

“Everything and Nothing” | Rev Tim Frickenschmidt | June 21, 2020

**Old Testament Reading** [Est 4:1-2, 4-16](#)

**4** <sup>1</sup> When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. <sup>2</sup> He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. ...

<sup>4</sup> When Esther's young women 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. <sup>5</sup> 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 this was and why it was. <sup>6</sup> Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. <sup>9</sup> And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. <sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, <sup>11</sup> “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, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

<sup>12</sup> And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. <sup>13</sup> Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. <sup>14</sup> 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 house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” <sup>15</sup> Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, <sup>16</sup> “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

**Epistle Reading** [James 3:2-3, 5-6](#)

**3** <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. <sup>3</sup> If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ... <sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

**Gospel Reading** [Luke 16:19-23](#)

**16** <sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.”

**Introduction**

We, Christians, find ourselves in an ever-widening social gap in our culture; trying to participate in the world but not to be overwhelmed by the world in which God is less obvious. How are we to live in such a world? How can God love and work through people like Esther and people like us? (1) God works through our words; (2) Our position; (3) The risk.

**Background**

1. God works through our words.

- God is intent on us using our words but, in Est 4, Esther hesitates in speaking to King Ahasuerus about saving the Jews as requested by Mordecai.
- Haman wanted Jewish genocide and went about seeking it by using words, speaking to King Ahasuerus, playing on the king's fears of financial need (greed).
- Haman then issued an edict to all the king's provinces using murderous words, to kill all Jews and to plunder all of their goods – resulting in confusion.
- The words of Haman (Est 3) and the words in our Epistle Reading bring hell to earth. We should not use our words to set things on fire but gently as [Prov 15:1](#) teaches.

2. Our position.

- God is also intent on us to use our positions. Mordecai tells Esther she has to use her elite insider position but she hesitates, fearful of losing all (e.g., Vashti).
- Seeing Esther's hesitation, Mordecai tells her that God has put her in a position of influence (“in the palace”) to use her. Likewise, God put us in Austin to use us here.
- We must ask if we are using our positions for ourselves. Are we using the world for ourselves or are we serving the world for the God who put us where we are?

3. The risk.

- God also demands risks from those who He has brought to “positions in the palace.”
- Yes, if Esther takes the risk of speaking out she might lose all. But, if she refuses to risk her position in the palace, she is already dead – and, we also would be dead.
- A greater risk is to allow the palace to kill/imprison us – like our Gospel Reading in which rich man, tormented in Hades, lifted his eyes to see Lazarus with Abraham.
- God calls on Esther to risk it all because He is the One Who always gives everything. So, God reveals Himself to Esther through Mordecai's words. And, she seems to grasp what she is being called by God to do by saying: “if I perish, I perish.”

What God calls on us to do is to risk everything and nothing. Because we cannot lose anything given to us by God in Christ, we can risk everything and lose nothing.

**Discuss**

- Discuss how Tim answered the question he posed at the beginning of his homily: How can God love and work through people like Esther and people like us?
- When/how should we speak (use our words)? Are there times when remaining silent might be better? Aren't actions stronger than words? For example: Upon listening to an acquaintance tell a racist joke at lunch, was Tim's silent look at his son a sufficient message of disapproval? Did his son understand? What else might Tim have done?
- What other options are there to being identified by our positions or our riches? How else can we be identified? What other identities would be more pleasing to God?
- God reveals Himself to Esther through Mordecai's words [Est 4:13-14](#). She seems to grasp what she is being called by God to do saying: “if I perish, I perish.” [Est 4:15-16](#)
- What God calls on us to do is to risk everything and nothing. Because we cannot lose anything given to us by God in Christ, so we can risk everything and lose nothing. A Christian missionary ([Jim Elliot](#)) once said: “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose.” Contrast this quote re: [Luke 9:24](#).

**Conclusion/Application**

- God never calls upon us to do anything He has not already done. He never calls us to do for others what He has not already done for us, Himself.
- Jesus died to give us a name and a position with Him and to make that name and position secure. If we belong to Jesus in faith and in baptism, our names and positions with Christ in heaven are secure in His Kingdom. Every time we baptize we use the person's full name because God grants them a position with Him. Therefore, we can risk everything that we have in this world when He calls us because we are not our worldly “stuff.”
- Risk what we have for the well-being others. Be willing to give it to them when God calls us on their behalf because there will be such a time for us. So, Speak, Act, Risk, Give.

