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Isn't it a joyful experience, that we gather to Dedicate this building, all that is in it and around it, to the glory of God? We gathered yesterday for a time of thanksgiving to God. If you weren't here, you missed the glorious singing, aided by Robin on the new organ, which put the Welsh Male Voice Choir to shame.

Once again, we remind ourselves, the Church is not the building; the building is where the Church gathers!

There are several metaphors which describe the Church: Family, Temple, a Holy Nation etc., but rated among the most popular is "**the Body of Christ**", which describes what it is and how it should function.

Each Member has a Unique Contribution to Make

*Paul tells the Church in Rome, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so (**ONLY**) in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us."¹ The church functions at its best when each member exercises his and her gift, as God intended to give.*

Together, members of the body of Christ are Interdependent

To the Church in Corinth, Paul says, "God has combined the members of the body... [so] that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."²

¹ Romans 12:4-6

² 1 Corinthians 12:24-27

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"In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."³

Individually each of us is unique, and together we are interdependent.

Our text today illustrates this very truth, that we the community of people who call God "**Father**", and who call His Son Jesus, "**Lord**" and "**Saviour**" we are one body, each responsible for a "**time such as this**".

The story of Queen Esther is well known in Persian culture and Persian history. The life story of Esther is long and complex and we won't go into that at this time, but let's pick up the story when Esther has been chosen by the King to replace Queen Vashti.

The King's adviser Haman, is told that a Jew by the name of Mordechai (who is Esther's uncle), refuses to bow down when he passes by. Using the authority as the King's advisor, Haman passes an executive order to have **ALL** Jews across the Persian Empire, killed by impaling.

Mordechai hears of the details of this pogrom, including the exact amount of money paid to the Governors of each province for each Jew killed, and through palace couriers, conveys this news to Esther, with the request she inform the King.

Esther replies, *"Everyone knows, anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited, is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold sceptre. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days."*

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "**Do not think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are**

³ Romans 12:5

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killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this, and for this very occasion?"

What does a sordid message like this have to do at a time of celebration? Surely Kalyan has a gremlin in his computer and has his sermons mixed up!

Well, that's what I asked of God when I felt Him directing me to this passage! And as I grappled with this passage, here's what God revealed:

First, God wants us to enjoy who we are, where we are, and what He has gifted us! We are His children and in that fact we rejoice; He has placed us here in Botley, and in that we delight; and He has gifted us, among many things, this wonderful new building. God says, ***Enjoy it all! don't hold back! Enjoy it!***

Second, while you are enjoying who I made you to be, and all I have gifted you, you have a responsibility: *Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed; i.e.* Don't think, because God has given you all this to enjoy, you will escape the responsibility of looking after those in need, as they come into need!

God's blessings to us, individually and as a Church, is not for us to hoard it for ourselves; God wants us to use every blessing, while we are enjoying its privilege, to take care of those around us, the marginalised, the needy, those hoping against all hope that life will be better one day soon.

Third, if we don't take this God-given responsibility seriously, God will find other ways to address the needs of those He also loves, and we will have

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let pass, the opportunity of being an instrument of God's blessing in our families, to our community and around the world!

Finally, the question that will follow us for all time is, **Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?**, i.e. Who knows if perhaps, God's blessing of the Church, in this place, to you this people, is **for just such a time as this!**

Whether we like it or not, the fact is that as a nation, we will be changed before the week runs out. How?, by what measure?, in what scale?, in which direction?, we don't know - nobody does. The fact remains, change is in the air.

In this climate of change (excuse the pun) God has given us **a new building in which TO BE Church!** (not a new Church building...)

Will we miss the opportunity to serve God, by simply enjoying what God has given us? Enjoy we must, and enjoy we should, but will it be at the cost of being God's instruments through which He will meet the needs of those He also loves?

This building is given to us in trust, **for just a time such as this.**

Lord ! May we never be so caught up in enjoying Your blessings, that we miss opportunities to bless others, and share Your blessings with others!

AMEN.