

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Esther 4:13-16

INTRODUCTION

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*
William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*
Act IV, Scene III

- A. There are a host of statements in common usage which bear out Shakespeare's observations on this "tide in the affairs of men" which ebbs and flows and must be respected if our ventures are to succeed.
 - 1. It's now or never.
 - 2. Opportunity knocks only once.
 - 3. He who hesitates is lost.
 - 4. Strike while the iron is hot.
 - 5. Fish or cut bait.
- B. Most of us recognize that success involves doing the right thing at the right place at the right time. The trick, of course, is to know which is the right time and where is the right place and what is the right thing to do.
- C. But how many chances have been missed, how many opportunities squandered, because we misread the tides of our lives and did not launch out at the flood, but remained bound in shallows and miseries all our days.
- D. The book of Esther is about such tides in the life of one young Jewish girl, living in the capitol of Persia. It tells of Esther's rise to the throne of Persia and of an opportunity she has to change the course of history. A powerful story of courage and success, but an even more powerful lesson about how a single person can make a great deal of difference for God.

I. MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR GOD (Three Lessons).

A. Preparing for the Time

- 1. Ahasuerus removed Vashti from serving as queen.
- 2. **Read Esther 2:8-9, 12-18**
 - a. An edict to find a new Queen, vs. 2-4.
 - b. Hegai, the keeper of the harem, was in charge.
- 2. Preparing physically
 - a. Girls were chosen initially on the basis of their looks (2:2).
 - b. 12 months of beauty treatments, vs. 12.
 - c. Esther was naturally endowed with physical beauty but spent one year preparing herself to be as beautiful as possible, vs. 7.
- 3. Preparing under the skin
 - a. In Esther's case, beauty was more than skin deep.
 - i. She pleased Hegai, the keeper of the harem (2:9).
 - ii. She pleased "everyone who saw her" (2:15b).
 - iii. She pleased King Xerxes (2:17).
 - b. No doubt, Esther had been raised to be socially, emotionally, and intellectually prepared for just such a moment.

Lesson #1: The time for preparation precedes the time of opportunity.

If the preparation has not been done, the opportunity cannot be grasped.

B. Recognizing the Time

1. The Jewish nation is threatened.
 - a. Haman plotted to destroy the Jews, 3:8-9.
 - i. His hatred of Mordecai turned to all Jews.
 - ii. He got Xerxes' permission to eradicate the Jews.
 - b. Mordecai heard and sought Esther's help.
2. **Read Esther 4:7-11** - Esther hesitates.
 - a. She was not convinced it was time for her to act.
 - b. Excuses seemed preferable to action.
 - i. If she had been truly convinced of the threat, the risk to herself would not have stopped her.
 - ii. She still hadn't seen it was "now or never".
3. **Read Esther 4:12-14** - The right place at the right time.
 - a. "... you have come to royal position . . ."
 - b. "... for such a time as this" (4:14).

Lesson #2: Be alert for the opportunities God makes available. All the preparation in the world does little good if we don't recognize the opportunity to put it all into practice. Here was Esther - prepared, in the right place, with the King's ear - yet almost failed to see that her time had come.

C. Risking at the Time

1. **Read Esther 5:1-3**
 - a. Esther takes her life in her hands and approaches the King unsummoned.
 - i. The law: death to those approaching in this way.
 - ii. The exception: extending the scepter.
 - b. The King welcomes Esther.
 - i. At that point, the battle is won.
 - ii. Haman is as good as dead when Xerxes extends the scepter.
2. The rest of the story:
 - a. Esther reveals Naman's plot against her people.
 - b. Xerxes executes Naman and promotes Mordecai.
 - c. The Jews of Persia are saved from destruction.

Lesson #3: Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Every opportunity for gain is equally a danger for loss. Esther could have lost her life when coming to plead for her people. Certainly she was prepared and finally she saw that her time had come. But she still had to muster the courage to act and the willingness to risk something precious in order to gain something even more important.

II. MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR GOD TODAY.

We seem to have the impression that all of the great things to be done in God's kingdom were accomplished in the good old days: Noah building the ark; David slaying Goliath; Daniel's three friends standing for the right while facing the fiery furnace; Esther saving the Jewish race. Esther is a nice story, but nothing so heroic or dramatic for us today. It is almost as if we believe that one person or one group of people can no longer make much of a difference for God. God doesn't provide that kind of opportunity any longer.

A. The Result of not Considering the Tide.

1. We don't prepare for opportunities.

- a. Why should we prepare to make a great difference when we no longer believe that great differences can be made?
- b. We are not grooming ourselves to be ready when God puts us in the right place at the right time. We are not preparing ourselves to do the right thing.
- 2. We don't recognize opportunities when they come.
 - a. Since we do not expect to make a real contribution, we don't recognize the chance to make such a contribution when it arises.
 - b. By the time we get through analyzing the opportunity and putting it through the committees and doing a feasibility study on it, the chance is long past.
- 3. We don't risk much when, at last, we see an opportunity.
 - a. Even when we do recognize an opportunity to make a difference for God, we seem unwilling to jump in over our heads, to take a risk for the sake of the kingdom.
 - b. We decide to play it safe, to be reasonable, to do it half-way, to compromise. And the chance for doing something great becomes another success at being mediocre.

B. Taking the Tide at the Flood

- 1. Preparing ourselves for the chances God gives.
 - a. Making ourselves "beautiful" for our King.
 - b. Taking the time now to make ourselves the kind of servants God can use when he calls us.
 - c. 2 Timothy 2:15, "*Study to show ...*"
 - d. Proverbs 22:6, "*Train up a child ...*"
- 2. Recognizing the chances God gives.
 - a. Knowing when God has put you in the right place at the right time.
 - b. Being alert to when the iron is hot, and holding yourself ready to strike it.
 - c. 1 Peter 3:15, "... *always ready to make a defense ...*"
- 3. Being willing to risk greatly to gain greatly.
 - a. There are times for caution and restraint. There are also times for speculation and risk.
 - b. We can risk a little and gain a little. But, having the power of God behind us, such an attitude is almost criminal.
 - c. Gal. 6:9-10, "...while we have opportunity..."
 - d. Ephesians 5:15-16

CLOSING

*There is a tide in the affairs of God,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of a Christian's life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
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And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*