



# GPS GUIDE: MAY 9, 2021

## Grow. Pray. Study

**Sixth Sunday after Easter**

**Sermon: Risky Faith**

### **Esther 7: 1-6**

So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king." Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?" Esther said, "A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

### **Monday: Read Exodus 2:1-10**

The story of Moses leading God's people out of slavery in Egypt is one that most people know. But how did Moses come to be able to do this work? By the bravery and risky action of several women who made sure that Moses was not killed as an infant. Read the story again and note the actions of the female characters who work to save his life: His mother gave birth to him and hid him for 3 months. Pharaoh's daughter adopted him. Moses' sister (Miriam) was the one who secured Moses' mother to feed him. Moses' future (and the future of the Israelites) was secured by a group of women who acted bravely to save his life, risked their own safety to further God's mission for God's people. Their actions had a ripple effect that changed history! Have you ever thought about how your actions can

work to bring about a needed change in the world? Even your seemingly small actions? The things we do this week — our actions, decision, choices — will, in fact, ripple out with consequences foreseen and unforeseen, for good or for ill. The question isn't whether, but what...what will we do this week to make a difference in the world?

*God of possibilities, help me to act in ways that help bring new life and hope to your people. Amen.*

### **Tuesday: Read Acts 9: 1-20**

In this story a profound transformation takes place between Saul's opening threats and his concluding preaching in the synagogues that Jesus is God's Son. Ananias, mustering his courage and following God's instructions, is also transformed. The two conversions are a vision, a sign, of how the name of the risen Lord takes shape and unfolds in the lives of believers, then and now. In this story disciples and non-disciples alike are swept up in the necessary plan of God's design. The story of Saul and Ananias invite us to ponder how we will look at our own world when God takes our "no way," and our "we've never done that before" and transforms them into "yes." Like Saul's and Ananias' new vision, God rearranges our ways of seeing, being, and acting. God changes our world. It is not far from the Damascus road to Paul's later word to the Romans about a "God who gives life to the dead and brings into existence the things that do not exist" (Romans 4:17). How do we imagine what God is doing? Where is God leading us to respond with bold faith? What will be our response when God says to us, "Get up and Go, because I have chosen you and am commissioning you for the life of a new community?"

*Prayer: Grant me courage and wisdom to go forward when you call. Amen.*

### **Wednesday: Read Joshua 2: 1-24; 6: 22-25**

Scripture describes Rahab as "a harlot." But her past sins fade away when we see how she risked her own life to help Joshua's men spy out the land. Rahab not only hid the men on her rooftop, but she also lied to the king's men who asked about them. Punishment for lying to the king would be severe, but this didn't deter Rahab from her goal – ensuring the safety of her family. Rahab knew what was about to happen to her city, and she acknowledged God's sovereignty. "...for the lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below". She shared her belief and extended an offer to Joshua's men. She would help them in exchange for her family's protection. The men agreed. As a result, Joshua spared Rahab. She and her family lived among the Israelites from the day the walls fell. Rahab took a big risk, setting her life on a course to be used by God in an even bigger way. Have you ever done something risky for God? In what ways do you think God is calling FCC to risk for the sake of the gospel?

*Prayer: In courageous faith may we proclaim the name of God. Amen.*

### **Thursday: Read 1 Samuel 17: 1-49**

The kind of faith that we see reflected in our Scripture lessons for today can, I think, help us to move forward in new directions. For example, look at the contrast between fear and faith in the story of David and Goliath. As long as the army of Israel believed Goliath's boasts about his prowess, they remained immobilized, paralyzed by fear.[2] Suddenly, a very young David, who is one of the army's "water boys," arrives on the scene. When he hears the Philistine's mockery, he is dumbfounded that no one is willing to accept the challenge. He volunteers immediately, despite the fact that he seems an unlikely challenger to the Philistine champion. But David goes not in his own strength or military prowess; rather he is confident that the "living God" who delivered him from danger many times before will once again deliver him from Goliath. We may not know the outcome of the new directions God is leading us toward growth for our congregation. But what we do know is this: "those who know God's name put their trust in God" (Ps. 9:10). In that spirit of faith, can you – can we as a church – muster the courage to do what may seem impossible?

*Prayer: May we have faith that you, O God, will be with us as we step out in new directions. Amen.*

### **Friday: Read Daniel 6**

In Daniel chapter 6, a group of politically motivated administrators laid a trap for Daniel by manipulating the king to sign into law a regulation that would put to death anyone who worshipped any god other than him. Daniel stood on his conviction to pray to God only, in spite of the consequence of being thrown into a den of lions as punishment. He was motivated to face this fear because he was so grateful to God for all the ways God blessed and protected his life. That gratitude made him extraordinarily confident. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Daniel's courage grew through praying three times a day even though it was against the law. His honor of God in prayer overpowered the temptation to be afraid of people. His devotion to God inspired King Darius, a foreign king, to write to all nations in their day to fear and revere God. Does the faithful practice of prayer embolden your faith? What spiritual practices make your courageous in your faith? How does your faithful response to God become a witness to others?

*Prayer: Give me courage to practice my faith, even in the face of danger. Amen.*

### **Saturday: Read Luke 8: 1-3 and Luke 24: 1-10**

Joanna's name is only mentioned briefly in Scripture. But the words used to describe her show her willingness to go where her Savior led and help in whatever way she could. Joanna was among the devoted women who traveled with Jesus

during his time on earth. She either had a terrible disease or was overcome by evil spirits. Jesus healed her, restored her, and accepted her. Most amazing of all, Joanna supported Jesus and the apostles “out of her own means”. Why was this such an integral detail in Joanna’s story? Joanna had connections with Herod the Tetrarch. Her husband Chuza held an important job at the palace. He was Herod’s household manager, his right-hand man. Yet the wife of the man appointed to oversee Herod’s entire estate faithfully followed Jesus. She also supported Jesus’ ministry with her family’s finances. Joanna’s role in Jesus’ ministry was a risk, but her connections to the palace didn’t deter her from her calling. She gladly risked it all for her Lord. God rewarded Joanna for her dedication. She was among the first to see the empty tomb and learn that Jesus Christ - her Healer and Deliverer - had risen, just as he promised. In what ways has Jesus brought healing to you? What are you willing to do to support his ministry in this day and time? In this church?

*Prayer: May my stewardship be a sign of my commitment to Christ’s ministry. Amen*



**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH BIRMINGHAM**  
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