

9 March 2022



ST. SAVIOUR'S

ANGLICAN CHURCH.

DIOCESE OF CAPE TOWN.

Lent 1: The Book of Esther

COLLECT FOR THE DAY

Almighty and holy God, your Son, in obedience to the Spirit, fasted forty days in the desert: give us grace to discipline ourselves that we may press on towards Easter with eager faith and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PREACHER: Revd. Johan Ferndale

PRESIDER: Revd. Chesnay Frantz

READING: Esther 2: 5-18 *The gift of beauty*

HYMNS: SOF

Introit: 112 For the beauty of the Earth

Offertory: 44 Blessed Assurance

Recessional: 519 Take my life and let it be

Lent 2022: Week 1

Lent 2022, is an opportunity for many of us to embark on a post COVID way of life. We acknowledge that the virus is with us, and we now begin to explore to live with it. This can be a nerve-wrecking experience and will require, patience, care, and a great deal of sensitivity towards others. As a means of helping each other navigate this terrain, we at St. Saviour's will be reflecting on the book of Esther for Lent.

Esther, as encountered in Holy Scripture (the Book of Esther) invites to reflect on various aspects of Christian living. We are told that Esther was chosen by God, "for a time such as this". God chooses Esther to accomplish God's will. Esther could be considered as God's agent of change. AS we read Esther, we learn of how she used her place of power and privilege to make a difference in the life of the Jews. One of the many traits of Esther's story which we notice is that there is no mention of God, it's a story where the work of God is implicit. God is part of the fiber and moral make-up of who Esther is, everything she does is grounded in the will and power of God.

Esther demonstrates to each of us that with power and privilege comes a weighty responsibility as she goes on to represent a nation before the king.

As we journey through the book of Esther, we will indeed be faced with a few challenging questions around our own faith journey. My prayer is that God will reveal to us that which God calls us to and in so doing empower us to stand bravely in the face of calamity. We do this knowing that God is ever present in a time such as this.

God bless.

Fr. Chesnay

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The Book of Esther starts with King Xerxes of Persia hosting a celebration for all his officials and noblemen, which lasted six months. This was followed by another party for ordinary citizens in the capital city of Susa. There were no restrictions on the amount of alcohol guests were allowed to consume. On the seventh day, while feeling happy from drinking, the king decided to summon his beautiful queen Vashti, who in turn was hosting a party for the women. The reason for this was so that the king could show off her beauty to all his guests. Her refusal to obey this instruction led to three consequences:

1. She became effectively divorced from the king and was stripped of her title as queen.
2. The king issued a decree which stated that every husband is ruler of his house and could say whatever he wanted.
3. A process was started to find a new queen in place of Queen Vashti.

A Jewish orphan girl named Hadassah, was adopted by her older cousin, Mordecai, who was one of the king's officials. Due to her extraordinary beauty, she was among those who were brought to the king's harem to be prepared and presented to him as the potential new queen. Mordecai warned Hadassah to keep her it a secret that she was Jewish and to use the name Esther. Not only was Esther highly favoured by the Eunuch in charge of the king's harem, but as soon as King Xerxes met her, she won his favour and affection. She became queen and through Esther and Mordecai, God's plan for salvation of the Jewish people from their enemies was put into motion.

Questions for reflection:

1. Are we able to see God's hand directing events as they unfolded?
2. What was it about Esther that made the king chose her as his new queen?
3. Are we able to use beauty as a means of drawing others to Christ?

LENT PROGRAM

BOOK OF ESTHER

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| Week 1: 9 March 2022- Chapter 1,2 | <i>(The gift of Beauty)</i> |
| Week 2: 16 March 2022- Chapter 3,4,5 | <i>(The gift of Favour)</i> |
| Week 3: 23 March 2022- Chapter 6,7,8 | <i>(The gift of courage)</i> |
| Week 4: 30 March 2022- Chapter 9,10 | <i>(The gift of Power)</i> |

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