



## **Sunday, August 2nd**

**Preacher:** Pastor Howard-John Wesley

**Sermon Title:** Call of Duty Part 3 - "Good Trouble"

**Scripture:** Esther 4:12-14 & 10:3

*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?"*

*Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.*

### **Sermon Summary:**

In this third installment of the Call of Duty sermon series, Pastor Wesley opened with the gospel of the late Honorable John Lewis by urging us to remain hopeful and optimistic, and when necessary to get into "good trouble." Just like Congressman Lewis, Mordecai used his voice to help create change in the political landscape of his day.

There are three instances when Mordecai receives the call of duty to be the voice and presence of God and finds himself in "good trouble":

1. When he refuses to bow to Haman.
  - Every now and then you ought to find yourself in some "good trouble" because of your commitment to your walk with God.
2. When he knows that there is a plan to kill Xerxes and says something about it.
  - Every now and then you ought to find yourself in some "good trouble" not because it affects you personally, but because there is a generation that comes after you that may suffer because of your silence.
  - Every now and then you have to prove your true patriotism by speaking against the injustices of this nation and demonstrating how it can be better.
3. When he talks to his cousin Esther.
  - Every now and then you ought to find yourself in some "good trouble" by challenging your own people and committing to not keep quiet at a time like this.

## Life Application Questions:

1. Even though there is no mention of God in the book of Esther, when you read Esther in the context of God's covenant relationship with Israel, it becomes clear that something bigger is stirring below the surface and that God's hand of providence is moving. What areas in your life does it seem like God is currently absent from? How can you step back to see the bigger picture and God's hand moving?
2. In Esther 4:14, Mordecai tells Esther '...perhaps you were born for such a time as this?' In your family lineage or community history, which elders like Mordecai made 'good trouble' during their lives, and how do you still benefit? What young people in your family or community could benefit from you engaging in 'good trouble' right now?
3. When Mordecai knows that there is a plan to kill King Xerxes, he refuses to sit back and remain silent, even though it isn't a direct threat to him. In reflection, how have you remained complicit to the issues that don't personally impact you? Has your silence or inaction allowed systemic injustice to continue unchecked?
4. Mordecai's decision not to bow down represents a set of behaviors he was not willing to engage in because of his convictions. What behaviors have you chosen not to engage in and which behaviors are you still working to change or stop in the same way? What makes it difficult to not "bow down" in your own life?
5. Pastor Wesley teaches that Mordecai, in an attempt to protect Esther, speaks up about the eunuchs plot to kill King Ahasuerus even though it seemingly didn't involve him. Who are the Esther's we should protect? Who have we failed to speak up for because it seemingly doesn't involve us? What causes could you get more involved in after hearing this part of the sermon?
6. As we near a presidential election season, many of us are engaging in hard conversations with those closest to us. Who are you having the hardest time speaking to about what's going on in our nation? What can you do to help them see your side, and what can you do to better see theirs?
7. One of the famous scriptures in the story of Esther is: "if I perish, I perish." Esther understood that the consequence of getting into "good trouble" could be death for her. What are the possible consequences you face for the good trouble you have chosen or will choose to get in?
8. In this story, Mordecai and Esther have dual membership as citizens of Susa and Jewish people. While Pastor teaches us that Mordecai has patriotism for Susa, we also see Mordecai having concern for his people. Black people have a similar story of dual identity in this country. What has patriotism looked like for you? What tensions have you experienced, if any, with exhibiting patriotism in a country that has also caused great harm to black people?

## Spirit Work:

1. We learned in today's sermon that even when the hand of God is not seen or it seems like God is not present, God is *always* at work. Spend the next couple of days journaling the ways God's goodness is revealed in your life (e.g. *a conversation with a friend or family member, revelation through bible study or a television show, an unexpected blessing*).
2. Pastor Wesley summarizes Mordecai's words to Esther in Chapter 4 as, "*Esther don't let your personal privilege in the palace make you apathetic to the plight of the people.*" Take time to dissect this line. Ask yourself, am I Mordecai or Esther?
  - a. *If I am Mordecai*, how can I answer the call of duty to be the voice and presence of God to the Esthers in my life?
  - b. *If I am Esther*, where does my privilege exist, and how can I use that privilege to stir change for my people?
3. In this sermon, Pastor reiterates the question "do you know?" Pastor uses this question to Esther as an encouragement to all of us, to ask ourselves the same question. Take time this week to learn more about what is going on in this question and look for ways to make a difference on that issue whether that is signing a petition to make sure a young girl is released from jail for not doing homework, reposting voting information, or donating to a worthy cause.