

Series: Running on a Full Tank
Title: A Tank Full of Purpose
Text: Esther 4:13-16
Key Word: Promises
Proposition: Everyone can be used of God when they rely on God's promises.

Good morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I thank God that I can serve as one of your pastors. We are thrilled that you have chosen to come and worship with us today. God is in this place. He is here to reveal His presence so that we can live the life God created us to live. As we express our love for God and others, we will encounter the Risen Christ who helps us grow to be like Him and to serve the world.

We all love a sense of security. We do know that there are no guarantees in this life. One moment we have a house full of possessions, the next it can be swept away by a tornado. Beauty fades over the course of time. Relationships change. Death is inevitable. Real security, then, must come from somewhere or rather something beyond this world. When our security rests upon God and his unchanging purposes, we can face the challenges that life is sure to bring our way.

Esther was one woman who relied upon her God to offer security to the Hebrew people. Her beauty radiated from within and from the outside. Imagine her clothed in vibrant colors made of fine silk. She wears gold jewelry and a crown studded with precious jewels. Her grace and bearing lead us to believe that she must be royalty.

We find her story in the Old Testament in the book which bears her name. Her story though is like no other. In fact, it is more like a novel than a book about God or faith. There is no mention of God or worship or faith. We find no predictions of the

Savior; no mention of heaven or hell – in short there is nothing religious about it. One would think that it would be in the biography section of the public library than in the Bible.

However, she leaves us with an important message, “God has a purpose for you.” If there is anyone with a strong sense of destiny and purpose, it is Esther. However, it took a while before she discovered her purpose. She often wondered if God had a place for her. Much of her life, she believed that God had no purpose, no place for her in his world. Her parents died when she was young. Her uncle, Mordecai, adopted her, and so she often wondered about her purpose in his large family. She grew up in a strange country with different customs and traditions, again contributing to her insecurity, not knowing what to expect. Even though she was a gorgeous young Jewish woman, the king of Persia chooses Esther as a member of his court. Eventually her charm and character won his heart and she became his queen. Over the years, she deepens her influence in his court.

She lived in his court during a time when the Hebrews had been taken from their homeland and exiled to Persia. She suffered many hardships in her life, but she also received this rare opportunity. One could say that it seemed that she was destined for a happy, storybook ending. However, an official in the king’s court by the name of Haman had devised a sinister plot to have all the Hebrews in the entire kingdom executed. He had to get back at Mordecai who refused to worship the king’s representative. His plan became a law of the Medes and Persians, and it looked as

though the Jews were doomed. When Mordecai discovered the plan, he sought Esther's help. To save their people, Mordecai urged her to appeal to the king. He believed that the reason God had allowed her to be queen might well be to save their people from this threat.

Perhaps there have been times when we have wondered about our purpose. People often feel that way. Sometimes we lack close relationships with others. Other times we question our ability to do the job required of us. We feel out of source, out of place. We fear that we will never make a difference. Esther understands. All of her life she questioned her purpose, having been dislocated from her family, culture, and country. She encourages us with these words: *“My friend, God has a purpose for the situations in which he places us. **So trust him when you don't understand his plans and purposes.**”*

Mordecai's request was no small appointment. Even in her favored position, however, she would be risking her life by attempting to see the king when he had not requested her presence. There was no guarantee that the king would see her. Although she was queen, she was still not secure. Since she did not fully understand that God had uniquely appointed her for a purpose she refused at first. The Scriptures teach us, *“Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: “Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and*

your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13, 14)

Mordecai says, "Esther, the fate of a whole nation, the dream of the people of God, is in your hands." You didn't ask for it, but here it is. Esther, you **have not been** brought to this point in your life for the sake of accumulating an exquisite wardrobe and precious gems and exotic fragrances. Esther, **you have not been brought** to this point in your life to become the most desirable and attractive woman in the kingdom. **You have not been brought** to this point for the reason the king thinks you have. You have been brought to this point in your life to be a part of what it is that God is doing on this earth, to work for justice, to spare a people a great suffering, and to oppose an evil and powerful man. **You have been brought** to this point in your life to be a part of God's plan to redeem the world. So do not let your success at filling society's stereotype for women blind you to what God says your life is really about.

Mordecai helps her to discern God's call upon her life. He also issues this very strong challenge: If you say no here, if you miss this, as frightening as it is, you miss the reason why you are on this planet. Who knows, but that you have come to your position for such a time as this? This is your moment, Esther. This is it. It's time to walk like you are going somewhere.

Mordecai's encouragement changed the way Esther saw her life. For the first time in her life, she knew that God had a purpose for her. Her reluctance was replaced

with resolve. Her doubts were dissolved with determination. She took courageous action.

Esther gets it. She tells Mordecai she wants to have three days to withdraw with her closest friends to fast and to pray. She asks them to gather all the Jewish people in Susa to fast and to pray three days for her, because she will not try to achieve this mission based on her own beauty, cleverness, and influence, though they are great. Her only hope is God. She says to Mordecai, "Give me three days of fasting and prayer." Esther realized that she was appointed to the king's court not just for pleasure; she was placed for a holy purpose. She needed Holy power to launch and keep her in the unknown.

When this is done, she said that she will go to the king, even though it is against the law—and then she responds with words that are as magnificent in their courage as Mordecai's were in their challenge—"*And if I perish, I perish*" (Esther 4:16).

Wow, what a woman. What a woman! She's going to the king, even though it's against the law. And if she dies, she dies. This Xerxes, this goofy, Animal House king, he's got no idea what he signed up for when he made Esther the queen. He doesn't have a clue.

Years ago, Mattel, messed up. They produced both GI Joes and Barbie dolls, somebody at the factory slipped up, and the voice boxes that were supposed to go in the GI Joes went in the Barbies. And the voice boxes that were supposed to go into the Barbies went into the GI Joes. So thousands of kids got these dolls that, when they

pulled the string, GI Joe would say, "Let's shop till we drop!" And they got Barbie dolls that said, "Hit the ground now, hard, hard!" Xerxes thought he was getting a Barbie doll and he ends up with GI Joe. Esther filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, hits the beachhead poised to fulfill her purpose.

God's purpose empowers us for life. Courage and conviction come when we embrace God's purpose for our lives. Winston Churchill wrote, "In every age there comes a time when a leader must come forward to meet the needs of the hour.

Therefore, every potential leader has an opportunity to make a positive difference in society. Tragically, there are times when a leader does not rise to the hour." Friend, God places us where He needs us. The decision is ours as to whether we will do what we can where we are.

Since God is in control, take a planned risk. Esther told Mordecai that if she was to die, then die she must. It wasn't that she was fatalistic. She simply resigned herself to God's care. She placed herself in God's hands, knowing that even death can be faced with confidence when you trust God. Not only does God have a place for us here, He has a place for us in eternity.

Friends, today is your day. You are where you are. I don't know why, maybe you don't either, but you have been given what you have been given and you are where you are for a reason. It may not be as dramatic, but you have a mission. And you have a challenge. And the bad news is, on our own strength, we'll always give in to our personal preferences and fears. But the good news is, Jesus understands.

I think Jesus faced his personal preferences and fears. I think for Jesus, his preference was to be Messiah and wear a crown without suffering—without the cross. There's a great New Testament scholar named F.F. Bruce, and this is what he wrote: "Time and time again, the temptation came to Jesus from many directions to choose some less costly way of fulfilling his calling than the way of suffering and death. But he resisted it." In the wilderness, tempted by Satan, he resisted it. When he told his disciples that the Son of Man would suffer at the hands of men, be crucified, and buried and in three days rise from the dead, Peter said, "No, you don't have to do that. Don't talk that way. You don't have to suffer. You don't have to die." But he resisted. In the Garden, he wrestled with his preferences. *"Father, let this cup of suffering pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."* (Matthew 26:39)." He resisted his preferences. He defied his fears. He embraced his purpose.

Friends, my life, your life, are woven into the fabric of God's ultimate purpose for the world. We are a part of a much larger picture, much larger story, a part of God's saving and liberating mission. Just like in the book of Esther, where God's name is never mentioned, but where God is working behind the scenes, God is working behind the scenes in our lives and in the life of His Church. We can't see Him, but He is the main character in the story. God is at work. God is present. He is for Esther, for Mordecai, for the Hebrew people. He is for us. Walk like your going somewhere. Run with a tank full of Purpose. 2014

