Esther's struggle for the nation of Israel in Esther 4:10-17 and its implications for the faith struggle of mothers today

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Abstract

In the book of Esther 4:10-17 tells the story of Esther, a woman who was appointed queen of Persia, who dared to fight against Haman's evil plan to massacre the entire nation of Israel. This story aims to provide inspiration for today's mothers who face various challenges in fighting for their faith. They are invited not to be afraid to speak out for the truth, even though they face social and cultural challenges. Esther teaches the importance of strategy and courage in fighting for family values and faith. Trust in God, as shown by Esther, is the key to facing difficulties and achieving victory. Mothers can emulate Esther's courage and wisdom in defending their family and their faith. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, namely a research approach that aims to describe, understand and interpret social or cultural phenomena in depth by collecting existing data. Esther's struggle provides inspiration for mothers today to fight for their faith personally and within Christian families.

Keywords: Esther, courage, Christian women

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Esther 4:10-17, we see the struggle of a woman full of faith and courage, namely Queen Esther, who is in the middle of a great crisis for the nation of Israel (Jemali 2018). At that time, the Israelites in Persia were under threat of destruction planned by Haman, a high official of the government. Queen Esther, despite being the king's wife, faced a great dilemma. Facing the king uninvited is an act that can cause death, but he decided to sacrifice himself for the safety of his people. In a situation full of threats, he led the people of Israel to fast and pray, showed steadfastness of faith, and was finally able to save the nation of Israel from destruction. Esther showed that despite being in a risky position, she still chose to fight for the truth and salvation of the people, with courage and dependence on God. Implications for the faith struggle of today's mothers, especially in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT):

1. Courage in Facing Local Challenges: East Nusa Tenggara, as a region rich in cultural and religious diversity, often faces various challenges, both from a social, economic and political perspective. (Patta Rapanna 2016). Mothers in NTT, who are often at the forefront of their families and communities, can emulate Ester's courage in facing challenges. In the midst of poverty, gender inequality, and difficulties in accessing education or health services, mothers in NTT are expected to be agents of change, daring to take steps to improve their family's standard of living, without being afraid of existing risks. Esther teaches that determination and courage in taking the right steps can produce big changes for families and communities.

Role as Defender of Family and Nation: 2. Esther (Sembiring and Esther 2024). not only thinking about himself, but also fighting for the fate of his nation. In NTT, many mothers are involved in fighting for the welfare of their families, both at home and in the community. Mothers play an important role in educating children, maintaining cultural traditions, and fostering faith values in the family. Like Ester, mothers in NTT also have a vital role in maintaining the family, maintaining social harmony, and advancing the nation's welfare. Mothers in NTT can follow Ester's example in fighting for the good of their community, whether by speaking up for justice, involving themselves in economic empowerment programs, or educating the younger generation to become leaders with integrity.

- 3. Strength in Prayer and Fasting for the Nation: One of the important moments in the story of Esther is the invitation to fast and pray as a preparatory step before acting. Mothers in NTT, with all the challenges they face, can harness the power of prayer and fasting to fight for change in their families and communities. In the midst of poverty, injustice, and threats to cultural and religious identity, prayer and fasting can be a means for mothers to fight for God's help. For example, they can pray for family resilience, peace amidst social conflict, and educational success and health for the younger generation. As seen in the story of Esther, when God's people united in prayer and fasting, the result was God's intervention that brought liberation and victory.
- 4. The Role of Mothers in Teaching the Values of Faith and Justice: Mothers in NTT can emulate Esther in teaching the values of faith and justice to their children (Latumeten and Pelupessy 2022). In many cultures in NTT, mothers are highly respected figures and play an important role in children's education. In the midst of life's challenges, mothers in NTT have the opportunity to educate their children have steadfast faith, a sense of to responsibility, and courage in fighting for the truth. Mothers can also teach the values of love, tolerance and sacrifice, which are reflected in Esther's actions, to build a more just and loving society.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, a research approach that involves describing, understanding and interpreting social or cultural phenomena in depth. By analyzing the text of the book of Esther 4:10-17, this research allows us to study the theme of Esther's struggle for the nation of Israel and connect it with the context of the faith struggle of mothers today.

DISCUSSION

1. The Historical Context of the Book of Esther in Esther's Struggle for the Nation of Israel (Esther 4:10-17)

The Book of Esther is in the context of the history of the Israelites who lived in exile in

Persia after the Babylonian kingdom was conquered by the Persian King, Cyrus (Cyrus). At this time, many Israelites lived in the city of Susa, the capital of the Persian kingdom, and they lived under the rule of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I). In Esther 4:10-17, we see Esther, a Jewish woman who became the queen of Persia, faced a great threat to the nation of Israel. Haman, a high official in the kingdom, planned the extermination of the Jewish people because of his personal grudge against Mordecai, Esther's cousin. However, Esther, despite being in a strong position as queen, initially hesitated to act because if she approached the king without being called, she could be put to death. However, after getting a challenge from Mordecai not to remain silent, she finally dared to take action to defend her nation, even though it meant facing a great risk to her own life, but Ester still did it to save the nation.

Implications for the Faith Struggle of Mothers Today,

Esther's struggle for the nation of Israel provides a great example for mothers today in several important aspects, namely:

- 1). Courage and Leadership: Esther shows that women, even in oppressive or restrictive positions, can be courageous leaders in difficult situations. Today's women, especially mothers, are faced with various challenges in personal, family and community life. Esther's story teaches them to dare to take big steps in fighting for truth and justice, even though it requires big sacrifices (Dapiyanta and Kasmudi 2017).
- 2). The Role of Prayer and Fasting: Esther invites the people of Israel to pray and fast in preparation for the action she will take. It reflects the power of prayer and humility before God in the face of great challenges. Today's mothers can also find empowerment in prayer and fasting when facing difficulties or the need to make important decisions in their own lives.
- 3). Belief in God: Like Esther who entrusted the fate of the nation of Israel to God through her full actions, today's mothers are invited to believe in God's inclusion

in all their life decisions, even when they face uncertainty. They can learn from Esther to believe that God works through their roles, while relying on His wisdom.

4). Social and Moral Responsibility: Esther not only fought for herself, but for the safety of her nation. (Setiawan 2024). This emphasizes the importance of women not only caring for themselves, but also for the well-being of others, including family and society. Today's mothers are called to fight for truth, justice, and compassion in their daily lives, both at home, at work, and in their communities.

Thus, Esther's struggle is not only a historical story, but also a living example for mothers today, to remain firm in faith, brave to act, and believe in God's plan in their lives.

2. Text Esther 4:10-17

(10י וַתּאֹמֶר אָסְתֵר לְהַתָך, וַתְצַוֹּהוּ אֶל-מָרְדָכ (

יא כָּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶהְ וְעַם-מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶהְ יֹדְעִים, אֲשֶׁר כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבוֹא-אָל-הַמֶּלֶהְ אֶל-הָחָצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרֵא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהָמִית, לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶהְ אֶת-שַׁרְבִיט הַזָּהָב, וְחָיָה; וַאַנִי, לֹא נִקְרֵאתִי לָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶה-וָה, (11שָׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם.)

(12יב וַיַּגִּידוּ לְמָרְדָּכָי, אֵת דְּבְרֵי אֶסְתֵּר.)

יג וַיּאֹמֶר מֶרְדֵּכַי, לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-אֶסְתֵּר: אַל-תְדַמִּי בְנַפְשֵׁךָ, (13קהַמָּלֵט בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶך מִכָּל-הַיְהוּדִים.

יד כִּי אִם-הַחֲרֵשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי, בָּעֵת הַזֹּאֹת--רָנוּח וְהַצָּלָה יַעֲמוֹד לִיְהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אַחֵר, וְאַתְ וּבֵית-אָבִיךְ תּאבִדוּ; וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ--אָם-(14לְעֵת כָּזֹאת, הַגַּעַתְ לַמַּלְכוּת.(

(15טו וַתּאֹמֶר אֶסְתֵּר, לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-מָרְדֵּכָי.

טז לַךְּ כְּנוֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנְּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן, וְצוּמוּ עָלִי וְאַל-תּאֹכְלוּ וְאַל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וָיוֹם--גַּם-אָנִי וְנַעֲרֹתִי, אָצוּם כֵּן; וּבְכֵן אָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כַדָּת, (16קַאֲשֶׁר אָבַדְתִי, אָבָדְתִי, אָבָדְתִי, אָבָדְתִי,

(17יז וַיַּעֲבֹר, מָרְדֶּכָי; וַיַּעַשׂ, כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוְּתָה עָלָיו אֶסְתֵר.)

3. Biblical Analysis of Esther 4:10-17

Esther 4:10-17 is one of the most important passages in the book of Esther, describing the critical moment where Queen Esther had to make a major decision regarding the fate of her people. (Rajagukguk 2023) The following is a biblical analysis of this text:

1. Background to the Conflict (Esther 4:10-11)

At the beginning, Esther sent a message to Mordecai after receiving information that the plan to exterminate the Jewish people had been authorized by king Ahasuerus through Haman's orders. In verse 11, Esther revealed that everyone in the kingdom, both men and women, who appeared before the king without permission would be put to death, unless the king held out his golden scepter as a sign of acceptance. Esther reveals that she has not been summoned by the king for 30 days. This shows Esther's isolated position, even as queen, and how difficult it was for her to approach the king without a formal invitation.

Theological reflection: This text illustrates the tension between the need to act for the salvation of the Jewish people and the risks that Esther had to face. There is a struggle between obedience to royal law and God's call to act for the salvation of His people.

2. Mordecai's warning (Esther 4:12-14)

Mordecai replied to Esther's message and gave a very important warning. He emphasized that there was no safe place for Esther just because of her position as queen (Boiliu 2019). In verse 14, Mordecai warns that if Esther does not act, the salvation of the Jewish people will come from elsewhere, but Esther and her family will be destroyed. Mordecai also asked a very moving question: "Who knows, whether you have not come to the kingdom for a time like this?" This shows Mordecai's belief that Esther may have been chosen by God for a greater purpose, namely saving His people from annihilation.

Theological reflection: Mordecai reminds Esther of her moral and spiritual responsibilities. He advised Esther to realize that she was not in her position just by luck, but perhaps God had put her there for a divine purpose. This shows the belief that God works in history, though his name is not mentioned explicitly in the book of Esther.

1. Esther's Decision (Esther 4:15-16)

Esther heard Mordecai's words and decided to act. He ordered that all the Jews in Shushan fast for three days and nights without eating or drinking. Esther herself will also fast with the maids in the palace. After that, he will face the king though the risk very big, saying, "If I Can, I perish."

Theological reflection: Esther's decision to act courageously is an example of selfsacrifice for the greater good. The fasting that Esther and all the Jews did was a form of spiritual preparation that showed their dependence on the Lord. It reminds us that big moments and big decisions often require inner preparation and faith.

3. Follow Up Mordecai (Esther 4:17)

Mordecai followed Esther's command and gathered all the Jews in Shushan to fast. This shows that Esther's actions received full support from the Jewish community in Persia. Mordecai understood that Esther's actions were a terrible step risky, but is also a necessary step for the safety of the people.

Theological reflection: Mordecai's actions demonstrate community solidarity and support in the face of greater danger. This illustrates the importance of mutual support and unity in the face of threats and difficulties.

Theological Conclusion: Esther 4:10-17 teaches several important theological principles:

Courage and sacrifice: Esther showed extraordinary courage to act despite the big risk. This illustrates the importance of acting for the truth, even in very dangerous situations, Esther was very brave to show her courage. (Johannes et al. 2024).

Inclusion of God: Although God's name is not mentioned in the book of Esther, the text suggests that God's actions worked through history, and Esther may have been chosen for a specific Divine mission.

Personal responsibility: Mordecai reminds Esther that she cannot remain silent because of her position, but must act to save her people. It emphasizes that we all have a moral responsibility to do right, especially when others depend on us.

Solidarity and prayer: The fasting undertaken by Esther and the Jews of Susa illustrates the importance of prayer and unity in facing great challenges. It teaches us to depend on God in the face of adversity. (Bala 2016) Overall, this chapter is about courage, responsibility, and the belief that God works through people to save His people, even when the situation seems uncertain.

4. Dogmatic Analysis of Esther 4:10-17

Dogmatic Analysis of Esther 4:10-17 (More In-Depth Version).

The Book of Esther, although it does not mention God directly, contains theological principles and doctrine which are very important for the life of Christian faith (Alisyah and Riniwati 2024). Esther 4:10-17 is a standout passage, depicting a key moment in which Queen Esther faced a huge dilemma in the face of threats to the Jewish nation. Through communication with Mordecai, we can explore several theological and dogmatic themes that are very relevant to the lives of Christians. This dogmatic analysis aims to explore several main principles contained in this text, which involve sacrifice, God's will, providence, divine calling, as well as prayer and fasting.

1. Courage and Sacrifice (Esther 4:10-16)

In Esther 4:10-11, Esther expressed her fear of appearing before the king without being summoned, which could mean the death penalty for anyone who violated the King's orders or palace protocol. Even though she was the queen, her high position did not guarantee safety when dealing with the king without permission. This response reflects the conflict Esther faced: personal salvation or sacrifice for the salvation of the Jewish people. However, when she heard Mordecai's advice to act (Esther 4:15-16), Esther showed extraordinary courage by deciding to take the risk even with the high possibility that her life would end right then and there but Esther believed that God would save her.

Related dogma: In Christian teachings, the theme of self-sacrifice for the good of others is fundamental to the teachings of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul teaches Christians to imitate the sacrifice of Christ, who, despite having a noble position, chose to humble himself for the sake of the salvation of mankind (Kustiati and Baskoro 2023). Just like Christ, Esther chose to sacrifice herself for the good of the people. This illustrates Jesus' teaching that those who wish to become great in the Kingdom of God must be prepared to serve and sacrifice themselves (Matt. 20:26-28, John 15:13). Esther firmly put the welfare of her people before her personal safety, a great example of sacrifice driven by love of neighbor.

2. God's Providence in History (Esther 4:13-14) When Mordecai urged Esther to act, she clearly expressed her belief that God would not allow His people to be destroyed, even though she did not know how God would work in this situation. Mordecai said, "If you remain silent at this time, help and salvation will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish" (Esther 4:14). This statement confirms Mordecai's belief that God is sovereign over history and will take care of His people, even though He does not always act in ways that are obvious to humans.

Related dogma: The Dogma of Divine Providence teaches that God preserves His creation and directs history according to His purpose. Even though Esther did not see God directly in the events that occurred, she was still called to participate in His plan of salvation. In Romans 8:28, Paul teaches that "all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose." Even though the Israelites were in a difficult situation, God remained in control of events, ensuring that the salvation of His people would be achieved. This shows that even in seemingly hopeless situations, God has a greater plan and can work through individuals to bring His purposes to reality.

3. Divine Call and God's Will (Esther 4:14).

Mordecai asked Esther an important question: "Who knows, whether you have not

come into the kingdom for a time like this?" (Esther 4:14). This suggests a belief that there was a divine purpose in Esther's life that she may not have fully understood. Divine calling is the belief that God has a greater plan for each individual, and each person has a specific role in His salvation history.

Related dogma: In the Christian tradition, divine calling is the belief that God calls each individual to fulfill a certain role in His plan of salvation (Sianipar 2019). In Ephesians 2:10, Paul says that we are "a new creation in Christ Jesus, to do the good works which God prepared beforehand." Like Esther, Christians are called to fulfill God's call on their lives, even if that call involves challenges or sacrifice. This calling is often greater than personal desires and leads to the glory of God. Esther's call to act with courage was part of God's plan to save His people.

4. Free Will and Moral Responsibility (Esther 4:15-16)

In verses 15-16, Esther finally decided to act. "If I perish, I perish," he said, indicating the use of his free will in making great moral choices. Although she knew that facing the king without being called was a big risk, Ester chose to take that risk in order to save her people, Ester also showed great moral responsibility for the choice she made (Sirait 2014).

Related dogma: Free will is an important teaching in Christianity, stating that although God has a greater plan, humans are given the freedom to make their own choices. The choices Esther makes reflect Christian teachings about personal moral responsibility. Christians are taught to choose wisely and act with integrity in carrying out God's will (Galatians 5:13). This moral responsibility includes the courage to act for the greater good, even if it means facing personal risk or sacrifice. Esther's actions are a clear example of making decisions based on strong moral principles, although not easy.

5. Prayer and Fasting as Spiritual Practices (Esther 4:16) (Ernawaty 2023).

Esther asked all the Jews in Shushan to fast for three days without eating or drinking. This fasting is done with the purpose of seeking God's help, please His guidance and protection. Fasting is not only a form of prayer, but also an act of surrender and repentance to God.

Related dogma: Fasting is an important spiritual practice in the Christian tradition, especially when facing great challenges or seeking God's will. In the Gospel of Matthew 17:21, Jesus said that there are some types of demons that can only be cast out by prayer and fasting, indicating that there is spiritual power in both. Fasting and prayer are means to deepen our relationship with God. acknowledge our dependence on Him, and seek His guidance in challenging situations. The fasting undertaken by Esther and the Jews of Susa is a clear example of a spiritual practice that focuses on seeking God's will and surrendering oneself to Him.

Esther 4:10-17 contains deep dogmatic teachings about how believers must face great challenges with faith, courage, sacrifice, and belief in God's will (Widharsana n.d.). Some of the main themes found in this text are:

- 1. Self-Sacrifice Like Christ who sacrificed himself for mankind (Philippians 2:5-8), Esther showed great courage to sacrifice her salvation for the sake of the Jewish people.
- 2. God's Providence God organizes history and uses individuals for His purposes, even though His means are not always obvious (Romans 8:28).
- 3. Divine Calling- Every Christian is called to serve God in a capacity according to His plan (Ephesians 2:10).
- 4. Free Will and Moral Responsibility Every individual is responsible for making decisions based on sound moral principles (Galatians 5:13).
- 5. Prayer and Fasting Important spiritual practices to seek God's will and draw closer to Him (Mat. 17:21, Luke 4:2).

The Book of Esther, although it does not mention God explicitly, teaches that God works through history, and that His people are called to act with courage, faith, and sacrifice in the face of great challenges.

5. The contribution of Esther's struggle for the nation of Israel to the faith struggle of mothers today.

Esther's struggle to save the nation of Israel and her contribution to the struggle for faith among mothers today can be explored more deeply by looking at the broader context and relevance in everyday life (Tabuni and Manongko 2023). The following are some additional clearer aspects of how Ester's struggle can inspire and contribute to mothers today:

1). Firmness in Facing Injustice

Ester showed extraordinary fortitude and courage when faced with injustice that threatened the lives of her people. As a woman, she is in a very special position, risky for to approach the king uninvited was an act punishable by death. However, Esther chose to fight for the truth and safety of her people.

Relevance for Today's Mothers: Today's mothers can learn not to give up or be afraid when faced with injustice, whether in the family, social environment, or work. Esther taught that women have a powerful voice, and they can make significant changes in society, even in the face of great obstacles and risks.

2). The Role of Women in Leadership

Esther held a very high position as queen in the Persian kingdom, which gave her access to communicate directly with the king and influence important decisions. As a woman, she overcomes the limitations that women often encounter in patriarchal societies. It indicates that a mother or woman, is in position whatever, can be an effective leader in directing, protecting, and inspiring others (Sakina 2017).

Relevance for Today's Mothers: Many mothers also play leadership roles in the home, workplace, or community. Ester gave an example that a mother's leadership role is not only limited to caring for children, but also in making decisions that affect the lives of many people. Mothers can learn to develop their leadership capacity in various aspects of life, whether in the family, society or profession. 3). Personal Sacrifice for the Common Good

One of the important moments in Esther's story is when she said, "If I perish, let me perish" (Esther 4:16). This shows that Esther was willing to sacrifice herself for the safety of her people. Esther's courage and sacrifice are an extraordinary example of how an individual can act for the greater good, even though it risks her own well-being, Esther still does it all.

Relevance for Mothers Today: Many mothers make sacrifices for the good of their children and families. For example, many mothers work hard outside the home to provide for their families or sacrifice personal time to educate their children. Esther taught that this sacrifice was not in vain, but a noble act that had a big impact.

4). Using Position to Defend the Weak.

Even though Esther was a powerful queen, she did not use her position for personal gain, but to defend those who had no voice, namely the nation of Israel. Esther talked to the king to change the decision that was so detrimental to her people and fight for their right to live.

Relevance for Mothers Today: mothers are in positions that enable thelp others, whether through social education, or empowerment. Ester to that today's mothers can use their posi protect and fight for justice for those work and have a voice or who are being opproprime whether in the context of family, sociin the struggle for gender equality.

5). Collaboration and Community Supp Esther did not fight alone. Before faci king, he asked for help and support fro people of Israel through prayer and fa The collaboration between Esther an Israelites reflects the importance of wo together to achieve a common goal.

Relevance for Mothers Today: E struggle also teaches the importan community support. Today's mother support each other in the family, environment, and in the struggle for j Support between women is very impor face existing challenges and create po change.

6). Rely on God in Every Step

Esther not only relied on her own wisdom, but also asked God for guidance before taking major actions. He and the Israelites prayed fervently, recognizing that their success could only come from God.

Relevance for Today's Mothers: Today's mothers can learn to rely on faith and prayer to face various life problems. Ester teaches that mother, even though they have many roles and responsibilities, should not forget the importance of spirituality and a relationship with God in their daily lives (Jemali 2018).

Esther's struggle is not only relevant in the historical context of the Israelites, but also provides a strong example for mothers today. He teaches courage, sacrifice, leadership, and the importance of faith and prayer in facing life's challenges. Esther inspires mothers to dare to speak, act and sacrifice themselves for the common good, while still relying on God in every step of their lives.

CONCLUSION

In Esther 4:10-17, Esther faced the great dilemma of: saving the nation of Israel threatened with destruction by Haman or risking her life by speaking to the king uninvited. After listening to Mordecai's advice, Esther showed extraordinary courage by deciding to approach the king, despite the great risk, and requested that all the people of Israel fast and pray to support her. Esther's struggle reflects courage, sacrifice, and firmness of faith in the face of great challenges for the salvation of her people.

The implications for the faith struggle of today's mothers are:

Ester's struggle teaches mothers to dare to use their influence in the family, church, and society to bring about positive change. Mothers can learn from Esther's courage in overcoming fear and fighting for what is right. In addition, Esther shows the importance of prayer and dependence on God in the face of difficulties. Today's mothers are called to maintain a strong spiritual life and pray for the family and the nation for a better change (Hermanto 2022).

SUGGESTION

Mothers can follow Esther's example by showing courage in faith, obedience to God, and persistence in prayer. They are called to be leaders in their families and communities by relying on God, and guiding future generations with steadfast faith and sacrifice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to those who contributed for their support and attention. This analysis of Esther's Struggle and the Struggle of Faith of Mothers today, provides valuable insight into how to solve problems for mothers today. Hopefully this research will be useful and a learning experience for Mothers today.

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