



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of December 4, 2022 (Esther 4:1-17)

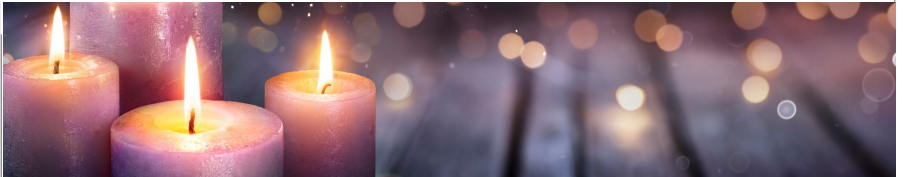
Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

It was for such a time as this that Esther was queen and a people were saved. It was for such a time as this that God call us to be whom we're called to be: those who love one another, those who act justly, those who serve the world today.

In our communities and neighbourhoods, we are called for such a time as this: to serve the poor, to feed the hungry, to comfort the lonely, to befriend the broken hearted.

In our churches and congregations, we are called for such a time as this: to preach good news, to wait on God among us, revealing light in our darkness- in our world.

We are called for such a time as this: to reveal the God who loves the world and lives with us, bringing hope and joy and peace for such a time as this. Amen.



Devotions for Life, Advent II

The Story: Esther 4:1-17

Context: In this 2nd week of Advent we get a very unorthodox text for Advent. We are in the Book of Esther. We move to a time after Israel was in exile in Babylon to a story in the Persian Empire. That's about all we know, however, because this story and the character of Esther being a queen in the Persian Empire does not show up anywhere else in the historical record.

That said, it is a big story for those of the Jewish Faith as it is the root of their holiday Purim. Some believe that it may not be an actual story from history, because it's meant to represent anywhere and everywhere where Jewish existence is threatened. It's a tragedy that this reality is a constant in our world, and it's incumbent upon all of us to stand abasing antisemitism whenever, wherever, and however we encounter it.



It may be worth reading the whole book (another short one) as it is all one story. The crux of it is that a king looks for a new queen after his current one refuses to

Advent at Home II :

[Light the candle you lit last week]

The candle of hope is lit. May hope burn deep in our hearts, minds, and souls.

[light the next candle]

Today we light the candle of peace. In a world soaked in violence, we pledge to be makers of peace. In our words, with every step we take, in our very breathing, may peace abide in us.

Let us Pray: Come, Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, come. Help us to be light for those in darkness, and may you guide our feet in the way of peace. Amen.

Compassion & Justice:

This month we are supporting STEP's annual Christmas toy drive. As the Bible calls us to **do justice**, it's important to remember the ways in which STEP is a primary organization in town that does this work to which we are called. One of their biggest fundraisers is their "give to the max campaign", wherein gifts given before November 17th are matched up to \$50,000. If you have the means, make a contribution before then! Head to www.stepslp.org for more info.

obey him. He gathers young women from throughout the region to essentially audition for him. A young Jewish woman named Esther ends up becoming his queen, but no one in the court knows she's Jewish.

As it turns out, the King ends up issuing an edict to rid Persia of the Jews. A man named Mordecai (Esther's Uncle, who raised her as she was orphaned) hears of all this and goes into action to plead for Esther's help. That's where our reading for today picks up.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. Why do you think this story is prescribed for Advent in our lectionary?
2. What phrases in this passage stood out to you the most?
3. How do we maintain our witness of faith in a culture dominated by material consumption and political brinkmanship?
4. What power does any one of us really have to make a difference?
5. What kind of risks are we willing to take on behalf of those vulnerable and threatened?
6. Which of our identities ultimately shape our lives? Am I first and foremost a parent? An American? A Christian? An employee?
7. What complicit agreements do we make with cultural or political powers to maintain our own status and privilege?
8. How might God be preparing us to step forward to speak truth to power?
9. What does it mean for "The Church" to truly be the "Body of Christ" for the world?

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