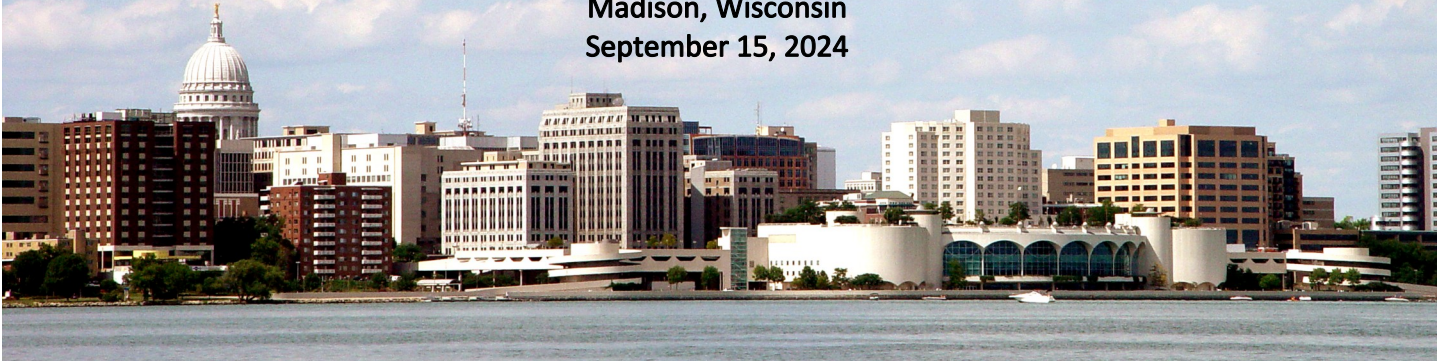


Rahab the Prostitute

Part 2 – A Journey of Faith

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Good morning and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting with us today, we are especially happy to have you with us, and we hope that you are encouraged by your visit. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card – either online or on a card from the pew in front of you. And we also invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns in that way.

In terms of our schedule, I hope to head out for Colorado after worship this morning. I'll be attending a series of lectures at the Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver on Friday, and between here and there I am hoping to do the Manitou Incline again, a series of 2,768 stairs heading almost straight up over 9/10 of a mile. I did it last year and said, "Never again," but I've nearly forgotten that. If I'm the least bit tired or hurt in any way, I won't be doing this. I don't want to be the cause of a rescue, but this is on my agenda this week, and the following week I hope to see my sister about 2 hours straight west of Seattle on the Olympic Peninsula and do some hiking in that area as well.

While I'm gone, we will be having Daniel Mayfield as a guest speaker over the next three Wednesdays! Daniel was a camper at Beaver Creek Bible Camp as a kid, and he is now preaching for the Oldham Lane congregation down in Abilene and doing a great job. Daniel has done the Manitou Incline, by the way, and he is also the one who got me into making sourdough about a year ago. He kept posting these amazing pictures online, I asked him for the recipe, and he said, "It's not a recipe, it's a relationship," and he told me to read a book he recommended. I'm learning that what he said is true. But, several months ago, he had a very good three-part series, "Foundations of Biblical Parenting," and we will be sharing these over the next three weeks. And even if you do not have children at home, I would highly recommend tuning in to these. But, thank you in advance for remembering me in your prayers as I travel.

We are here this morning to preach the good news that God loves us and sent his Son to save us from sin. He died on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up on the first day of the week. We obey this good news through faith, repentance, confession of our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and then by allowing ourselves to be buried with the Lord in baptism (an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins). And this morning we are sharing some good news from Ooltewah [OO-teh-wa], Tennessee (near Chattanooga). They posted a few days ago, and they say that, "Heaven rejoices tonight as another soul obeys the gospel of our

Lord. After study with one of our good elders Steve Edwards, Abby Dodd decided to be baptized into Christ for remission of her sins and was added by God to the body of Christ!!! Glory be to God for this great night!!”

This next one comes to us from Richard Hill, who preaches down in Eureka, Illinois. This is the congregation that collects t-shirts that they then turn into diapers for an orphanage in Nicaragua, and we have helped out with that by providing multiple bags of shirts several times through the years. But they say, “God be praised! Today was an absolutely amazing day. Decameron came to visit us at church. He had been reading his Bible and had determined he needed to be baptized. He studied with Gary this afternoon and at 4:00 he was immersed into Christ. Hallelujah!”

And this last one comes to us (once again) from my friend Paul Delgado who preaches at the Westside congregation down in Elgin, Illinois (a northwest suburb of Chicago). We just had one from Paul last week, but he posted again a few days ago, and he says, “Today, we welcomed our new brother and sister, Hadi and Maryam, to the family of Christ! They began learning about Christ back in Iran and have been visiting with us at Westside Church of Christ for the past several weeks wanting to learn more about Christ and His Kingdom. We’re so thankful to God for their decision, for their friend, Zabi, who translated our studies into Farsi, and for the Gospel’s power to save (Romans 1:16).” That is amazing, and it is so good to see this. As always, we share images like this to try to show what it means to obey the gospel. If we can help in any way, please get in touch using the contact information on the wall up here, or you can send a text or give me a call at 608-224-0274.

Last week, we talked about the fact that all of us here this morning have the power to influence other people, and sometimes we can even be influenced by our great-great grandparents. I introduced you to my great-great grandfather, Robert Elijah Exum, and I noted that this man has influenced my life, even to this day. With that in mind, we looked at King David, who was almost certainly influenced by his great-great grandmother, a woman by the name of Rahab. When the Israelites come near to the Promised Land, Joshua sends two spies, and when they enter the land, these men find themselves at Rahab’s place, and although this woman is terrified, she welcomes the spies and saves their lives by letting them down on a rope and sending them off in the opposite direction of the king’s men who were hunting them down.

Last week, we looked at Rahab as being an unlikely source of faith. She had so much working against her – as a pagan Canaanite, as a woman, as a prostitute, as a traitor, as a liar, and as someone living in a city that had been marked for death. And we learned from this, first of all, to be extremely careful when it comes to judging certain people as being unlikely to ever obey the gospel. There is a danger in spiritual prejudice. And then, secondly, we also noted that we are Rahab in this story! Most of us here this morning are also unlikely prospects for obeying the gospel. We are not stuck IN traffic, but we ARE traffic, as we learned last week. Even on our best days, we are in no way deserving of God’s mercy. We are Rahab!

Today, I want us to look at this chapter again, and this time I’d like to go back and take a closer look at the progression of Rahab’s faith in this chapter. There is a path of faith before us, in a sense, and Rahab is leading the way. And so, there is a value in taking a closer look at the progression of Rahab’s faith in this account. I’m hoping to be out of town for the next two weeks, but when I get back, I’d like to skip ahead a few chapters and take some lessons from the fact that Rahab’s faith is rewarded. Nevertheless, as the Israelites are camped out on the other side of the rain-swollen Jordan River, Joshua sends two messengers to scope out the city of Jericho, and they find themselves at the home of a prostitute by the name of Rahab, this woman who will eventually become the great-great grandmother of King David. This morning, then, let’s take a look (once again) at all 24 verses of Joshua 2,

¹ Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. ² It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." ³ And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from." ⁵ "It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.

⁸ Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. ¹⁰ "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 who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ "When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. ¹² "Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, ¹³ and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." ¹⁴ So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

¹⁵ Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. ¹⁶ She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way." ¹⁷ The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, ¹⁸ unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. ¹⁹ "It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. ²⁰ "But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear." ²¹ She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

²² They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them all along the road, but had not found them. ²³ Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. ²⁴ They said to Joshua, "Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."

What an amazing account! And one thing I noticed this week that I didn't notice last week is that we know Rahab's name, but we do not have the names of the two spies. And that's interesting, because although the story of the spies who went 40 years earlier was all about the spies and their lack of faith, today's passage is all about the faith of Rahab. This is her story of redemption. And we see it from both sides. We see it from Rahab's point of view, but I think we also see it from God's perspective. We see some parallels with Esther, and what I mean by that is that we may not see God actually doing things in this chapter, but this story has God written all over it. We have two messengers who are told to spy out the land, and they just so happen to end up at the home of a prostitute who just so happens to be open to salvation – like those two people from Iran who started to learn about Jesus and just so happened to end up in Chicago where they hear the gospel and obey it. How did that happen? I don't know, but I do know that God had something to do with it. So also with Rahab. This morning, then, as we go back to Joshua 2, let's pay special attention to Rahab's journey of faith.

1. And to start, I'd like to point out that RAHAB HAS SOME KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

It starts with knowledge! From our perspective, the account is a little bit out of order. The spies show up, she hides the spies, and only when we get to verse 8 do we actually learn WHY she does what she does, and it starts with knowledge. In verse 8, she says, ***"I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you."*** So, let's think for a moment: How did she know this? As far as we know, there's no prophet in Jericho. As far as we know, Rahab hasn't been reading the word of God. They don't have the Ten Commandments, and so on. No, she hears about God by word of mouth. In fact, God had arranged this. Forty years earlier, in the middle of the Ten Plagues back in Egypt, God has a message for Pharaoh through Moses. In Exodus 9:16, God refers to the plagues themselves and says to Pharaoh, ***"But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth."*** The plagues, then, were designed to be so amazing and so overwhelmingly devastating that people would talk about it all over the earth. And that is exactly what happens. Word gets out. This knowledge of God, in fact, spreads over time and distance, even to the point where a pagan prostitute up in Jericho is terrified of what God has done.

And speaking of fear, let's think about this for just a moment. Forty years earlier, when those twelve spies first went up into the Promised Land, ten out of the twelve were terrified of what they saw, "The people are large, the cities are fortified, we are like grasshoppers in their sight," and so on. And so they shrank back in fear, and God allowed an entire generation to die off in the wilderness. Meanwhile, at that exact moment, the locals were actually terrified of the Israelites! God's people could have walked right in, but they were held back due to fear, all while the locals were terrified of them!

In verse 10, Rahab continues and says, ***"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 who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed."*** So, it's not just the distant past (with the Ten Plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea), but Rahab and her people are also terrified of what the Israelites just did to Sihon and Og. This past Wednesday, we just studied this in Numbers 21. On their last push toward the Promised Land, Moses asks permission to simply pass through several areas (we won't eat your food, we won't drink your water, we promise to just stay on the highway and keep moving), but these local kings object, they even attack, and God has the Israelites kill all of them and take their land. It didn't need to be that way, they offered terms of peace, but these kings across the Jordan rejected those terms and paid the price for it. Meanwhile, these people across the river in Jericho, even though they are in a highly fortified city, they see what's coming, and they are terrified. Rahab says (in verse 11), ***"When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you."*** These giants, therefore, were completely

terrified of a band of basically unarmed Israelite slaves wandering around in the wilderness. Their hearts had *“melted”* and they had *“no courage”* – not because they were outnumbered by the Israelites, but because of Israel’s God and because of what God had done.

Now, before we move on from this, let’s just note that as far as we know, Rahab hadn’t experienced any of this personally. She wasn’t there for the Ten Plagues, she wasn’t there for the crossing of the Red Sea, she wasn’t there to witness the defeat of Sihon and Og, but she knew these things based on the testimony of others. It starts with knowledge.

2. As we head back to the text, we find, secondly, that Rahab not only has this knowledge, but she ACCEPTS IT AS BEING TRUE IN HER OWN LIFE.

We might say that she internalizes this information. And I say this because many others had the same information, but it doesn’t affect them as it did Rahab. She takes this knowledge, and she runs with it; she accepts it. After telling the two messengers how terrified they are, Rahab continues (in verse 11), *“When we heard [these things], our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”* So notice: This knowledge causes Rahab to accept the truth that God *“...is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”* So, she takes this knowledge of what God has done, and she comes to a conclusion; she accepts this knowledge as being true, that God is the one and only true and living God. And this is important, because her accepting this knowledge will affect what she does next. I say this, because everybody else in Jericho also knew what God had done through the Israelites in the wilderness, but it doesn’t affect them like it does her. She internalizes this information. This information changes the course of her life. She stakes her life, in fact, on the fact that what she knows about the Lord is true. He is the Creator of heaven and earth. And that’s what faith is. We learn what God has done, and we internalize it, we accept it in a way that changes the way we live going forward. She not only hears about God, but she understands what she hears, and she accepts it as being true. We serve the same God!

3. And this leads us to the next progression in Rahab’s faith, as we find that as soon as she hears and accepts the truth, she puts her own life at risk to actually do something about it – SHE ACTS ON HER FAITH.

She hears, she believes what she hears, and then without hesitating, she commits treason against her own people by siding with God’s messengers. She may not know much, but what she knows changes her behavior. We will look at this more in a few weeks, but in James 2, Rahab is praised for receiving the messengers and sending them out by another way. And then in Hebrews 11, Rahab is praised for acting “by faith” and welcoming the spies in peace. By doing that, she puts her own life at risk. When those soldiers came to her door demanding information on the spies, the easy thing for Rahab to do would have been to give them up, “They’re up there on the roof.” Rahab, though, feared God more than her own king at this point. This godly fear, then, motivates her to side with God, even risking her own death. But that’s what saving faith is – trusting God and doing what’s necessary, even if it’s dangerous, even if it’s not popular, even if it puts us at risk of ridicule. It’s not enough just to know about God, it’s not enough just to accept in our minds that God is who he says he is, but our faith has to cause us to do something. And in this case, Rahab’s faith causes her to welcome the spies and send them out by another way.

Last week, I said that a lot of what’s been written on this chapter is all about “Rahab’s lie.” And I don’t want to give the wrong impression. I am thankful for those who wrestle with the question, “Why is Rahab praised for her faith when she lied in the process, and what does that mean for us?” I’m glad we have scholars who can tackle questions like that (so also with the water to wine controversy I mentioned last week as well), but let’s

just remind ourselves once again that Rahab lying is not the main point of Joshua 2! The main point of Joshua 2 is that Rahab's faith is expressed in obedience. She believes, and then she does something. The other residents of Jericho, they had the same information Rahab had. They were also terrified, so, in a sense, they believed in God as well, but they didn't do anything about it. The others in Jericho are like the demons described in James, they believe and they tremble, but they are not obedient. Real faith takes action. And that's what Rahab does: With soldiers at her door, Rahab sides with the Lord.

4. Beyond this, I would also just briefly note that Rahab (in verse 12) demands a sign from these men, and in the process EXPRESSES CONCERN FOR HER FAMILY.

Having just discovered the truth, having just accepted the truth, and having just taken action on this truth, Rahab now wants her family to be saved as well. She reminds us of the woman at the well in John 4, who, when she met Jesus, immediately leaves her water pot and heads to town saying (in John 4:29), *"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"* And many believed because of her testimony. And we may also think of other times when whole families were saved – Cornelius in Acts 10, Lydia and her household as well as the jailer and his entire family, both in Acts 16. Just a note of encouragement to those of you who are trying to share your faith with those at home: You are in good company! Don't give up. Faith is worth sharing.

5. This brings us to the end for today, where we find that Rahab asks to be saved and is given a CONDITIONAL PROMISE.

In verses 12-13, she asks these men to *"deal kindly"* with her and her father's household, *"spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."* In response to this request, the men give two conditions: 1.) Do not tell this business of ours (don't tell anybody we were here), and 2.) You must hang this rope made with scarlet thread out your window and get your family together with you in the house – we are not responsible for anybody who's not with you in the house, because everybody else in Jericho will die. Rahab agrees, and in verse 21 she sends the men away, and she immediately ties the scarlet rope in the window.

Some have asked about the scarlet rope. Some have speculated that the scarlet rope was the sign of a prostitute's home (a bit like the spiral thing outside a barbershop) – if the scarlet rope is hanging outside the front door, "the prostitute is on duty and ready for business." I don't know, but maybe. I'm a bit more confident in the idea that the scarlet rope is what she uses to lower these men down from her window on the city wall. But I think the idea is: As we are hacking and killing everybody, we need a clear sign not to kill you and your family, and the scarlet rope hanging out your window on the outside of the wall will be that sign.

And this brings us to the very end of verse 21, where she says, *"According to your words, so be it."* And the text continues, *"So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window."* Her obedience to this conditional promise is immediate. She didn't just believe she could be saved, but she obeyed as well. And she didn't even know when the attack was coming. It might have been coming in hours, maybe days, maybe weeks or months, but she puts that scarlet rope out her window immediately.

Conclusion:

We hope to focus in on Rahab's faith being rewarded by picking up with the rest of this story (in Joshua 6) in a few weeks, but as we close this morning, as we think about the "So what?" question, as we think about what this passage really means for us today, I would just remind us that even in the face of judgment, God always

provides a way of salvation. And that's amazing ! Here is a pagan Canaanite prostitute who's been marked for death (as we really focused on last week), but God chases this woman down by sending messengers with a message of salvation. They come with terms of peace, and this woman accepts the truth that she knows, she takes action by hiding the spies, she demonstrates concern for her family, and she immediately complies with God's terms of salvation.

In just a few moments, Josh will lead us in a song written by Fanny Crosby. By the way, as we've learned before, Fanny Crosby was blind, and nearly every one of her songs has some reference to "seeing." So, keep an eye out for that as we sing. But as I went looking for this song I was thinking about today, I found it in our book, but it was missing the middle verse that I remember hearing from my childhood. So, I found it and added it in myself (we're going to have two verse twos today). It's not in our books, but it is in our PowerPoint this morning. And it made me think of Rahab,

*O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer, the promise of God.
The vilest offenders, who truly obey,
That moment may enter the heavenly way.*

That is Rahab! And that is us as well. We deserve destruction, eternal separation from God, but God has promised salvation to even the vilest offenders who truly obey. Praise the Lord! Even in the face of judgment, God provides salvation. This is the good news. If we can help with your obedience to this good news, please let us know.

Next week, John Higgins will be preaching, and the week after that Josh Yancy will take a turn. This may be John's first time. I wish I could be here! But I am so thankful for both of these men for saying "yes," when they very easily could have said "no." You have no idea the burden you have lifted. Thank you, brothers!

For now, though, let's close our study by going to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

Thank you for telling us the story of Rahab. Like us, she is unworthy in every way, but you saved her – not because of who she was, but because she put her trust in you. We pray for the same faith today. And we ask for your help as we reach out to our families like Rahab did. We pray for open and honest hearts. We pray for your help in setting a good example in everything we do.

Father, we ask your blessing on those we love who are struggling with their health – we pray for Abe today, as well as James, and Jane. We pray for all of those who are with us online today who may not be able to get out and around due to health concerns. Thank you for being with them this morning.

We love you, Father, and we come to you this morning in Jesus' name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: foullakeschurch@gmail.com