

Thursday First Week of Lent 2/18/16
Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25
Psalm 138:1–3, 7c–8 Matthew 7:7–12¹

Today we are privileged to hear the prayer of a courageous and godly woman, Queen Esther. This is the petition she offers as she makes herself ready to appeal to King Ahasuerus. For you see, the king's right hand man, Haman, was about to enact a law that would result in the systematic killing of all the Jewish people throughout the 127 provinces of Ahasuerus' kingdom. Esther, a Jew, is about to approach the king to try and influence him to repeal such a heinous law. This is the prayer offered just prior to her going to the king.

Esther's prayer is instructive for God's people when faced with laws that run contrary to our faith. Laws like Bill 10 and legislation that would make euthanasia and doctor assisted suicide readily accessible to Canadians.

In her prayer Esther begins by affirming the sovereignty of God in the midst of such a dark time.

“O my Lord, you only are our king; help me, who am alone and have no helper but you,

Esther here admits her vulnerability while at the same time affirming the vision of true kingship, that rests not with Ahasuerus but with the Lord.

Next she recounts the story of her people.

Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, for an everlasting inheritance, and that you did for them all that you promised.

This sets her present challenge within the larger narrative of God's saving work and promise to be faithful to his people Israel.

Esther then brings to the Lord the crisis at hand

¹²Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction

Then she prays for herself, asking she will be an instrument used by God for positive change.

and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! 13 Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him.

She then ends where she began by saying:

But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord.

Esther was a woman who put into practice Jesus' words:

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you”

¹ Catholic Lectionary. (2009). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

She did this as she

1. Remembered God's sovereignty,
2. Recalled her people's history,
3. Brought to the Lord the present predicament
4. Prayed for courage to act.

In the climate of Bill 10 and Euthanasia/Doctor Assisted Suicide Esther reminds us of the centrality of prayer as the foundation for all political action. Our Collect for today summarized this succinctly

*Bestow on us,
we pray, O Lord,
a spirit of always pondering on what is right
and of hastening to carry it out,
and since without you we cannot exist,
may we be enabled to live according to your will.*

Such was Esther's prayer. May it be ours as well.