



Grain

“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for such a time as this.”
Esther 4:14

Field

³Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. ⁴For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king.” ⁵Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?” ⁶Esther said, “A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.” Esther 7:1-5

Thoughts

Difficult decisions - we’ve all made them. We may in one moment enjoy having what appear to be endless possibilities and in the next, feel cornered by circumstances. Within a democracy, we have a multitude of laws and systems ready to encourage our self-determination. Domestic abuse shelters take in individuals who have felt trapped; anti-bias laws protect us from discrimination; social services and police work together to help those victimized by human trafficking, etc. Laws do not provide absolute protection. But when laws don’t include basic protections or they codify bias and abuse, choices in how to find justice become more limited. We may take democracy for granted but it is fragile.

Queen Vashti and Esther had very different personalities and approaches to being married to King Ahasuerus, who forced choices from within and outside of his home. The king, filled with wine, summoned Queen Vashti to reveal her beauty before his guests. She refused. What a bold move not to surrender to what the king wanted, and it cost her. Options for women were dismal, and not much better for men who were not part of the majority and/or who publicly didn’t agree with the king.

To replace his wife, the king gathered young virgins to be part of his harem and serve as possible candidates for the open queen position. Esther was one of the females. She was also Jewish and living in diaspora, disjointed from her homeland. Her caretaker cousin, Mordecai, told Esther to hide her Jewish identity. She did. Mordecai also made a couple of major decisions, including not bowing to the king’s high official, Haman. In reaction to Mordecai’s refusal to defer sufficiently to him, Haman decided to destroy Mordecai and all Jewish people in the land, with the king’s support.

Mordecai asked that Esther try to influence the king to stop the campaign against the Jews. “For if you stay silent during this time...” He asked what if Esther was in her position for that moment. Esther felt pressure from two directions. More docile and compliant than her predecessor, she risked approaching the king, but in her own way and at the time that felt right to her. It worked.

What we do to stand up to unjust power quietly, loudly, directly, or indirectly may in Christian terms, sometimes lead to the cross and other times not. Let us pray for direction when our key moments for decisions emerge. Let us also pray and take action in ways that support political systems that will not demand its citizens to make what may seem like impossible decisions. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy