

For such a time as this

Esther 4:14b And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?

Ship's Captain Arthur H. Rostron was known by his crew as a spiritual man who turned to prayer in times of crisis. His kindness, fairness and decisiveness had won the allegiance of his entire crew. As he drifted off to sleep that night of Sunday April 14th 1912, he didn't realize that his "for such a time as this" experience was about to happen. The wireless operator was just locking up for the night, when he heard the clicking of a distress message coming from the radio speaker. The distress call was from a ship called The Titanic that had just struck a large iceberg almost 60 miles from their location.

Rostron awoke from his sleep to the news of the Titanic's distress and began the dangerous race to the disaster scene. The SS Carpathia's theoretical top speed was only 14 knots. By cleverly ordering the rerouting of steam from various secondary systems, Rostron soon had it slicing through the ice debris at 18 knots.

Rostron deployed his Second Officer, James Bisset, as one of several iceberg lookouts, instructing him, "I count on you, with your good eyesight, and with God's help, to sight anything in time for us to clear it". The crew recalled seeing the Captain, with his head bowed in prayer. Icebergs were spotted, avoided and quickly disappeared astern all while the ship remained at full speed ahead. During the 3 ½ hour trip, Rostron gave detailed orders that prepared the ship to receive the survivors, with hot drinks, soup, medical facilities and beds that were made ready. Realizing that hope was an ally, at a distance of 10 miles out, he ordered the ship's rockets fired to give hope to the survivors that help was on its way. Carpathia arrived just in time as some of the lifeboats were beginning to sink from the waves of the building sea.

The next morning Rostron held a memorial service in the Carpathia's dining room for the more than 1500 souls who had been lost and in thanksgiving to God for the 705 survivors now safely onboard.

Rostron described his experience in this way, "Icebergs loomed up and fell astern and we never slackened. It was an anxious time with the Titanic's fateful experience very close in our minds. There were 700 souls on Carpathia and those lives as well as the survivors of the Titanic herself depended on the sudden turn of the wheel. When day (light) broke, I saw the ice I had steamed through during the night. I shuddered, and could only think that some other hand than mine was on that helm during the night."

Rostron became a decorated hero and was knighted in Great Britain and received a United States Congressional Medal of Honor. He was given a very substantial \$15,000 thank you gift from the Titanic survivors but being a modest man, promptly distributed these funds to his crew. A loving cup was presented to him on behalf of the grateful survivors by their spokesperson, Mrs. Margaret Brown of Denver, whose familiar nickname was "The Unsinkable Molly Brown".

The loss of life from the Titanic's sinking would have been much greater if it was not for this quiet godly man who was available "for such a time as this".

We each have a unique calling to be servants of the One who wants us to be ready for our “for such a time as this”. Our experience may not be as dramatic as Captain Rostron’s. We may be called to fire flares of God’s encouragement for those who need hope. Or to pass a warm cup and blanket both physically or spiritually to those who are cold. Or to reach out a hand in God’s love to pull onboard those who need Jesus. Let us be as willing as Captain Rostron was to answer the cry for help when we hear it.

Let’s pray:

Lord - In this time of communion we commit ourselves anew to be available to You to love and comfort others and to be ready for whatever special calling of service You have for us.

Richard Lewis
Pathway Christian Church
Riverside, CA