

December 1, 2019

## Unlikely Women Who Bring Glory to God: Rahab

## Joshua 2:1-14

2 Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. <sup>2</sup>The king of Jericho was told, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.” <sup>3</sup>Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land.” <sup>4</sup>But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. <sup>5</sup>And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.” <sup>6</sup>She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. <sup>7</sup>So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

<sup>8</sup>Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof <sup>9</sup>and said to the men: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. <sup>10</sup>For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. <sup>11</sup>As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. <sup>12</sup>Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith <sup>13</sup>that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.” <sup>14</sup>The men said to her, “Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the Lord gives us the land.”

<sup>15</sup>Then Rahab let them down by a rope through the window. (Her house was built as part of the city wall; she lived in the wall.) <sup>16</sup>She told them, “Head to the hill country, so the ones chasing you don’t find you. Hide from them there for three days, long enough for those chasing you to return. Then you can be on your way.” <sup>17</sup>The men said to her, “We are not bound by this oath you made us swear unless the following conditions are met: <sup>18</sup>When we invade the land, tie this red rope in the window through which you let us down, and gather together in your house your father, mother, brothers, and all who live in your father’s house. <sup>19</sup>Anyone who leaves your house will be responsible for his own death—we are innocent in that case! But if anyone with you in the house is harmed, we will be responsible. <sup>20</sup>If you should report what we’ve been up to, we are not bound by this oath you made us swear.” <sup>21</sup>She said, “I agree to these conditions.” She sent them on their way and then tied the red rope in the window.

Abr  
 aham  
 was the  
 father of  
 Isaac, and  
 Isaac the  
 father of Jacob,  
 and Jacob the  
 father of Judah and  
 his brothers, and  
 Judah the father of Perez  
 and Zerah by Tamar, and  
 Perez the father of Hezron,  
 and Hezron the father of Ram,  
 and Ram the father of  
 Amminadab, and Amminadab the  
 father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the  
 father of Salmon, and Salmon the father  
 of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of  
 Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,  
 and Jesse the father of David the king. And  
 David was the father of Solomon by the wife of  
 Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and  
 Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father  
 of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and  
 Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of  
 Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the  
 father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah  
 the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and  
 Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his  
 brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the  
 deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and  
 Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and  
 Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the  
 father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,  
 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan  
 the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph  
 the husband  
 of Mary, of  
 whom was  
 b o r n

# JESUS

*who is called Christ.*

The Gospel of Matthew begins by recording the 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus. During these weeks leading up to Christmas we are taking a closer look at the 5 women named.

Who were these women? Why are they included in this list?

Last Sunday we learned the scandalous story of Tamar. I thought it could not get more challenging. It sure can because the next woman we find is Rahab, the harlot.

Rahab was about as low as you could get. Jericho is the lowest city in the world at 250 meters – 850 feet -- below sea level. Rahab took part in one of the lowest occupations in society. Jericho is the oldest city in the world. 23 civilizations have occupied Jericho. Rahab participated in the oldest profession. She also proved to be a liar.

We will never know why she chose this path in life. She had respectable parents, brothers and sisters all living in town.

I think God could have chosen more worthy women to be matriarchs of Jesus. Somehow I feel bad about God's choice? I keep searching for ways to clean up the narrative. How can I cover and protect Rahab? In the final analysis it is God's – not my – responsibility to do that.

Every major league sport has a hall of fame for outstanding players: baseball, football, hockey, basketball... Every year there are the performing arts awards: the Grammy award, the Oscar's Academy Award, the Emmy Award, the Tony Award, the Golden Globe Award...

The Bible has a hall of fame in Hebrews 11 naming heroes of faith in the Old Testament. Rahab, the harlot, is the only woman to be included in both Matthew's genealogy and in Hebrew's hall of fame. Sarah is the only other woman Hebrew's list but she did not get into Matthew's. God moved Rahab from the house of shame to the hall of fame.

I am so grateful for the Holy Spirit who always humbles me and renews my faith in God. I am reminded, again and again, not to put God in any box. The grace of God is for all people including those with the worst reputation. May the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds even wider to comprehend the length, breadth, height and depth of God's love.

I think I was about 5 years old. My mother and my brothers were playing word games. I butchered one word in a funny way. I tell you, till this day, I am still teased about that word. Isn't that how it works in this life. Mess up once and you have a nickname for a life. Just say "Enoch" instead of "Eunuch" and, long after everything else is forgotten, this will be the one thing remembered. Why is it so? Have you made a mistake and you are labeled ever since?

Rahab is mentioned several times in the Bible and only Matthew does not talk about her being a prostitute. He refers to her as the wife of Salmon who, the Bible tells us, was a prince from the tribe of Judah.

We know they had children, so why has that label stuck with her. Why can we not let the past go for ourselves or for others. We know that in Christ we are a new creation and our responsibility is to help each other in being transformed, yet we consciously and unconsciously keep our brothers and sisters from changing.

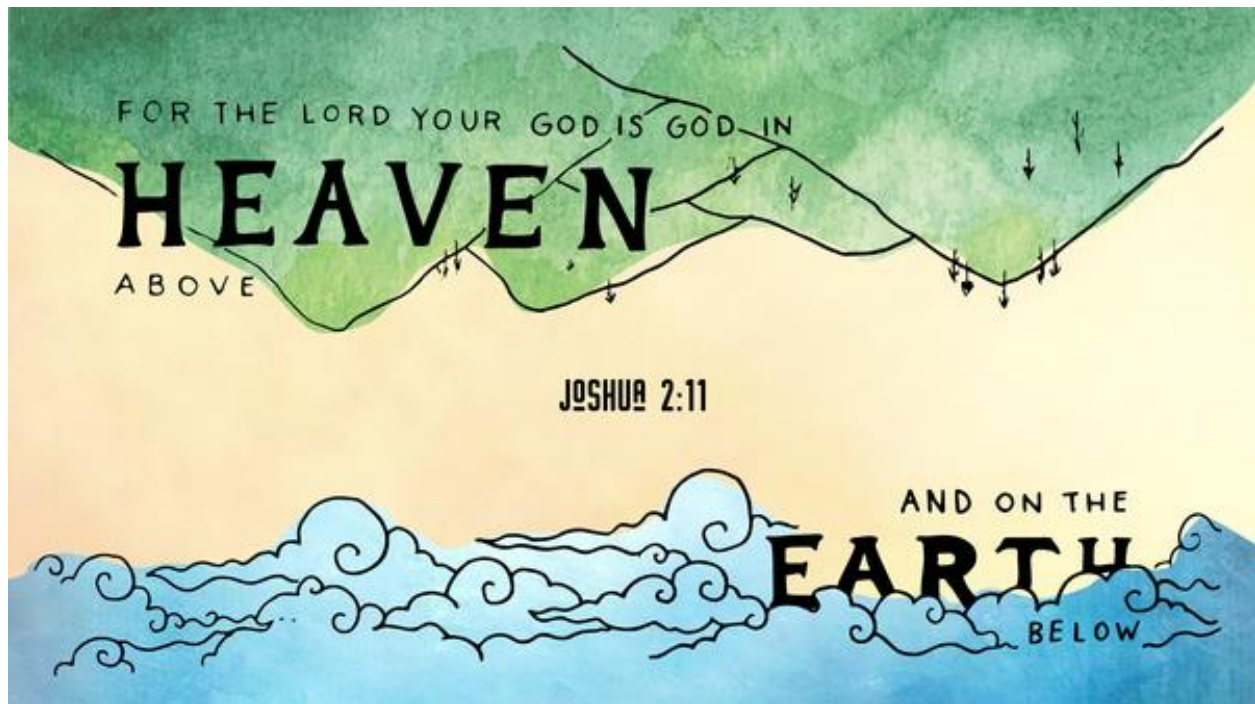
Joshua sent two spies to check out the promised land and especially Jericho. They went to the home of a prostitute. Men! I probably will never figure out men.

Why did they go there? Because she knew a lot? Because they will not be as suspicious to others? If their goal was not to be seen, it did not work. The King of Jericho found out that there are Israelites in Rahab's house. Maybe the Holy Spirit guided them to Rahab because it was God's plan to spare her so she could be the mother of Boaz and the great-great-grandmother of King David and ancestor of Jesus.

Even more strange: the spies brought back no tactical military information for battle but only reported about the new heroine named Rahab, the harlot.

I saw courage in Tamar and I see courage in Rahab. She took a very high risk in not only hosting the spies, but in hiding them and lying to the king. This raises an interesting ethical question: Is there ever a time and place to break the commandment of not bearing false witness? Is it every OK to lie?

Why was she so brave?



She gave the answer to the spies. "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. <sup>10</sup> For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the

Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

<sup>11</sup> As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below.”

Significantly, she used the Hebrew name for God: “Yahweh”.

How did she come to have faith in God? How does this woman, a pagan Canaanite, safe and secure in the indestructible wall of Jericho, living life as a prostitute, get the wisdom and discernment that God is the only true God and nothing will stop God?

Today we lit the first Advent candle of hope. In Rahab I find hope for myself. I can question and shake my head over how Rahab is in the tree. I, too, am a sinner. When I received the calling from God to follow Him, to proclaim His word, to be a pastor, I thought, I cannot do that. Did God forget about my horrible, messed up past? I am not worthy to stand in front of people. Rahab gives me hope that God can use even me for God’s kingdom.

God is not limited by who you are or what you have done. God’s love is stronger than anything else. Our sins, faults and failures cannot prevent the grace of God from reaching you and me.

Rahab’s tells these two spies that she believes in their God so much that she is ready to leave her past, to leave her identity, to risk and take a courageous step into new life. Do not be afraid to tell what you believe. Rahab says: I KNOW the LORD. If you know God, share your faith. Second, she took action. She realized that Jericho is filled with pagan gods and is filled with evil. She decided to be part of God’s plan.

Rahab begins to negotiate: “Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord – there is a commandment against this -- that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith <sup>13</sup> that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”

I do not know her relationship with her family, but I can only assume that they were not very happy or proud of what Rahab was doing. Despite what they thought about her, she wanted to save her family. She struck a deal with these two spies.

They promised that if she left a scarlet rope hanging from her window she and all her relatives in the home would be spared. If they were elsewhere in the city they would perish.

Can you trust spies? Can you trust a loose woman? Can a paid woman trust her clients?





After the gates were shut, she lowered them through the window and left the crimson woven cord hanging in the window.

Rahab's salvation was dependent on that red rope. The salvation of the Hebrews on that first Passover night depended on every home being marked with the scarlet blood of the lamb. Our salvation from sin and death depends upon the crimson blood of the Lamb of God. We are saved by the blood of Jesus.

The only way her relatives could be saved was if she practiced her faith by urging them to come to her house. We, too, must practice our faith by urging others to come to the Lord's house.

Rahab stood alone in her faith. It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as everybody else believes. It is difficult to be the only one who believes and to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause.

Rahab's faith was an active one. Faith without works is a dead faith. James 2:25 says, "In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she received the spies as guests and sent them off in a different direction?" Who are you and I receiving as guests? Even more important, who are we sending off in a different direction to follow the Lord?

Hebrews 11:31 says, "By faith, Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she welcomed the spies in peace." She is considered righteous in God's eyes because she had faith.

Rahab's faith made her holy. She abandoned the life of sin. She was a changed woman because of her faith.

I wonder what it was like for all of Rahab's relatives. They gathered in the room and then watched the weirdest battle ever. For six days they watched Israel silently march around the city and go home. On the seventh day they watched Israel silently march around the city seven times.

I wonder if she questioned her faith those first six days. Did the family tease her? Did any of them walk out?

The spies did not say when they were returning. They only told her to be prepared. Advent season is a reminder to prepare for the return of Jesus. He did not tell us when he was coming. Rahab lived in the faith that they were coming.

As the walls "came a-tumblin down" Joshua ordered the spies to go into Rahab's home and bring out everyone in there. The city was utterly destroyed and burned and all the citizens were killed.

Rahab and her family were saved. Rahab took the risk of trusting the spies enough to leave the crimson cord hanging from the window. God gives a guarantee that you can trust the scarlet blood of Christ to save you.

Rahab had a faith in God. She believed what God has done in the past and she trusted what God would do. She trusted enough to risk her life. She trusted enough to leave a red cord hanging through her window that witnessed her faith in what will happen.

As we begin our journey through Advent may all of us have hope. May our lives be not the same as the whole world.

Keep the vision of Christmas as the coming of Christ. Use Advent as joyful preparation for His coming again. Let it be a time to renew our hope and not be defined by the world. It does not matter what names we will be called. It does not matter what mistakes we have made. It does not matter what the past might try to tell us. God is not afraid to come in to the mess, in to the shame, into the guilt. His grace is more than enough. His hope is for all.

We, as a church, are offering several opportunities to put your faith in action. First, join Bible study which is for all of the church every Sunday at 9:30. Second, what I wait for the most this season is this: December 22nd. Christians on Christmas share their faith. Christ-centered people bring joy to the least, the lost and the lonely by bringing good news to the neighbors. As much as it is a heart-warming feeling to have Christmas, for me it is actually a call to go tell it on the mountain. I invite all of you to go Caroling. We will share the gospel with songs, with a little gift and an invitation to start new life in Christ. Thirdly we will host a meal for the community on December 3 at 5:30 PM.

Take action as Rahab did. Show your faith. Be courageous. Live by faith in God.