

**LENT 2017 – day 6 – March 9th**

**Today's first reading is from the book of Esther, but it's not in the Protestant**

**bible.** This particular part is in the Catholic part of the Bible of the Old Testament. It's interesting to know why there are books in the Catholic section of the Bible, while it is omitted from the Protestant versions. The simple reason is: Up to the 15th century, these books were accepted by everybody. But in the 15th century there was a great separation. There was a separation in the church before that and that was in the 10th century - when the Eastern Church broke away from the western church.

The western church is the Roman church and the Eastern Church was the church of Constantinople - which is in the African region. Some of the emperors of Rome shifted their main places of residence from Rome to Constantinople. So there was a break in the Eastern Church. It was not a break in doctrine, but it was a break in leadership, so the people who didn't accept the leadership of the western church broke away and they were an independent church. The doctrinal breakaway took place in the 15th century when Martin Luther started the breakaway.

What he did was, he said, "If you can't find the original text in Hebrew of the Old Testament, we don't want those books." The six or seven books the Catholics have and the protestants don't have are the books that were originally found only in Greek. Even today, the oldest forms of the Old Testament are found in Greek. The reading we are going to look at is a part of that.

*Esther 14:1*

*Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish, fled to the Lord for refuge.*

**According to the background, Queen Esther was married to a king who was not**

**a Jew.** It looks as if she didn't know much about God, because she was living in the culture and religions of that country. A problem actually drove her to God. It was not her personal problem, but the problem of the Jews suffering in that country.

**The first rule we learn is: When you have a crisis and a problem, it's actually a big curse.** We normally have a crisis, a sickness, a financial crisis - and it's a big curse. *But if it drives you to God, it has the foundation and the potential to become a blessing.*

**That's how every curse can be turned into a blessing - if it drives you to God.**

**On the other hand,** great blessing can be a blessing - *but if it takes you away from God and makes you lose divine perspective, your blessing has now become a curse* because it has taken you away from the heart of God.

If you look at Jesus, He was always talking about it. He was talking about the rich, the powerful leaders

of the people and even religious leaders, and telling them, **"Your blessing has become a curse for you because you have stopped connecting with God."**

## **So what happened to Esther?**

*Esther 14:2*

*Then she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying: "My Lord, you alone are our King. Help me, who am alone and have no help but you..."*

**It looks terrible to have no help but God** - especially if you don't know Him. That's when people get the nervous breakdowns. They feel all alone and abandoned. We arrogantly reject God and we suffer - depression, sadness, fears loneliness. Yet, we arrogantly refuse because we don't penetrate the cloud and touch the reality of God. So if you're having a problem, it's truly a great opportunity to break through this.

One of our young adults is battling cancer and this person is bravely facing it and going through the challenge. I'm inviting you to intercede for a breakthrough because God can give us a breakthrough. When you see that kind of issue, you feel ashamed of your own little worries. I'm worrying about this and that, while people battle with life and death.

He is a young person and I'm thinking, surely, God has to give us a breakthrough! So many things are happening in these days - even yesterday you saw how people are instantaneously touched and healed. But we need the bigger, greater stuff. Maybe we need to storm heaven more.

*Esther 14:4*

*From birth, I have heard among my people that you, Lord, chose Israel from among all nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, as a lasting inheritance, and that you fulfilled all your promises to them.*

**To deal with a crisis, we speak from Nehemiah and say: Remember who God is.**

That's the grace of receiving faith from generation to generation. Actually, I see the value of this when I travel to other countries. I meet people whose parents have also not been Christian. So these are third generation non-Christians and they're living in some kind of a void and they are wild. Sexual promiscuity is normal, indulging in yourself is natural. They think something is wrong with people who want to practice discipline - because they are third generation non-religious.

Fortunately we don't have it here yet, because we have one generation that has brought the faith and given it to the other - but we are soon going to have that.

In Australia there was this young girl who had come back to the Lord and she was explaining how wrong was right and they never saw wrong as wrong; and they felt right was somehow wrong.

**Here is the great gift God is offering us and our parents have given us - the faith.**

We have come to know about God - but that is not enough. You can come to know about God and still be helpless - until you come to know Him. You do that by seeking Him in your crisis. When to intercede, things will happen. That is what the gospel is saying:

**Matthew 7:7-10**

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?"*

**Have you ever spent some time visualizing that?** The child asks for some fish and you say you'll give it to him and then take a snake and put it in his hands. A lot of people think God acts like that. We have been motivated by fear. Fear is an easy way to motivate people. You frighten them and they do things. Fear is a great motivator, but unfortunately, it is a low level motivation and won't last long.

**Then He says:**

**Matthew 7:11**

*If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!*

**A lot of us may not even know that this is possible.** I'll share with you an experience that we need to testify about. If you notice - when we have meetings - the Tuesday Mabile meeting, Wednesday meeting, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar - any place we go to, we carry our sound. How we carry our sound is that someone has given us the gift of a lorry and we have fixed a lift behind and we have been using it for the last 10 years or so. We have been patching it up again and again and using it; but finally, it gave up and it was no more - but we have to do the work.

**So what can you do?** We brought it to the Lord. We just checked how much a lorry costs and it was 6 million rupees. 6 million when you don't have 10 rupees is a large amount. So we prayed and I have this prayer that I've been teaching you. I tell the Lord, "Stop hiding. You're rich, you're powerful and you can provide. You're just playing games." Recently I read that one of the saints said that God really enjoys playing hide and seek. So I said, "For you, providing a lorry to us is effortless - you only have to show us how you're going to do it."

December came around and someone gave medicine and things for the cancer project. I didn't know who that person was, but out of gratefulness for that kind of contribution, I took the phone number and called this person. When I called this person, this person was in London and not here. I thought it was here because on WhatsApp you don't know where they are because of the number. I called them and I thanked this person for making that kind of contribution.

Then that person asked, "What else do you need?" So, of course I said, "We are looking at this lorry that we are dealing with." She said she needed to think about it and then she came back to me and says, "In February I'm coming to Sri Lanka. I'll give you 2 million rupees." So now we have two fifths of the money.

Then we went to Australia. As I'm talking to a person and discussing, this person asked what was happening. I said, "The wonderful thing that happened was, we were looking at this lorry and now we have the 2 million and I suppose we will lease out over the years and try and work it out." This person

remained silent, and after a few days he called me and says, "Buy the lorry, I am going to give you 3 million."

This is said for the glory of God; but I have a motive also - there is 8 lakhs gap, because it's 5.8 million in the complete price - but I'm sure the 8 lakhs is also waiting to come and join us. We have ordered the vehicle because everything is possible for God.

**But remember that He checks your own heart. This I have learnt over many years. Divine providence works with people who don't play games.** If you play games, He leaves you to your own devices. If you're having a block, the first thing you need to do is clear that block with God and just make sure that you're internally right and doing the right thing and handling life the way it should be handled. When you do that, that's when you get the breakthrough.

Actually, until 2007, myself, Jagath and Mercia worked and served without any kind of remuneration from the community because I knew that would be an obstacle to serve the Lord. But I also began to realize that it's a time when God was calling us to full time service because the ministry was getting big. I threw this challenge to the Lord and I said, "I'm not going to depend on the community for financial subsistence. You have to provide this independently - then I will be full time."

That is exactly what He has done from 2007. Because of that you have a freedom of knowing that you are serving without expecting anything in return. When you do that, God has a way of opening doors that you can't imagine.

Even in 2007, the battle I had in my heart was - we were pretty comfortable, life was good, we were being paid well for the work we were doing and the temptation was to continue that. When we made that choice, on the last week of that year, Sri Lankan airlines sent someone to our house. They offered me the one year contract and if I signed it it was going to be millions over the year. I looked at my wife, and here it had come. "What about another year?" I asked. She said, "No. If we have made the choice then we have made the choice. Let's go forward."

That's what we did, and we are grateful that we did it because God was faithful. Remember He is rich, He is powerful - and if you are blocked, you better take it to Him in intercessory prayer and allow Him to clean you internally. If you're worried, take it to the Lord in intercessory prayer; if you're disturbed then take it to the Lord. First, work it out with Him because He can handle it without anybody else being involved.

A lot of people have what we call the 'scarcity mentality'. You say, "I don't have this, I don't have that." You and make a rap song out of it. You're always talking about what you don't have and your life can become truly miserable. Or you can break through. You have a Father who says, "If you know how to treat your children, how much more will we treat you?" So take the risk, seek God and enjoy the life that God has prepared. God has prepared a beautiful life for all of us. It's not that you won't have trouble - but it'll be free of worry. It's not that you won't have challenges - but He will take you and make you overcome it.

**There is one last condition:**

*Matthew 7:12*

*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

**If you refuse to forgive someone, you may be blocking the flow from God into your life.** If you're carrying a grudge, anger or reaction - what's the point? Just liberate them, bless them and say, "Lord, let good things happen to them." Then, the whole thing works out.