

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
17th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, September 20, 2026
Scripture: Esther 2: 15-20
Sermon: But God...Transforms Our Weakness

The story of Queen Esther is remarkable. The book of Esther contains a thrilling tale of escape from mortal danger for the Jews and shows the courage and faith of a young Jewish maiden who is chosen to be the queen, the wife of the powerful and rich ruler of the Persian Empire.

Queen Esther won the hearts of the royal household. She was not a Persian, but a Jewish orphan who had been raised by her cousin, Mordecai, an exile from Jerusalem.

Esther brings Mordecai with her to the palace as her guardian. Mordecai doesn't give the proper respect to the Prime Minister of the Kingdom, Haman. In anger Haman convinces the king that he should destroy all the Jews in a day of slaughter because they follow their own religion and do not worship as the Persians do.

Esther had remained silent about her Jewish heritage but Mordecai kept her informed daily of the situation that was building and ready to explode.

With the grim reality fast approaching of the coming slaughter of the Jews, Esther's own people, Mordecai felt that the only solution was for Esther to intervene.

Here Esther was in the King's Palace, married to the king, living in luxury, with beautiful things all around her. But yet in the midst of all this beauty in the palace, Esther never forgot her roots. She didn't forget where she came from and what was important to her and who was important to her.

Mordecai wanted Esther to go to the king and talk with him about what was being planned and what this killing would mean. But to go to the king, Esther was risking her own life, because no one was allowed to go to the king without being summoned, not even the queen. To go to him could mean her immediate death if he had not called for her to come to him.

Mordecai was relentless, telling her she was the only one who could intervene. In our scripture lesson it says, “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Meaning that there is a reason for being in a certain place at a certain time in your life and in a certain spot of history. There was a reason why Esther was at the palace at this time and why she was the Queen. A Jewish woman fearful of the king would be a voice of salvation.

Esther didn't receive God's message through the words of a prophet but she was led by the words of God through her relative Mordecai.

Young Esther, who had always been a quiet follower and didn't want to make any waves, was soon to be transformed into a woman of great faith, of great courage, of great leadership. She was afraid but knew God was with her as she risked moving into the unknown. God was transforming her weakness into strength to do what she knew she had to do to save her people.

This was a time to be empowered and not surrender to the safety of keeping silent. Esther knew what time it was and she knew what she had to do and so wisely she moved forward with faith and trust in God. Esther faced this challenge before she knew that she was risking her life, but she knew she had to act.

Esther put her faith into action. Esther knew that she couldn't remain silent. She had to be bold and courageous.

Coming to this crisis situation revealed the power within her life and it revealed God, the one that can transform what we think we couldn't do, what we think isn't within us, what we think we couldn't accomplish, and transforms what we thought was our weakness into an empowering strength to do God's will.

Esther was willing to subject her life to God's plans and timing. She desired to do His will. She was willing to deny herself and pick up the cross and follow in a sense.

Esther, identifying with her people, called the Jews to fast for three days and nights. This was her call to obedient community prayer. Drawing people together.

Esther realized she was powerless without God's help in this situation. Esther became deeply aware of her need for God's guidance. She needed wisdom and courage to go to the king and be able to speak her mind. She

prayed to be transformed into action and to be able to do what once seemed impossible.

Esther hosted a dinner party for the king two times. She prayed for wisdom and after their second dinner together she talked with him about the situation. She took her time because the timing was important. But God worked in the life of the king. One night the king couldn't sleep and he remembered that Mordecai had never been honored for saving his life. At this remembering Mordecai's life and those of the Jews were saved. The king looked with favor upon the Jews and upon Esther.

I like the story of Esther and her courage. The book of Esther has so much more in it so read it through for it is a great story of God working in Esther's life.

The name of God doesn't appear in the book of Esther but God's presence and workings are evident.

A powerful crisis or turning point in our lives can force us to do things we thought we couldn't do. Has that ever happened to you? What would you have done if you were Esther? Some people would have simply retreated further into safety, yielding to their fears, and weaknesses, and refused to take the risk Esther took.

Struggles that we have, or new challenges call us to move out of our safe zone into the unknown. Esther found the wisdom, and the courage to speak and to make a difference.

So many times we let, what we think are our weaknesses, stand in the way of doing God's will, of growing, of exploring, of living life.

Concentrating on our "weakness" binds us, they control us so that we view life from the impossible instead of the possible.

I remember a man that ran the NY Marathon several years ago, but he had no legs. He walked on his hands and thighs. It took him a day longer to finish, but he did it. This man went beyond what others would have considered his weakness.

Many of you may know the story of Joni Erickson Tada who had a diving accident into a lake on July 30, 1967 that left her paralyzed from the neck down but that hasn't stopped her from writing over 40 books, painting beautiful pictures with a paint brush in her mouth, having a business and being an advocate for those with disabilities. She is married and continues to

live a full life. In Christ she is made strong to accomplish what others deem impossible.

Nick Vujicic, was born without arms and legs. He has a new movie coming out September 25 that is entitled "No Limbs, No Limits". Born without arms or legs, Nick Vujicic became a voice of hope to a billion people worldwide. But his real story has never been told. "No Limbs, No Limits" asks a deeply personal question: What if the thing you spent your life trying to fix is the very thing God wants to use? He is happily married and has several children but growing up had a difficult time accepting his body but as he got older he realized God had a purpose for his life. "For such a time as this."

God's love can transform our life and can empower us to grow and to climb to new heights of discovery and growth.

God encourages us to keep working on bringing out the best in ourselves and bringing out what God has already planted in our souls.

It reminds me of "The Wizard of Oz" story in the fact that the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Lion, each wanted something from the Wizard when they got to the Emerald City. The Scarecrow wanted a brain, the Tinman wanted a heart and the Lion wanted courage. But when they got there they finally realized that they already had what they thought they lacked. They actually had what they needed. It was there all the time. They just needed to realize it themselves.

As we let go of what holds us back and let God work in our life, God can transform our doubts and insecurities and weaknesses into strengths and into possibilities.

As we let God guide us we become God's instrument. We are able to take up the cross and follow. We are able to deny ourselves because what we do isn't for ourselves but for the glory of God and the ministry of the gospel.

There are many people who feel as though they don't have the confidence to do things here at church or in other areas of ministry because they have never done it before.

I ask you to pray for empowerment and transformation, to be granted the desire, the wisdom, the courage, to step beyond what is comfortable and safe and to grow beyond the limits you set for yourself, and to find within you the seeds God planted to be all that God wants you to be.

God will lead you to where you are to serve but we must first be open to the task and willingness to move forward growing in the knowledge and love of God.

I pray as the Fall Season approaches, each one of us will grow, stretching our wings into new areas of ministry and outreach opportunities.

Remember what was said to Esther which is also said to us,

“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Let us have the courage to proclaim the Good News and stretch ourselves beyond our limits.

Pray for guidance, wisdom and courage to have God transform your weakness into a strength. Be open to God’s challenges. Be open to ministry opportunities. Be open to trying something new, knowing the Lord is with you.

“For such a time as this” God has placed you here!