

Commissioned by Tara Sandlin

Esther's Request

for Voice and Piano

Text: Esther 7:2-4a
Music by Jaclyn Breeze

2022

Esther 7:2-4a (NLT)

. . . the king again said to Esther, “Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!”

Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request, I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us.”

Overview

The king of Persia demands that his wife Vashti (name meaning beauty) come before him at a banquet—likely to be sexually objectively and certainly violating principles of modesty at the time. She refuses, so he dismisses her as queen and begins a search for a new queen. Prior to this story's era, the Jewish people had been held in captivity in Persia, and while they were no longer officially exiled at the time of this story, their communities were somewhat separate and they were commonly discriminated against. So, when the king begins a search for a new queen from the virgins in the kingdom, a Jewish man Mordecai advises his cousin/niece Hadassah (Hebrew for myrtle) to change her name to Esther (Hebrew root means "hiding") to conceal her Jewish heritage from the king. She is chosen to become the new queen. Around the same time, Mordecai overhears some people plotting to assassinate the king, he reports it. Meanwhile, the king's advisor Haman plots to kill all the Jews when Mordecai refuses to bow down to the Haman; he also builds a gallows on which to hang Mordecai. Mordecai asks Esther to go to the king, reveal her identity, and save her people but there is a rule that anyone who approaches the king without being summoned will die unless he holds out his golden scepter, so she is understandably hesitant. Also at this time, the king decides he wants to promote whoever saved his life (he doesn't know it's Mordecai yet). Esther goes to the king, does not get killed, arranges a dinner party for herself, Haman, and the king, then reveals her identity and how Haman wants to kill her people. Also, the king learns that Mordecai is the one who saved his life, and he's a Jew. So, the king hangs Haman on the gallows intended for Mordecai, and then the Jewish people slaughter the people who were going to kill them. This event is remembered every year during the Jewish festival of Purim.

- Tara Sandlin, 2022

Program Notes

Esther is an Old Testament story that shows that God invites us to be a part of his plan for our sake, not for His. In this story, while He is not named, God invites Esther to take part in saving the Jews. Mordecai says in chapter 4, verse 14 *“If you keep silent at the time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father’s family will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this.”*

God was going to save the Jewish nation no matter what, but He offered Esther the chance to be a part of his plan.

This piece was commissioned for Tara Sandlin’s Senior Vocal Recital at Syracuse University. The program outlines the book of Esther.

The text that is used takes place after Esther has become queen when the king asks what her request is. He does not yet know of the plan that has been put into place by one of his officials to wipe out the Jews, so this moment of Esther speaking up saves many lives, and the official who was planning the genocide is executed.

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Jaclyn Breeze (BMI)

(♩ = ~80) Very Rubato

Voice

Piano

8va

p

mp

3

Pno.

3

8va

f

4

colla voce *mf* , *a tempo* (♩ = 80)

The king a - gain said to Es - ther "What is your re -

4

colla voce *mf* *a tempo* *mp*

8va

6

quest? I _____ will give it to you _____ Ev - en if it's half the king - dom."

Pno.

p

9

colla voce
mf Queen Es - ther re - plied, "If _____ *mp*

colla voce

Pno.

f sub. *p*

12 Reserved (♩ = 64)

I have found fa - vor with the king, if it

Pno.

p

mp

14 *accel. mp*

pleas - es the king to grant my re - quest, I ask that my

Pno. *mp* *mf* *accel.*

Moving (♩ = 80)

17 *mf* *f*

life and the lives of my peo - ple would be spared. For

Pno. *mp* *mf* *p* *8va*

A little faster (♩ = 96)

20 *accel.*

we have been sold to those who will rav-age us, those who would kill us,

Pno. *f* *8va*