

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor
September 8, 2024
Lesson 2

Title: Letting Go of Fear

Texts: Esther 4:10-17; Psalm 56

The king had made Esther his queen (Esther 2:17). Things looked pretty good for her, but there was one royal stipulation that even she had to obey: No one was to go into the king's inner court without being called there (Esther 4:11). And as the story unfolds, Mordecai wanted Esther to go to the king on behalf of the Jews. She knew this was illegal (verse 16), but she agreed to go despite her fear. Stay tuned!

In our own time, faithful people may well fear what will happen to them if they go to bat for the poor, offer to help an immigrant, give respect to an opponent, seek justice for all...you get the idea. Like Esther, we are still called to situations that come equipped with fear and uncertainty.

The psalm for this lesson, Psalm 56, is a claim upon trust in God in times of fear. The psalmist suggests that the worst thing that can happen is that we be put to death for a good cause, and even that is not so bad because, "you have saved my life from death" (Psalm 56:13a). What a confidence in a time of fear!

Clara Welch has wondered, "How are we called to place the needs of others over our needs and to act for the good of the whole, even if it is at the expense of our individual good? In our individualistic society, when must we make choices between exercising our individual freedom and doing what is in the best interest of others?" That is exactly the situation in which Esther found herself. No wonder there was fear!

Esther 4:14 may sound more familiar to us in the King James translation: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Have you ever faced such a moment? Now, push has come to shove...now is the moment. I had always feared that I should have to make a stand against the crowd, and now is such a time. I look around and there is no one to step forward except me. Racism pushes back, but I must go forward. For you, is this time "such a time as this?"

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "I bring my fears to you, O Lord, and pray for your better tomorrow."

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