

Who comes to mind when you think of someone who did one thing that changed the world? Not just making a difference in our lives, but actually changed the world. Rosa Parks comes to mind. All she did was refuse to give up her seat on a bus, and this one act helped launch the civil rights movement. Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer refused to sign a watered-down statement of faith that would assist in removing the Hebrew Bible from the German Church, deny the importance of the Jewish people, and cause more focus on Hitler than Jesus. By refusing to sign it, he became a prominent figure in the resistance of Nazism.

Esther prepared a banquet for the king, which gave her the opportunity to use her royal position to prevent genocide on her people. Esther is an ordinary young woman who became King Xerxes' queen after, let's say, a beauty pageant was held to find the next queen. Esther didn't necessarily want to apply for the job, but she met the qualifications of the King's decree, which was to bring in all beautiful young virgins for the King to select his new queen.

Esther followed the advice of the King's attendants to be obedient to the King's wishes. She was also obedient to her cousin, Mordecai's advice. He was a palace guard, and suggested that she keep her Jewish heritage a secret. Most of the remaining Jews had assimilated into Persian life, but Mordecai was fearful that someone may discriminate against Esther.

Because of her beauty, goodness, and obedience, Esther won the favor of the King and the crown. However, palace drama continues to unfold: Mordecai is recognized for spoiling an assassination

attempt on the King. Haman, the King's right hand, is jealous. He begins to create a plan to get rid of Mordecai. One day, he notices that Mordecai would not bow down to Haman. It was custom to bow when greeting the King's officials to show respect and to acknowledge their authority. Haman asks other guards why Mordecai would not bow down and finds out that he is Jewish.

Now, it was ok for Jews to bow to royalty as a sign of respect as long as they were not worshipping them. So, perhaps Mordecai was using his heritage as an excuse to disrespect Haman. The two were feuding. And, even though the Jews had been living peacefully with the Persians, there were racial tensions simmering beneath the surface, especially within Haman.

Haman is an Amalekite. Amalekites have been enemies with the Jews ever since King Saul's reign. Haman's racism is unleashed when he learns of Mordecai's heritage. He decides that punishing Mordecai isn't enough. All Jews should be killed, so he hatched a plan for their destruction.

Haman, a trusted advisor, went to the King and said, "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire who keep themselves separate from everyone else. Their laws are different from those of any other people, and they refuse to obey the laws of the king. So, it is not in the king's interest to let them live. If it pleases the king, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 10,000 large sacks of silver to the government administrators to be deposited in the royal treasury" (Esther 3:8-9).

Trusting his advisor, the king doesn't ask too many questions. It sounds good to him – he punishes people for not upholding his laws and he receives money. And so, it became a law to kill all Jews – “young and old, including women and children” (v.13) and it was to happen on a specific day, March 7. The henchmen to carry out this decree were the common people because if they didn't follow the king's law, then they could be killed too. And, to add more motivation, “the property of the Jews would be given to those who killed them” (v.13).

Here's the hole in the plan: Haman doesn't know that Esther is Jewish. She kept her family secret just as Mordecai advised. So, Haman is committing treason, and he doesn't realize it. Haman's racism and his thirst for revenge will eventually cost him his own life. Or, it could go the other way. Esther could be killed just like all the rest of the Jews.

Mordecai is no longer allowed into the palace, so he sends a message to Esther, begging her to go to the king and plead their case. Esther is hesitant because she knows the rules of the kingdom. No one is allowed to approach the king unless he calls for them and holds out the golden scepter. She could be killed just for that. And, I'm sure there's a part of Esther that has grown to like her position as Queen. She doesn't want to jeopardize her lifestyle.

Mordecai reminds her of whom she is. Perhaps Esther thinks she is protected because she currently has the king's favor. Mordecai says, “Don't think for a minute that you'll escape this. Living in the king's house won't protect you. Perhaps you were made queen, [by God,] for such a time as this” (v.14). After careful thought, Esther

decides to risk it and help her people by cooking up her own plan to have the king reverse his decree.

God never calls us at the “right” time. God calls at a time such as this. Whatever is happening around us causes us to rise to the occasion. Where we find ourselves, our place in authority or influence, urges us to act. God has placed us there to use our privilege to help someone else, especially if they are in a place where their voice won't be heard.

God knows what he is calling us into. God knew that Esther's calling as queen would present challenges and conflicts that she would have to face. They would be risky for her personally, yet the cost would be too great if she remained silent. Like Esther, God hasn't positioned us in our places of authority and influence to reward us and protect us. We've been given this crisis, this moment, so we use our privilege, our influence, to stand up for those who can't stand up for themselves.

We may think it's not the right time in our lives to answer God's call. It's never the right time. If we wait for the right time, it will never come. God calls each of us, ordinary people like Esther, to do extraordinary work, for a time such as this.