



THE
LUTHERAN
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BIBLE STUDY

Text: Esther 1:10 -17

SAYING NO TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE DESPITE THE STATUS WE HOLD

The book of Esther is one of my favorite books when it comes to issues of Gender Based Violence and being wounded healers. In this book we find two different characters of two Queens: Queen Vashti and Queen Esther.

From the text we see King Ahasuerus (husband to both queens) when his heart was merry with wine he sent his men and Eunuchs to call queen Vashti and come to where the King was so that she can show her beauty to the people and officials. Queen Vashti refused she said; **“No, I am not coming and I will not do that”** She didn't tolerate such an abuse despite being the wish of her husband. The next thing we hear is that she was sent away as a mechanism of silencing and threatening the wives in the kingdom who don't obey their husbands. King Ahasuerus did that due to alcoholic influence but in our context, alcohol is not the only influence to gender based violence, they are many contributing factors that lead to abuse, i.e. patriarchal system, cultural/ traditional beliefs etc.

Question to reflect on:

- What happens when women say No to cultural norms that oppress them?
- What happens when men do not get their way?
- What is the cost of standing up for oneself?

Queen Vashti was fade up. She didn't want to build a fence around GBV and wanted her dignity as a human being and woman be maintained, she wanted her rights and freedom be well exercised and not an embarrassment from her husband this resulted into the loss of her status as a queen.

To be a Queen was not an ordinary status or position, it was more like being the state president's wife. Queen Vashti valued her dignity and reputation as a woman and not necessarily her status.

- King Ahasuerus forgot all good things the Queen did for him, family, society, etc. She lost her royal status as a queen for a meaningless reason under the influence of King's officials with bad advice.

- Many people especially men forget our commitments, dedication and love very quickly because of one mistake or whenever they see women struggling for their space.

Despite holding different statuses, **“We must say No to Gender Based Violence and Gender Injustice”** Though not easy don’t fear. God is with us and will never forsake us.

You need to be strong always and prayerful.

Queen Esther in her position as a queen played her role as a “Wounded Healer”. In the same situation of having an abusive husband. It is doubtful if King Ahasuerus changed his attitude of abuse. Could we say Esther was tolerating the abuse silently, considering her status as well as her responsibility of saving her people from the hand of Haman?

- Yes, they are times we need to be healers to others though wounded. But how do we cover our wounds? We shouldn’t cover it so tight if we do the recovery will be prolonged. We need to share with other the challenges we are encountering but the problem is we don’t know whom we can share our challenges with.
- When healing others or providing the treatment make sure the wounds we have are not oozing, suppressing issues is not healthy, share with others but mind whom you are sharing with. As sisters in Christ let us pray for one another and once someone has shared her challenge we shouldn’t publicize it but hold hands in prayers for God’s intervention.

What kind of shoes are we wearing? Is it of queen Esther or Vashti?

All of us have different wounds in relation to GBV, Gender Justice and other related issues which need to be taken care of. We need total healing from God.

In my case as the first female Pastor to be ordained in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi after 40 years of its establishment, I don’t know with whom exactly should I share my challenges, so I keep praying. There are many difficulties in my path. If I share this difficulties with people who don’t support me, what will they do?

As the first female Pastor I also play a role as a wounded healer in the sense that whenever the youths – young ladies ask me how my journey has been before my ordination, I also find it difficult to explain the exact picture as to how the ordained ministry is all about, that’s when I realize the importance of covering my wounds other than exposing it and explain to them everything because if I do they will lose their interest with fear of going through my experience as the first female Pastor. I need to be strong but at the same time I should comfort and encourage more young women who want to follow my footsteps.

- Queen Vashti was seen as a wife/ Queen who is not submissive, people pointed fingers at her the way they point fingers on us disregarding the contribution we've made in our churches, families etc.
- We are failing to get out of the bondage due to some harmful cultures. i.e. dowry. Parents in my context are not ready to have their girl child back home even though they are experiencing Intimate Partner Violence just because parents are not stable financially to pay back the dowry to the abusive husbands.

No matter what kind of the situation we are going through remember God is with us always and stands with the marginalized. God's love and grace is sufficient upon our lives.

Be strong, trust God and never lose hope.

May God bless You and Bless His word, Amen!

Bible study prepared by Rev. Bertha Godfrey and presented at the LWF Women's Pre-assembly in Wroclaw, Poland, on September 9, 2023