

THE LESSONS APPOINTED FOR USE ON THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Esther (Apocrypha) 14:1–6, 12–14

Matthew 7:7–12

Psalm 138

Preface of Lent

THE COLLECT

Strengthen us, O Lord, by your grace, that in your might we may overcome all spiritual enemies, and with pure hearts serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT: ESTHER (APOCRYPHA) 14:1–6, 12–14

Queen Esther, seized with deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord. She took off her splendid apparel and put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled hair. She prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and said: “O my Lord, you only are our king; help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, for my danger is in my hand. Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, for an everlasting inheritance, and that you did for them all that you promised. And now we have sinned before you, and you have handed us over to our enemies.

“Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction, and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord.”

THE PSALM: PSALM 138

1. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; *
before the gods I will sing your praise.
2. I will bow down toward your holy temple
and praise your Name, *
because of your love and faithfulness;
3. For you have glorified your Name *
and your word above all things.
4. When I called, you answered me; *
you increased my strength within me.
5. All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord, *
when they have heard the words of your mouth.
6. They will sing of the ways of the Lord, *
that great is the glory of the Lord.
7. Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly; *
he perceives the haughty from afar.
8. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; *
you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;
your right hand shall save me.

9. The Lord will make good his purpose for me; *
O Lord, your love endures for ever;
do not abandon the works of your hands.

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 7:7–12

Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

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