



Sunday, July 19th

Preacher: Pastor Howard-John Wesley

Sermon Title: Call of Duty Part 1 - "It's Your Time"

Scripture: Esther 4:12-16

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Sermon Summary:

God continually calls us to use our voice and our presence to spread the gospel and speak against the evil of the land. Everyone isn't called to preach, but everyone will be called to be a prophet who speaks against injustice. God leads us all to points where we realize silence is unacceptable and we decide to speak up.

In this first installment of the Call of Duty sermon series, Pastor Wesley focuses on the story of Esther. In chapter 4, after Haman received permission from King Xerxes to destroy the Jews, Mordecai sent a message asking Esther to speak to the King on the Jews' behalf. Pastor Wesley presents three reasons why Esther was initially hesitant to speak up for the Jews, and connected it to why many of us struggle when it is our time to use our voice for the benefit of others:

1. Esther misunderstood the purpose of favor
2. Esther was afraid of conflict
3. Esther lacked the courage to lose her position in order to secure someone else's protection

With each point, Pastor Wesley builds on his argument that every child of God has a time when they are called to be a prophet. At some point in our Christian walk, silence will not be an option and God will require us to raise our voice and to declare the will of God for the benefit of others.

Life Application Questions:

1. What areas in your life would you identify as evidence of God's favor? What was a moment of clarity when you realized that you were placed in your current position to act in a specific way to bless a particular person, family, or group?
2. Have you ever needed someone to speak up for you? What was the outcome of that person using, or not using their voice, and what was the impact on your life? How does that experience impact the use of your own voice?
3. Using the book of Esther as an example, Pastor Wesley stated that just because God is not mentioned does not mean that God isn't at work. How do you identify that God is working in a situation that traditionally isn't a religious space? What was the outcome of that move of God?
4. In the beginning of this sermon, Pastor Wesley remarked that Esther was called to be the voice of her people. What do you think is your current "call of duty?" What fears do you have about heeding this call?
5. Pastor Wesley asked us to consider that we are not fighting just against Haman but against the "spirit of Haman." While it is easy to read this text and look at Haman as a biblical villain, we should also point out the "Haman's" in our political leaders, communities, and even ourselves? How can we hold ourselves accountable for the spirit of Haman we encounter in our present day.

Spirit Work:

1. In Pastor Wesley's sermon, we are reminded that we are "called to duty." As we prepare for these assignments, we will need courage, strength, and wisdom. Take a moment to submit a prayer request via the Alfred Street Prayer Request Form - <https://www.alfredstreet.org/about-us/prayer-for-the-sick-shut-in/prayer-request/>
2. *Credit Reel:* "Just because God isn't mentioned, doesn't mean God isn't at work." In our own lives we may fail to mention the name of God even as we were benefiting from God's work, provision, or favor. Make a visual "credit reel" for your life. List out some events, accomplishments, and blessings that stand out in your life. Write brief notes of thank you credits to God and anyone else who helped to make it happen.
3. The book of Esther tells a story of a people who have been oppressed. In your own life, where have you been part of the oppressed, and where have you seen yourself take on the role of the oppressor? Take some time this week to consider your own privilege and look into resources to help combat sexism, classism, able-ism, or homophobia.
4. We were encouraged in this sermon to act in wisdom and not in anger. Think about what angers you most often and spend some time this week searching out [anger management techniques](#) that could work for you. These techniques could be anything from remembering to stop and pray or taking a moment to pause and breathe.