**For Such a Time as This Wednesday Meditation by Reverend Victoria Ney 10/28/20**

Isn’t it wonderful to be living in these placid, peaceful times? Yes, I’m joking! A year ago, who could have imagined a pandemic named Covid19 would completely disrupt our world—our civilization—our every-day life as we know it? Last year at this time, we all came to church, had coffee hour and meetings and activities and Sunday School and time together. I hope I don’t upset anyone, but last year at this time I remember a large number of Democratic candidates running for president, so who would have predicted that it would be Vice President Biden running against the incumbent President Trump? Not me! And who would have thought that exactly one year ago this Sunday, I would have preached a sermon entitled “For Such a Time as This?”!

You may have been in the church that day or not, but I was using the fact that it was Halloween, October 31. I knew that the church children would love to dress up that day, so I suggested that all the kids could dress up as a King, Queen, Bible character, whatever, and I would preach on Queen Esther in the Bible.

Do you remember Esther’s story? It’s a fascinating one to be sure! In a very short version, King Ahasuerus needs a new queen and runs a sort of beauty contest. Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, “wins” and becomes the new queen.

A short time later, an evil man named Haman plots to kill all the Jews and seize all their land and property. What makes the plot more intriguing is that Esther never told anyone that she was actually Jewish. Her uncle, Mordechai, basically reminds Esther she had better do something about Haman’s plan, or she will end up just as dead as all the other Jews.

Esther says there’s nothing she can do. Her uncle wisely states that she could be right—in which case God will raise up someone else to save his people. But then Mordechai makes this marvelous statement: “But perhaps you have been placed here for such a time as this.”

I hate to spoil a great story, but Esther did her praying and God guided her to what she needed to do to save all the Jews and have the evil Haman get his just reward. You probably remember that Esther is revered to this day in the lovely Jewish holiday called Purim.

If you think that Esther’s story is unique in the Bible, you’re mistaken. I won’t tell a lot of stories today, but think of Joseph in the book of Genesis who saved his whole family—the sons of Jacob who would become the people of Israel.

Joseph’s story is so fascinating, because so many horrible things happen to him—he’s sold into slavery by his brothers and thrown into prison, and then incredibly ends up as “Prime Minister” of Egypt, which enables him to save hundreds of thousands of lives from starvation during a famine in Egypt and the whole Mid-East—and, of course, saves his family.

There are lots of other people in the Bible—and throughout history—who are “coincidentally” in places that influence the outcome of the world. Or maybe in a place that influences or saves the life of just one person.

Sometimes things in life appear to happen rather randomly, don’t they? But don’t be fooled. I don’t believe there are any coincidences in this life. To me, coincidence is God acting anonymously.

I think it’s worthwhile to pause right here and ask ourselves—have we been placed wherever we are “for such a time as this?” Are you in a particular job “for such a time as this?” Are you OUT of a job “for such a time as this?” Are you in this church “for such a time as this?” Are you a neighbor, in a line at the grocery store, at a Zoom meeting “for such a time as this?”

I have no idea what the future holds for any of us. We may be wearing masks and social distancing for a year or more. The election next week may have a good result or cause more problems. Who knows what will happen? I sure don’t, but God does.

I believe that our seemingly “out-of-control” world is NEVER out of God’s control—not today, not next week, not next year, not any year. God will still be in control. I get a lot of comfort from that fact.

There’s an old hymn that I remember singing when I was a little girl at St. John’s By the Sea Church in Ventnor. The first line is: “God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year.”

I still believe that, and perhaps you and I are placed where we are “for such a time as this” as God works God’s purpose out.

Will you pray with me?

Dear Lord, we are so glad and relieved that you are not only the creator of our world, but you are still in control of it. We put our lives in your capable hands once again, knowing that you will continue to care for us and place us where we can be your hands and words—your partners—as you work your purposes out in our world. Amen.

I think it’s worthwhile to pause right here and ask ourselves—have we been placed wherever we are “for such a time as this.” Are you in a particular job ‘for such a time as this?” Are you out of a job “for such a time as this?” Are you in this church “for such a time as this?” Are you sitting in a pew or asked to be a participant “for such a time as this?” Are you a neighbor, in a line at the grocery store, at a meeting “for such a time as this?” Sometimes it seems that life happens rather randomly. But don’t be fooled. I don’t believe there are any coincidences in this life. To me, coincidence is God acting anonymously. Sometimes we even have this mistaken idea that “it’s all about me.” The author Rick Warren would disagree. He wrote a book called “The Purpose Driven Life” and Rick says “it’s all about Him.” Believing that we are here “for such a time as this” gives our lives meaning and purpose.

Well, back to the story. Esther listens to Mordecai and says she will go to the king. But first she will fast and pray for three days—and asks Mordecai to get all the Jews praying. Interesting. Prayer is not the last resort—it’s the first resort. Esther knew that we need to seek God during difficult times. And then we commit ourselves to action—to serving God.

Well, Esther did her praying and God guided what she needed to do next.