

At times, we must stand in the gap for others

Lesson Scripture: Esther 3:2-3,5-6a; 4:7-16

Lesson aims: to recognize God's hand in human affairs, to understand that at times we must stand in the gap for others and to always honor God in what we do.

Background: Esther is the last of the historical books in the Old Testament. Dated around the 5th century B.C., it records events during the Babylonian Captivity. The Persians have been in control for some time. Actually, "the first wave of Jewish exiles returned home about 50 years before this book begins" (NIV Standard Lesson Commentary).

There are 10 chapters in the book with no direct mention of God. The author is unknown but generally people accept Mordecai as the writer. The theme is "God's providential care." Ahasuerus - the Greeks call him Xerxes - is king of the large empire that stretches from India to Cush.

No records to date have validated Esther's story; however, the detailed description of Persian culture is accurate for that period.

To appreciate the idea of providence, keep in mind the following three points. "First,



Mildred Peppers
Sunday School Lesson

nothing happens merely by chance or fate. Secondly, God works in our lives without taking away our freedom of choice, and finally, God works within the framework of history" (Richards' Complete Bible Handbook). To make this live, think for a few moments about the Civil Rights Movement. God moved within history, allowing everyone to choose his or her side. When He moved nothing and no one could stop the changes. I would like to approach this lesson from that perspective.

Lesson: Esther (Hadasah), an orphaned Jewish girl living with her uncle, Mordecai, is in Susa (Shashan). The Persian King Ahasuerus is having a series of banquets

that are designed to display his wealth and power. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary suggests that the banquets are strategic planning sessions for an attack on Greece. The first one lasts for 180 days. The second one comes on the heels of the first and lasts for seven days. It is during this one that the drama heightens.

Ahasuerus summons Queen Vashti to show her off to his guests. She is also giving a banquet and refuses the audience. A decree is issued that she is never to appear before the king again. Later he is persuaded to choose a replacement. Several years later, the king chooses Esther as his queen. She is told by her uncle not to disclose her identity.

Mordecai, a minor official in the king's court, overhears a plot to assassinate the king. Immediately, he informs Queen Esther. Of course she tells her husband. The matter is investigated and the culprits are executed. A third character is introduced, Haman. Honored by the king, everyone is expected to bow. Mordecai refuses and Haman hears about it. Considered a sign of disrespect, the official plots to kill him. Haman comes up with a date to not only kill Mordecai but all Jews as well.

The king sanctions the decree. Mordecai and many other Jews go in mourning (sackcloth and ashes). Esther sends a eunuch to find out what's going on. Her uncle explains through the eunuch and appeals for her intervention. She knows the customs and is fearful for her life.

Mordecai sends a message to her that states silence is not the answer but if she will not someone else will. He tells her that her position could very well be for a time such as this. Upon hearing his reply, she requests that all Jews in Susa fast along with her for three days. After that, she will approach the king.

Application: Ezekiel 22:30 asks, "Who will stand in

the gap...?" Today that question resonates throughout society. Who will stand in the gap for the many faceless and nameless people who are cheated, mistreated, plotted against and ignored? Many of us are in positions to change things or at least bring them to the forefront. It's uncomfortable and may jeopardize that job, but God will get the glory. You didn't get that position

solely on your own anyway. Could you be there for such a time as this?

Yes we are like Esther but there is a voice that shakes us to the core. Are we honoring God in whatever we do? There are a number of us that put on blinders once we arrived. We turned our backs on our people. God acting in our history, once again sends someone to remind us. Now what?

Macedonia Holiness Church Of God Of The Apostolic Faith, Inc.

Bishop R.L. Wise, Sr.
D.D.; S.T.D. - Pastor

Sunday Services
 Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
 Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
 M.Y.P.U 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday Services
 Prayer & Bible Study 7:30 p.m.
 4111 Whitfield Drive
 Phone: 336-767-3700
 Fax: 336-767-7006

United Progressive Baptist Church

PASTOR LEWIS E. DEVLIN
 Home Tel: (336) 767-7825
 Office Tel: (336) 724-1266
 Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.
 Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
 Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00 p.m.
 Thursday Grandparents Bible Study - 7:00 p.m.
 At E. 12th & Jackson Avenue
 1122 Quincy Caldwell Circle
 Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Pastor Lewis E. Devlin and
1st Lady Mary E. Devlin

Piney Grove Church of Winston-Salem, Inc.
 Early Sunday Morning Worship Service 8:00 a.m.
 Join us for a Blessed Time in the Lord.

Piney Grove Baptist Church
 Dr. James F. Linville, Pastor

4715 Indiana Ave. • Winston-Salem, NC 27106 • (336) 767-4044

- ♦ Early Morning Worship.....8:00 a.m.
- ♦ Sunday School.....9:30 a.m.
- ♦ Morning Worship.....11:00 a.m.
- ♦ Evening Services.....4:00 p.m.
- ♦ Bible Study Every Wednesday.....10:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Mission Statement: "A Saving Station for Lost Souls and Enrichment Center for Christians"

Website: www.pineygrovebcinc.org E-mail: pgbc2005@bellsouth.net

Goler Memorial offers dynamic community sermon series

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Pastor and Mrs. Seth O. Lartey and the entire Goler Memorial AME Zion Church family invite you and your friends, relatives, associates, neighbors and prayer partners to share in an exciting worship experience, beginning Feb. 22 and continuing through April 4. The services will be held at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. The sermon theme is "Living With Purpose to Possess God's Promises for Your Life."

At the end of the series, guests, seekers, friends of Goler Memorial, members and the disciples of Jesus Christ will live a purpose-pursuing life in the following areas:

- In spiritual matters: what makes Jesus superior to all other prophets.
 - In self-care: how to be excellent in all areas of your life.
 - In kingdom building: turning the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God.
 - In financial matters: going from poverty to prosperity.
 - In relational matters: how to live at peace with all persons.
 - In parenting: the roles of the father, the mother and the children.
 - In community development: how to rebuild the community one block at a time.
- The following members of Goler's Worship Celebration Team will be present to welcome you and assist you in any

- way:
- The ministerial staff - Ministers Pamela D. Phillips, Virnell Johnson, Inez Hairston, Patricia Landingham, Donna Maree, William Ross and Rev. Henry Hill; trustee - Virginia Hardesty; deaconess - Benzena Purvis; steward - Robert Jarrett; usher - Marion Henderson; Lay Council - Lynette Gerald.
- Board of Christian Education - Betty Bowman; missionaries - Jacqueline Lartey, Dorothy Williams, Claudette Gethers-Boyd; class leader - Claudette Jarrett; music department - Ricky McKinney; drama ministry - Jackie Nunn; stewardess - Mosé Belton-Perry; preacher's stewards - Frank Stowe and Dr. Everette Witherspoon;

- evangelism - Minister Pamela Phillips; hospitality - Doris Christian and Earnestine Cornelius.
 - Parking - Robert Leak and Robert Kimber; visitation - Robin Witherspoon; new members - Marian Anderson-Booker; children's church - Cassandra Petty; college ministry - Benny Patterson Jr.; men's ministry - Fred Phifer; women's ministry - Jamie Transou; singles ministry - Sherry Springs and Carman Lockhart; youth ministry - Shirley Kindle.
- The public is invited to attend any and all services. If you need transportation or more information, call the office at 724-9411. The church is at 630 N. Patterson Ave.

UNION BAPTIST CHURCH

HOLDING ON TO OUR HERITAGE

"A Celebration of Pastoral Service"
 Sunday, February 22, 2004 5:00 pm



Dr. Sir Walter Mack, Jr.
Host Pastor



Dr. William A. Jones
Guest Preacher

 Pastor Edwin Allen Ambassadors Temple Church	 Pastor J.D. Ballard United Metropolitan Baptist Church	 Pastor Dennis Bishop First Waughtown Baptist Church	 Pastor Johnnie Boyd Raleigh's Crossroads United Methodist Church	 Pastor J. Ray Butler United Cornerstone Baptist Church	 Pastor Serenus Churn Mt. Zion Baptist Church	 Pastor Samuel Cornelius New Jerusalem Baptist Church	 Pastor Jerry Drayton New Bethel Baptist Church	
 Pastor Moses Edwards Ephesus Seventh Day Adventist Church	 Pastor William Elder Middlefork Christian Church (Retired)	 Pastor Carlton Eversley Dellabook Presbyterian Church	 Pastor William Falls Greater First United Baptist Church	 Pastor James Fulwood St. Mark Baptist Church	 Pastor Wallace Gaither True Temple Holiness Church	 Pastor Charles Gray Mt. Olive Baptist Church	 Pastor Waldo Hauser Freedom Baptist Church (Retired)	
 Pastor John Jackson Goodwill First Baptist Church	 Pastor S.D. Johnson Macedonia TVPH Church	 Pastor Joseph Jones Zion Memorial Baptist Church	 Pastor Luther Jones Sr. Retired	 Pastor Charles Leak Solid Rock Baptist Church	 Pastor Gwathney Leake Stokesdale Church of God	 Pastor W.D. McCollough Rock Hill Missionary Baptist Church (Retired)	 Pastor Mack McConnell Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church	 Pastor R.E. McGowens, Sr. Galilee Baptist Church
 Pastor Benjamin Mittens, Sr. White Oak Baptist Church	 Pastor John Mendez Emmanuel Baptist Church	 Pastor Rayfield Medcalf Hanes CME Church	 Pastor Richard Miller Holy Trinity Full Gospel Baptist Church	 Pastor Larry Nance Ezekiel AME Zion Church	 Pastor F.D. Patterson Ambassadors Cathedral	 Pastor Theodore Rice Mercy Seat Holy Church	 Pastor Cedric Rodney St. Philips Moravian Church Retired	
 Pastor J.R. Samuels St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church	 Pastor L.V. Stennis Christian Counseling Center	 Pastor Samuel Stevenson Grace Presbyterian Church	 Pastor Donald Stowe Second Calvary Baptist Church	 Pastor S.E. Tyndall Friendship Baptist Church	 Pastor Ray Watlington Christian Fountain Church	 Pastor James Webster First Baptist Oak Ridge Church	 Pastor Michael K. Williams The Messiah's House	

Please join us as we honor the legacy of these "Men of God" who have served the community for over 20 years!

Union Baptist Church "A Church Determined To Live For Christ"

1200 North Trade Street • Winston-Salem, NC 27101 336.724.9305 www.unionbaptistwsnc.org