

ADVENT EVENING PRAYER: **DECEMBER 8, 2022**
ADVENT II + Hark! + Listen! God is Calling

SCRIPTURE - Esther 4:1-17

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and to entreat him for her people.

Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai: "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that, if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law: to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days." When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 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 family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

SOLO - Time for quiet and reflection using the questions below.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. *What unique gifts has God given you? What power do you have?*
2. *What keeps you from doing the good that needs to be done around you?*
3. *Where has God currently placed you in order to do good?*

PRAYER STATION and CANDLE-LIGHTING

After the soloist concludes, we invite you to participate in a prayer station. God placed Esther in a position of power at a time where her gifts and presence were needed to do good. Her story teaches us to consider the same question: how might we use our power and gifts to act for good and God's justice where we have influence?

Where has God currently placed you in order to do good? Write down on your post-it note those place(s) where God has placed you at this time to make a difference for good with the power you have. Your job? Your family? A committee? A social group? Once you have written it down, place your post-it on the clock face in front as a commitment to follow God's call for you to work for good, now, in this time, in these places, using your gifts however needed. Then, light a candle. Kneel or bow before God with your prayer and your intentions, asking for what you need to move forward.

PRAYER*

Gathering our many prayers into one, let us pray together.

**God of starlight, every part of us is trying to seek you:
our bodies that carried us into this space, our heads bowed in prayer,
our hearts that keep whispering, "There is more than just this."
We are seeking you. So meet us halfway.
Find us in the maze. Quiet the rest of the world.
Open the door to us. Speak words of hope. Amen.**

The light shines in the darkness.

And the darkness has not overcome it.

Continue worship with The Annunciation on page 8 of the songbook.

* Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.