

Date: Sunday, February 5, 2012

Location: Effingham ARP

Title: Extraordinary Women: Rahab

Text: Joshua 2:1-21

Theme: God redeems Rahab's scandalous past

I. What's in A Name?

A. I've known plenty of biblically-named women in my life:

1. Ruth
2. Rebekah
3. Esther
4. Sarah

B. But I have yet to meet anyone named after the Godly woman we're studying today: *Rahab*.

II. When Matthew describes the lineage of Jesus Christ, we find Rahab is one of his ancestors **[on screen, do not cite]** (*and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse*) matthew 1:5

A. in Hebrews 11 she's commended for giving "**a friendly welcome**" to Israel's spies. (Hebrews 11:31)

B. in James she is described as being "**justified by works when she received the messengers.**" (James 2:24)

C. She is a key figure in our own Christian story, so why does no parent want to name their sweet little girl "Rahab?"

III. I suspect you already know the answer: In almost every description of her that we read, we find no last name, no real descriptor of nationality. Only this: "Rahab the prostitute."

A. Imagine the characteristic of your life that you like the least...

B. now imagine that it is your name:

1. "Brian the Jerk," Pastor of Effingham Presbyterian.
2. and yet it is Rahab's shameful status as a prostitute that makes her story so poignant
3. it is her sinful *past* that makes her place in Jesus' *future* that much greater.

IV. When we find Rahab, she is introduced as a key component of a significant story in Israel's history.

A. Joshua sends two spies to Jericho under the cover of darkness.

B. **[PIX: MAP]** they journey by foot,

1. 7 miles to the Jordan River
2. cross the Jordan River at a shallow ford
3. 7 more miles to the gates of Jericho
4. there they are to make notes on the fortifications, walls, security, military force and report back.

5. This is a reconnaissance mission before Joshua will lead Israel's army to take the city.
6. God has commanded it-- it *will be* their foothold into the promised land, strategically located between Jerusalem and Bethel.
7. as a side note, let me point out that God has already promised this land to Israel. He's assured their victory, yet Joshua wisely does *his* part. He sends spies in preparation for battle.
 - a) God uses our own experience and actions to bring about his plan-- in this case, victory.
 - b) Joshua is doing his part; chipping in...
 - c) but that's another sermon for another day...

V. **And Joshua the son of Nun** *sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho."*

VI. **And they went and came** *into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.*

VII. **And it was told to the king of Jericho,** *"Behold, men of Israel*

have come here tonight to search out the land." (Joshua 2:1-2 ESV)

- A. it can be a little confusing in the text to have 2 spies in their *secret* operation found out almost as soon as they enter the city.
- B. but we understand that the residents of Jericho knew full well that Israel was just a few miles away; security is heightened; the spies have come into the city-- perhaps disguised or maybe mingling with afternoon foot traffic, they seek out a place to begin their operation, but *someone* has seen them.

VIII. **Why Rahab?**

- A. but them being seen is not the toughest question for us. Rather it is this: Why did they go to a Prostitute's house?
- B. As I've mentioned a few times, we're basing this series on John MacArthur's book *12 Extraordinary Women* and his description of how Rahab fits into this story is just great.
- C. He describes Jericho as a walled city **[PIX: Jericho]** where houses and businesses were in and on the wall.
- D. like modern day cities, prime real estate was any room with

a view-- the penthouse suite...

- E. For Rahab, business was good, and her home afforded a strategic view of the city
- F. in addition, because of the nature of her profession meant that she understood the need for discretion-- the spies could stay with her for the night without arousing suspicion (or so they thought).
- G. and as one scholar points out, the text takes great care to make clear that the spies were only with this woman of the night for strategic reasons-- nothing else was going on
- H. The spies are in her care when suddenly, there's a knock at the door.
- IX. **"Bring out the men who have come to you,...for they have come to search out all the land."**
- X. **But the woman had taken the two men** and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out... Pursue them quickly..."
- XI. **But she had brought them up to the roof** and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had

laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords...(Joshua 2:3-7 ESV)

- XII. **Rahab lies to the King's men.**
 - A. it is very likely that it's not the first time she's had to hide someone in the stalks of flax
 - B. while someone else (like an angry wife perhaps) was in pursuit.
 - C. the text tells us she's laid them out in advance-- maybe the flax stalks stay up there all year!
 - D. Isn't it a wonder how Rahab personality and experience in a shameful business is used to help God's people?
 - 1. God is in the process of redeeming her sinful past.
- XIII. **As readers, we're distracted by** the fact that she lies here-- no way around it--in her heroic act of serving the Lord [God of all truth, who "never lies" see Titus 1:2], she lies!
 - A. the Bible never condones the lie itself, only her developing faith.
 - B. ethically, perhaps it can be said that the soldiers gave up their right to the truth in trying to hunt down 2 men on a Godly mission.
 - 1. Rahab's lie and whether it was right or wrong can be

- your lunchtime discussion today!
- XIV. what I'd like to point out is the timeline of events:
- A. before there is ever a knock at the door, Rahab has learned who the spies are, she knows the essence of their mission, and she helps them *before* the King's men come searching.
 - B. She helps them-- she takes *action*, before there is ever a mention of her *faith*.
 - C. she demonstrates faith in her actions long before she utters a word of faith from her heart.
 - D. Once the King's men are gone, she talks with the spies...
- XV... **"I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.**
- A. the story of Yahweh and Israel has arrived long before the two spies.
 - B. it's no wonder Jericho is buzzing with the news that Israel is encamped a few hours away
 - C. in this statement, the subtext is that Rahab is coming to the LORD as THE LORD.
- XVI. **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...whom you devoted to destruction.

XVII. **And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.**

- A. And *there* is her acknowledgment of what has been going on in her heart-- she is at once mixed with *fear* of God's power, and *recognition* of his power
 1. He is mighty to *judge* and mighty to *save*-- two sides of the same coin

XVIII. **Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house...and deliver our lives from death.** (Joshua 2:9-13 ESV)

- A. and so they do... her entire family will be spared *destruction*...

XIX. **The men said to her,...** Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's

household... Joshua 2:17-21
ESV

XX. The scarlet cord,

- A. it is not the same rope by which she helps them escape
- B. it is a decorative cord, perhaps a woven cord
- C. blood red,
- D. We know that in the past, God has used the mark of red to mark those households to be spared
 - 1. namely, the **passover lamb** that marked the homes to be spared in God's judgement of Egypt.
 - 2. and just like that terrible time, this time Jericho will be will be subject to God's judgment
 - 3. but in the faith of Rahab, she and her family will be spared
 - 4. in the midst of wickedness, they have been redeemed.

XXI. And this morning, when we study this story, the names of the spies are not given.

- A. these two anonymous men, living out a Godly life, serving God's purposes faithfully
- B. being good, living right, doing as God commands-- *we don't even know their names!*

XXII. Instead, we know Rahab...

- A. What's in a name? We know the name of the woman who

lived year after year in a shameful business,

- 1. offering up her body to the anyone with enough cash
- 2. known by her reputation, known for her business

XXIII. And we know her as well--

- A. But not as the people of Jericho knew her...those people of Jericho now long gone.
- B. we know her as *God* knew her
 - 1. future grandmother of Christ
 - 2. model of faith in action...of how our Lord takes our corrupt past and redeems it-- *remodels* it for the future.
 - 3. the model of our own attitude when confronted with someone we know with a past--
 - 4. certainly if a prostitute can become a family member of Christ himself, we can show a little grace to those in our lives who have stumbled..

XXIV. But Rahab the prostitute...

and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. (Joshua 6:25 ESV)