

## *Salted with Fire*

*Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-21 • Esther pleads for her people.  
Mark 9:38-50 • Whoever is not against us is for us.*

Well, let's do a quick recap of how far we've come...yeah, that covered it. Okay, so in Esther's time, there was a king who only thought about himself. Nah, that would never happen now. In Esther's time, the leader of the free world had a prime minister to whom he listened without question. Nah, that wouldn't happen either. In Esther's time, one person could convince an entire country via its leadership to annihilate – annihilate, totally wipe out – a whole race of people, based solely on the fact that they maintained a particular religious belief. We've moved right along, haven't we?

I hardly know where to begin. Or maybe I should just call it an end. 'Cause folks, perhaps it is for just such a time as this that we were born. Perhaps, perhaps we can hear it afresh and understand how our own words have power, and our own way of being with other folks is tremendously significant and how I greet and treat each of you every day matters to the whole. It isn't just about our relationship with one another, but it's about what that looks like beyond us.

We've had some time now to live into, somehow, the understanding of what it might truly mean that every child matters. But it's interesting that it's kind of been, you know...there was the first discovery, and then in a matter of just a few weeks, we stopped talking about it. Oh well, that's been dealt with now. We've heard the story, and gosh it was awful, but anybody know what today's numbers are? The last number I read, which was not today, was 6,300-something. We can't even keep up. At least, I'm not doing very well at it. See, I think sometimes we're kind of like the king. We said, "Okay, we've taken care of the person who did the ugly. So that's it. It's done." And today I'm calling upon each of us, and myself, to be like Esther and say, "Oh no, it's not done." To, in fact, again be salted with fire, inspired by the spirit of truth and reconciliation among us, to say, "No, no, we've barely begun. We still have to get the word out. And it's not just a word to our neighbours." One of the things that I think was one of the most powerful pieces that I've read this week in prep for this was a piece that reminded me that until I participate in the undoing of all that my ancestors put in place, I haven't quite done my part.

Systems and structures were put in place by governments way before I was born, and they're still there. And it's on me, and I invite us to consider that it's on us, to tear down those systems and structures. To put in place the voices and the leaders that, in fact, will change those systems

and structures so that we can, in fact, say “Okay, we’ve come a little way since Esther’s time.” We’ve at least managed to make some restitution for the things that have gone on in our time.

It was interesting during the pre-election time – I always get it around pre-election time – usually from my relatives who say, “You know, politics and religion shouldn’t mix.” What? I get it, ‘cause you know, I am the one who got ordained and all of that. And I happen to be the one who spouts all the time about how politics and religion actually have everything to do with one another. And so of course, I get it. And I’m here again to say: the story of Esther is the clearest reminder I know of how politics and religion are so intertwined as to not ever be separated. We can’t pull them apart. Because what I believe has everything to do with how I function in the

world. Everything. Esther took courage. Thank God she did. May we take courage. Thank God for your blessing upon a community that desperately needs us. Amen.