**Sunday, October 25th, 2020**

**Esther 4:5-16**

Today is Reformation Sunday.

It is a day when we pause to remember what Martin Luther

          did to help us understand all God has given to us and done for us.

In Luther's time there were many problems in the church.

Two things in particular bothered him the most

          because they separated the people from God.

They prevented the people from truly experiencing God's presence,

          and made it difficult for the people to know

          God's love and peace, his joy and forgiveness.

Worship was conducted in Latin,

          a language which most people did not understand.

The other was the practice of indulgences, the buying of forgiveness.

There were many other problems in the Church,

          but these two greatly concerned Martin

          because they separated the people from God.

Although his life was in danger, he continued to fight

          to help the people come closer to God.

Friends took him to the safety of a castle where he spent years

          translating the Bible into the language of the people.

He never ceased explaining the falsehood

          of trying to buy God's forgiveness and love.

Love cannot be bought, neither can peace, or joy.

Martin Luther spent long hours and risked his life, for the people of his time,

          and for us, so we could truly understand and worship God.

He was in the right place and the right time to make a difference.

When God asked him to do a tough job, he did it.

And it has made all the difference in how we experience and worship God.

The story in our scripture lesson this morning has many similarities with

          the story of Martin Luther.

Queen Esther was also in the right place, at the right time to make a difference.

Esther was a Jewish girl raised in Persia by a cousin named Mordecai.

She was chosen by King Xerxes to be his wife, and therefore queen,

          of one of the greatest powers of the world.

Everything was going smoothly, and Esther lived a rich and comfortable life.

But before long, things changed, as they so often do.

An evil prime minister named Haman, made up his mind to annihilate all the Jews.

One day he got his chance.

Mordecai, Esther's foster father, refused to bow before Haman.

Haman was so angry he convinced King Xerxes

          to let him do away with the whole Jewish nation.

The only person who could upset his plans was Queen Esther.

However, if she were to intervene, she could easily lose her life.

And what difference could she really make?

She was a powerless sex partner to a king

          who strongly preferred women who never interfered with his wishes.

She could only come to the king when he called.

Everyone, including the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces,

          knew that if any man or woman went to the king inside the inner court,

          without being called, there was but one law – they would be put to death.

Only if the king held out the golden scepter to someone, could that person live.

Yet Esther alone, of all the Jews, had access to the king.

She knew if she entered the king's presence without being summoned,

          she would be sentenced to death,

          unless, the king chose to hold out his scepter and offer his pardon.

Mordecai knew the danger and yet told Esther:

“If you keep silent at such a time as this, you will also perish.”

With the odds stacked against her, Esther called on her people to pray and fast.

Esther told Mordecai: "After we pray and fast,

          I will go to the king, although it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Esther stood in the inner court waiting to see if she would be condemned to death,

          or if the King would hold out the golden scepter to her.

He held out the scepter to her and asked: "What is your request Queen Esther?

          It shall be given to you."

After a bit of daring maneuvers, Esther was able to convince the King

          to allow the Jews to defend themselves and not perish.

Esther cared about her people.

And like Martin Luther, was willing to do whatever she could to protect them.

She was in the right place and the right time to make a difference.

When God asked her to do a tough job, she did it, in spite of the risk.

Throughout the Bible, and down through the centuries,

          people have found themselves in the right place, at the right time,

          to make a difference.

Often it is not an easy task they face, but it does matter.

What if Moses had not dared to cross the Red Sea?

What would have happened if Noah had not built the ark?

What would have happened if Ruth had not remained with Naomi?

What if the prophets had not dared to convince the people to turn back to God?

What would life be like now if the apostles

          had not spread the Good News throughout the world?

These, and many others, were in the right place, at the right time,

          and were willing to do what God requested.

We are in this time and place, and God has many tasks for us.

We can remain silent, not wanting to put out the effort, or to take the risk.

Yet seldom do we face such a great risk

          which those like Martin Luther or Queen Esther faced.

What we say matters, what we do makes a difference.

If we remain silent, when we do not act,

          we are not loving our neighbors, or obeying God.

Look around, there is much to be done:

          people are confused, lonely, frightened, hungry, cold, suffering.

God calls us to trust him,

          and take care of each other,

                    and encourage one another.

We are here in this place for such a time as this.

AMEN