

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Answering God's Call to Advocacy and Action

BREAD FOR THE WORLD'S 2018

OFFERING OF LETTERS:
FOR SUCH A
TIME AS THIS

In the relationship between God and God's people, it is clear that God not only cares for us, but cares how we treat one another. Throughout the Bible, we find examples of how God's people promote the common good and speak up for what is right. In the book of Esther, for example, we find the story of an unlikely advocate—Queen Esther, who is persuaded to risk her own position of privilege to save her people from destruction (Esther 4).

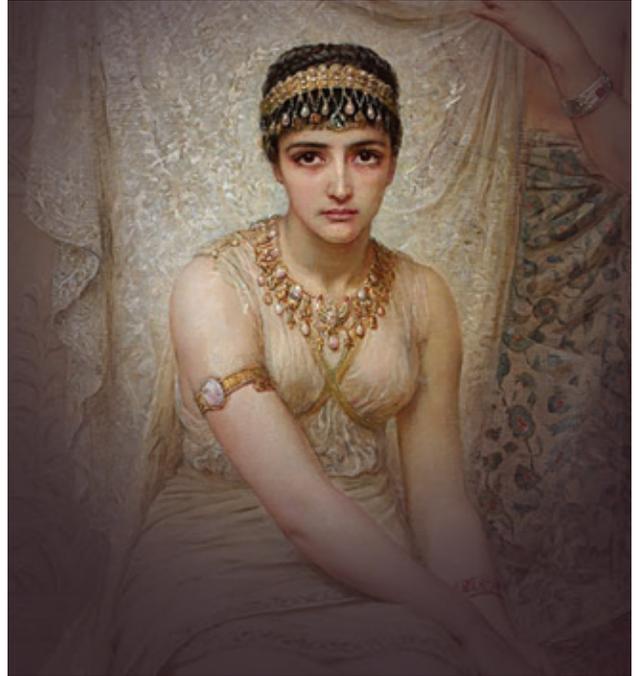
From Leviticus and Deuteronomy to the Wisdom books; from the teachings of the prophets to the works and sermons of Jesus Christ—the Bible outlines measures for the nation's leaders and individuals to provide for the most vulnerable members of the community to feed themselves. The choices made by our elected leaders on the federal budget determine how our nation generates revenue and invests shared resources. We show our commitment to the common good when we advocate for investments in programs that move people out of hunger and poverty, and into better opportunities in life.

We read in Deuteronomy, “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings ... Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore, I am commanding you to do this” (Deuteronomy 24:19-22).

Jesus, too, instructs his disciples to care for people who are hungry and poor. In a familiar passage in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells his followers, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me ... ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matthew 25: 35, 40). Jesus is teaching that we will be judged as a nation by the way the most vulnerable members of our community are treated. In our time, this includes the many people who struggle with hunger and poverty. It also includes immigrants who are seeking better lives for their families, and people who have been incarcerated and are trying to get back into the job market.

God has blessed our nation with sufficient resources to make provision for all in our present time and in years to come. Investments in domestic safety-net programs, such as WIC, SNAP, free and reduced-price school meals, and tax credits for low-income workers help people in the United States move out of poverty and feed their families. International programs like the global food security initiative, Feed the Future, and the McGovern-Dole school feeding program help millions of hungry people around the world.

Like Esther, we must meet the challenges before us and speak truth to power. Mordecai reminded Esther that she could not remain neutral. Action was needed, and she could use her position of influence to change the fate of her people. We cannot be silent in this challenging time. Together, we must urge Congress to develop a federal budget that serves the common good and offers help and opportunity for all people—especially those struggling to put food on the table.



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