

## SM 200726 It Will Make A Difference - Ministry

### Opening Prayer

Gracious God... We thank you this special time of worship... and for the joy that blooms as we fellowship with you and in the company of believers. We humbly ask that you will grow us from the inside, and so fill us with your Holy Spirit that, all of our works, begun, continued and ended in you, might bring honor to your name and make more disciples for the transformation of the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Announcements

- New Members: Last week we celebrated with 7 from our midst who...
  - Affirmed God's call to serve and to grow here at Aura...
  - Made a commitment to Full Membership...
  - It was a great day of celebration and fellowship...
  - Thanks to all who made it possible
- News: Joe DiNovi agreed to repair the soffits on the church and educational building...
  - Answered prayer...
  - Will begin in about three or four weeks
- Covid-19: Let's continue to practice social distancing
  - Masks
    - Wear upon entering exiting (high traffic/ close areas)
    - Wear outside when fellowshiping, unless social distancing
  - Please stay home if...
    - You are showing any symptoms...
    - You have been exposed to someone with Covid-19
    - Let me know so we can pray for you and offer needed help
  - Simple Precautions: Good Hygiene - Wash Hands/ Don't touch face or eyes
  - \*Make it our goal... that no one will get the coronavirus because of me
- Offering Plate: Up front if you would like to make an offering

### Sharing Our Prayers and Praises

### Message Introduction

- We live in a world that values status...
    - In law enforcement an officer's status denoted by his or her rank (private)
    - In counseling titles denote status: Student, intern, associate, professional
    - Status is even conveyed in churches...
      - Through the use of robes, hoods, stoles and bars
  - Even people serving in the church are often divided into two parts...
    - Clergy... (pastors, ministers, priests)
    - And Laity [everyone else in the pews... not clergy]
  - But some people don't like the word... laity...
    - They argue that laity is a poor choice of words...
      - Because the term... "laity"
- \*Suggests that non-clergy are amateurs**

- It is almost like...
  - What we ask doctors to do...
  - We often ask them to describe our problem in... “layman’s” terms
    - In other words...
      - You’re the expert... I am the novice...
      - Explain my issue using words that I can understand
  - So... looking at it that way...
    - Clergy are the experts in ministry
    - And the laity are the amateurs
- \*But that’s not the what the Bible teaches about laity...**
  - The word 'laity' comes from the Greek word... *laos*
    - Which simply means... **“people”**
  - The Apostle Paul pick’s up on this idea in his letter to the Ephesians...
    - “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens  
but fellow citizens with **God’s people.**”  
(Ephesians 2:19)*
  - So according to Paul...
    - Believers are not armatures...
    - You are... God’s people...
      - You are the people doing God’s work...
        - And when you are doing God’s work...
          - \*It will make a difference!**
  - What does that have to do with you and me...
    - At this time and place?
  - Queen Esther may help us to answer that Question...
    - But before we go there let’s prepare our hearts to receive God’s Word
      - Gracious God, you are the Potter and we are the clay!  
-Mold us and shape us...  
-With wisdom... to understand your message.  
-With strength... to build our lives on your Word.  
-And with courage... to live what we have learned.*

**Scripture Introduction:** Esther 4:6-17 (Pew Bibles: Small - p. 403, Large - p. 770)

- The Book of Esther takes us all the way back to Iran... (I mean Persia)
- Just as there are many courageous Christians in Iran today...
- Esther was a courageous young woman
  - And a devout Jew lived in the Capitol city of Susa
- When the King’s wife Vashti dishonored him... he divorced her...
  - And sought out a new queen...
  - Eventually Esther was chosen to be his new bride
    - Then something dreadful happened...

- Haman persuaded the Persian King Xerxes to sign an edict ordering that...
  - All Jews... young and old, women and children...
  - Be destroyed, killed and annihilated on the 3/7/473BC
- Why would Haman do such a despicable thing?
  - After 60 years in captivity...
    - The Persians decreed that the Jews could return home
      - This infuriated the Amalekites...
      - They hated the Jews...
      - And had been looking for a way to destroy them
- This brings us to chapter 4...
  - Esther's cousin (Mordecai, whom raised her)... learned about the edict...
    - And went into a state of extreme and very public mourning
      - Right in front of the king's palace
  - Esther sent a palace servant (Hatach) (Hay – thatch)
    - To find out what was wrong with Mordecai
    - Mordecai convinces her to intervene with the king...
      - Even though...
      - To trouble the king without an invitation could mean death
  - \*Nothing less was at stake than...
    - The lives... the very existence of God's chosen people!!
- This is where we pick up our reading for today (Esther 4:6-17)

*So Hathak (Hay – thatch) went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.*

*Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."*

*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."*

*So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions."*

### **Application** (What does Esther's courage have to do with us today?)

- Esther was a Jew who lived in a hostile and violent world...
  - Just like the riots that we see today are not about George Floyd...

- For Haman... it was not really about the Jews...
  - It was all about power, influence and control

**-Yet... step by step God was preparing Esther for a mighty work...**

- You and I are living in a rapidly changing world...
  - Yet... step by step God is preparing us for a mighty work...**

- Last week 7 people joined our church...
  - Since December the membership here at Aura has more than doubled...
  - Attendance has tripled over what it was two years ago...

**-Hold on... this is not about me... (About what God is doing here at Aura)**

- I want us to think for a minute...
  - About some other things that have happened in the last two years
    - New clear panels were donated for the illuminated front sign
    - Nursery was cleaned/updated/ sound system installed
    - The Front Portico was restored to its original beauty...
    - A brand new natural gas furnis was donated and installed
    - The Social Hall:
      - New Septic system, hot water heaters
      - Restored inside and out – beautified and now functional
    - Education Building:
      - Entire plumbing system replaced/new fixtures installed
      - Mildew removed from hallway/ dehumidifier installed
    - Cemetery: Cleared of debris and undesirable trees...
    - Church bell restored to functionality...
    - This summer: New Air Conditioning...
    - This fall:
      - All the decayed soffits will be replaced...
      - And the trim on the belfry will be restored...
    - Parsonage: All systems brought up to grade with any necessary repairs
    - Church Grounds...
      - Entire Campus beautified
      - Every Sunday our grounds honor God by looking the very best

-Now some may argue...

**\*The list of things you just mentioned are just maintenance/ repairs...  
-Not ministry... (I get that...)**

- Yet I am absolutely convinced that God is using you and me...
  - Not clergy...
  - Not laity...
    - But all of us... the people of God...
    - The ones God has called us... (like Esther)
      - For such a time as this...
      - To lay a foundation...

-For a mighty work that God wants to do

**\*This has nothing to do with being professionals or amateurs...**

- God didn't require us to study for years and years...
- Now we are the experts... executing our plans...

**-Exactly the opposite...**

- We are the church...
- The gathering of God's people...**
  - Of all different stripes... gifts... and abilities
  - Called for such a time as this...**

**-Two years ago...**

- How many of us knew that we would be here today!**
- Probably more than half of us had no idea!

-Yet... in his abundant grace and according to his perfect will...

**\*God has called us to be part of his mighty work here at Aura...**

- I don't know about you... but that excites me...

-We ARE doing vital ministry in the present...

-And we are **also** laying a foundation...

-For the future ministry of the Aura Church

-So that the Aura Church will remain a powerful witness...

-For the Christian faith in our community/nation world

**\*We are the church...**

- The gathering of God's people...**
- Blooming where God has planted us...**

-Like Esther...

-And like the whole host of witnesses that have gone before us...

**-God has called us for such a time as this...**

The Apostle Paul summarized God's plan...

-For the laity... the people of God...

*"For we are God's workmanship,  
created in Christ Jesus to do good works."  
(Ephesians 2:10)*

**Conclusion** [I will close with this story... (Maybe you've heard it)]

**\*Has a lot to say about why we serve...**

**-And how our devoted service makes a difference!**

A man was walking along the shore when he came upon a little boy standing in the midst of thousands of starfish that had washed up along the shore.

The man watched the little boy as he picked up one starfish... and then another... one by one throwing them back into the sea.

The man watched for several minutes then walked up to the boy and asked,  
**"What are you doing?"**

The little boy answered,  
**"I'm saving these starfish so they won't die."**

The man said to the boy...  
 "There are too many to save, it won't make any difference."

The little boy reached down and picked up another starfish and said...

**"It will make a difference for this one"**  
 -As he threw it back into the ocean...

**\*You might not be able to fix everything...**

- In our nation...
- In your community...
- On the school board or in our county

**-Yet... Your effort to be faithful witnesses for Christ...**

- Is making a difference...**
  - Where God has planted you...**
  - In this place...**
  - In your social circles...**
  - With family, friends and neighbors**

- God is using...
  - Your faith...
  - Your unique witness...
  - Your gifts and talents to make a difference...

**\*Maybe not for every starfish...**

- But the Bible tells us that...
  - Even if only one friend or relative comes to the Lord...
  - Because of your faith...

*"The angels in heaven will rejoice over one sinner who repents."  
 (Luke 15:10)*

## **Let's Pray**

Gracious God... We thank you for calling us to the Aura Church... for such a time as this. Help us to bloom where we are planted so that our faith and witness will make a difference in the lives of those we love and in the world. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen