Folks, it can't be luck in one place and cursings of God another. They have got to be similar.

God blesses us and sometimes even what seems to be curses isn't really a curse from God, it's something to be learned that we don't want to go through. It's heartache; it's trial; it's tribulation; it's storms; it's failure and it hurts so bad. And we've all been there. It's only that Monday night football...I look back years later. Sometimes it's not: oh, I went through that last week. Everything is fine now. No, it's years back and you say: Now I can see. Now I can see why I am on this path that I am on today.

Sovereignty of God isn't something we speak a lot about, but the Word of God reminds us there is no other God. Sovereignty: I am the supreme, I am the ultimate, I am the only. You will not bow to any other God, not the things of earth, not other things of heaven, not unto the false gods. I am God. And I'm wondering if we begin to think of that daily: how is the sovereignty of God impacting my everyday life, my decisions? As young people grow up, as

older get older, am I really committed? Is God number 1? Are all other things beneath God in our life?

Here is this woman, Esther, placed in a situation she did not choose. She happened to be a wonderful woman who the king's men who were looking for more wives discovered, brought her into a place she probably did not want to be. Most people, I think, really in life want to find someone to love and to share a life with. She was brought in to a king with a few hundred other women. I doubt she had a really tight relationship with the king. That doesn't sound like a fun time to me. She might have had a nice house and lots of food and good things, but I don't know that that's the best.

She was drawn into this area where this King Xerxes was this very powerful man in a very huge area and he was so controlling and so powerful and yet there was this mean, nasty man names Haman who didn't like her and her people, the Jews of that day. He was so angry he wanted to see them all slaughtered. This is a pretty common theme throughout history. The Jews have gone through persecution time after time even though God has called them to be his people. And her uncle Mordecai who had raised her came to her. He heard these rumors that said if you are not doing something all of your people, your family, your friends, probably hundreds of thousands will perish. Because this man Haman hated us so much he went to the king and said: King, these people are beneath us. I want you to make a decree that anyone who won't bow down to me and to you, they must be executed. The king wrote the decree. It was sealed with the king's stamp. It was sent to all the territories and guess what? You follow that decree or you are executed. It was to that that Mordecai went to her and said: Girl, you don't know why you are here, but God has placed you in this place in this time that you can save God's people. You'd better pray about it and you'd better do something because if not, God will raise someone else up to save it. But you and your people may perish.

She took it to heart. She asked him to pray and to fast with those other people. She asked for the appointment with the king and he put the scepter out to see what she said. And when she spoke to him, he was amazed at what he heard. This someone would want to take the life of someone he loved.

There are a lot of things we do in life that we choose and there are a lot of things that we think are chance, but I want to tell you what: There are a lot of times we need to choose to do the right things. It is not by chance. She could have chosen to say: I'm okay, Mordecai. Thanks for raising me. Bye Bye. And all those other Jews would have perished.

Ruth could have chosen to go back to her own family but she stuck by Naomi.

How many times have we seen things going on, we allow racism and sexism and all kinds of isms to exist and we keep our lips tight, we don't say anything, we see other people hurt and we don't care enough to say: you know what? I'm not better than you and I've done things

too, but this is really wrong.

Years ago I think I shared this story. I told a joke that was really off-color as I do from time to time and shouldn't and I try to improve but not always. And someone came up to me privately, not to make fun of me in front of the other friends and said: What in the world are you doing? Nothing about a pastor. You say you are a Christian, how can you do that? It was like: Ouch! At what point do we take a stand, not to belittle people. It would have been wrong of him to do that in front of other people, but privately. When do we take a stand for God to do the right thing at the right place and protect other people for God?

She chose, not by chance, she chose to put herself in danger's way because she knew she was a gift to others. May I tell you clearly today, you, you, you, are a gift of God for other people to the world. I want you to repeat this out to me: I am a gift of God. Say it: I am a gift of God. (I am a gift of God.) Because you are. You are a gift of God and someone, probably many someones, are counting on you to do the right thing to stand for the right. What is God's plan for you? I don't know. But I know you are a gift of God and God has a plan for you.

But we need to check out the sovereignty of God and say: God, what is it? You are my God. You are holy. You are my everything. You are my all in all. What is it that you would have of me today? I invite you to pray that daily.

And not only was God a sovereign God, God is a God of deliverance. This whole book of Esther is a story, as was Ruth, of God's deliverance of God's people. Here again was this nasty man, Haman, and he would have destroyed hundreds of thousands of people had it not been for her.

You and I have opportunities and they are often lost because we don't want to do the right thing. We have men and women who serve every day as firemen. They don't go out looking for: boy, where's a house? I would like to run into some fire today. It's an instinct because they have been trained, they have been prepared and are called to that job and when there is a fire and everyone is running away, I think of the tower in New York: they are collapsing and these crazy men and women are doing what? They are running in there.

There are men and women who serve our military around the world and they run in. I was amazed when I looked back at history at the people in World War I and II, 15 year olds lying about their age because they wanted to save our nation. Boy, could we have a little of that backbone today.

But you know what is bigger than that? People who will stand up for God. People who will stand up on the name of Jesus Christ and do the right thing. Why? Because people around us are sinking and some are going down for the third time. It is those on addictions that will never understand if you have not been an addict. I'll never understand that. But we need to

be there instead of judging. They are the people who are mentally challenged all the time of their life with all kinds of mental health issues who are looking for someone to care a little bit. It's the elderly who have been forgotten. It's the young who wish someone would be their mentor and guide them. There are opportunities to stand for Jesus around us and we are so blind in our own happiness and our own selfishness that we forget that we are deliverers, day after day and we need to take action.

I had a gentleman I used to spend a lot of time with. He passed at 89. He was in mid-80s and he told me: you know, I was a machinist all of my life. I have more talent, more wisdom, more knowledge than any time in my life and I feel like I have been put up on a shelf to die. If you are 85 or 90 today and you feel that, then I want to put it back on you. What are you doing to reach out? There are a lot of people, young and older, that need someone to guide, to be there. We get notes from the Neighborhood Center in Harrisburg because many of the folks that are young there don't have anyone who will read books to them just to help them learn to read. Boy that's a tough job: putting a kid on your lap and reading a book.

What is it that God is calling you to take action to? What is it that God says: I need you today more than any day before because this culture, this world, this destructive path we tend to be on can be changed when we believe in the sovereign God, when we realize we make a difference, that God loves us and God needs us.

We can make a difference because this King Xerxes when he heard this, he got on the right path, that sovereignty of God, he was glad to get on that because he didn't understand why anyone would kill people for doing nothing.

This good and bad stuff is all around us. It's very easy to be on God's side when all is good. But there are some things that you might be called to right now that are a little risky. When all of your friends believe one thing and you take a stand and say: I'm not getting into a battle with you, but this is what I believe and this is why I believe it. I am called to do this thing for Almighty God.

God has a bigger plan for me than I have for myself. There have been so many times in my life that I have been so frustrated. Those of you who are younger and looking into schools. Wait until you apply and you get that note: thank you for applying, but... That's a painful letter. And you try a new relationship with someone and you are in it for a while and after dating for a couple of months and they say: Thanks for your time, but this isn't really working for me. I need to move on. And you get your first job and someone comes in and says: This isn't really working for us and you need... This is life. And you know what? In all of those things in my life, as painful as they were and I don't ever want to go through all of them again because there are new ones to go through, God is always there. There might be tears and heartache. For me there always have been and for you as well. But somehow that we don't understand, looking into our future, God is there. God has a plan that we don't understand.

Esther could have asked: Why me? But instead she said this: If I perish, I perish. I am going to do what I am called to do.

What are you called to today? Have you even asked God to call you? Have you said: God, make me an instrument of your piece? Here I am, Lord...we heard that sung a while ago. Are you saying that? I'm yours, God. I'm available. What would you do? Are you willing to take a stand today to do the right thing in the right place at the right time verbally, in action, by your deeds? What are you running into, to a family that needs you to be present for them? To an elder who is wishing anybody could help them in his process of getting Social Security and taking them back and forth to offices or going to rehabs or whatever it is. There are a lot of people who have this many people around them, they are counting on people like you to say: I will rise to the situation.

Haman wanted destruction and God said: I won't have it. When Esther talked to the king and the king said: Who would do this? She said: This man right here. Haman did the dirty deed. He build a gallows because he wanted to hang this man Mordecai, Esther's uncle because he couldn't stand him because he refused to bow down to him because he was not Mordecai's God. Guess who got hung on the gallows he built. The bible has some very interesting stories. The very man who planned this whole thing was paraded through the city and hung on the very gallows that he planned to kill the man that he didn't like. Wow! Talk about karma. It wasn't good.

You see, God has a big plan. It is about deliverance. God wants to deliver us from our troubles, from our behaviors that need to change, from the relationships that are broken, from the addictions that overtake us. God is saying time is running out and I am giving all of us here time now to choose wisely. What will you do with it? Will you just sit all day and tap your fingers and say I can't do anything to change anything? Because it is overwhelming when you watch the news, or you say, you know what? I can't change the world. But I know this person down the street. I know my cousin. I know my relative. I know somebody has something that I can make a difference because when Mordecai went to Esther she wasn't sure what she could do, but what she found out, instead of saying are you crazy, you want me to put my life at risk? You want me to be the fireman? You want me to be the soldier? You want me to be the police officer? No, no, no. You are not crazy. I'm going to take action and if I die, I die, but I am going to do the right thing.

Taking action? Action changes things. It does. Action changes things.

We have a problem. Instead of action we have this: We talk an awful lot. I remember someone in my family sitting around the table. Small people talk about people. Bigger people talk about objects and things that we can do something about. All these young girls getting pregnant. What are we going to do...they have all kinds of names they call those girls. I said at one point, what are we going to do about the boys who get them pregnant. You never hear

about those bad boys, do we?

We talk about all this stuff on abortion right now on TV and radio and we got to change all these things, but at no place do I see any legislation that we are going to find every man that ever got these girls pregnant and we are going to hold them accountable. Wow! What a radical thought that someone else is a part of that process.

We can talk about those crazy addicts and these crazy younger people and those other people and those...it doesn't do any good to talk. All of these people are our children, our friends, our neighbors, our family. We could either talk and gossip and chew up and spit out people.

I wanted to really see what gossip is. I loved it: Gossip is speaking to someone who is neither directly part of the problem or part of the solution, concerning another person who is not present.

And you know what I found out about it? A lot of time when we gossip we really don't have the facts. We make judgements about things we know very little about. Instead of doing that, what about the young girls who are pregnant? If we really don't want abortions, are we willing to put our money where our mouth is? To have homes for unwed mothers? To help them with their children until they are raised? How about let's stop it before it happens? Are we willing to talk to our children about premarital sex and about having higher expectations and protecting themselves? Both boys and girls? Are we willing to do the right thing even though it is going to cost us?

We are living in a society that is so broken and costing us not millions or billions but trillions of dollars that is spitting in the dirt because it is not getting improvement because we are not taking a stand for the wisdom of God.

One of the greatest things that these people did was listen to the wisdom of Mordecai, an older man who had experience and said you have to do the right thing, to say we need some unity here. When Mordecai talked to Esther they decided to stand together, to get united. If there is one thing that we need now today, this thing about united we stand, and I'm not talking about nations. I want to tell you, our nations is in big problem because we are trying to stand with each other and we are not standing with God.

God does not respect nations. We are specks of sand unless we proclaim God as the sovereign God. If we want this nation to change, we'd better come back to God. I can't control everybody else. I have problems controlling me. But you and I can choose that we will take the road of Queen Esther and we will take the road of Ruth and we will take road of Daniel and Moses and these Biblical characters I wish I could go week after week of telling you all about these people who sacrificed, who took stands, who were ridiculed, who were abused and said: I will stand for my God, even as Job, losing the family, losing his wealth, losing everything and even as wife said: why don't you curse God and die and he said: naked I

came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return. Blessed be the name of God.

Are you willing to do that? Because the world around us doesn't need that other junk. We need this. We, you and I, need to know that God loves us, God has a purpose for us, God knows that you are called and wants you to be light. Today we are the light of Jesus Christ. Let us claim it as our own and let us be people that are determined as all of these people in the scriptures to make a difference.

Thanks be to God. Amen.