

*Shiloh Christian Church Sunday School*

*Soul Sisters Series*

***RAHAB – Woman of Faith***

If you've ever had to choose a name for a baby, you might have struggled long and hard with that decision. You may have paged through several different books of names. But one girl's name you don't see, and probably one that doesn't even cross our minds because of the kind of woman we associate with it is the name Rahab. That's the name of the woman in our Scripture for today: Rahab. Why would we hesitate to name our child Rahab? It is obvious, isn't it? What is she called in our text? "The prostitute Rahab" or older translations simply say, "Rahab the harlot--almost like it's her last name. This also is the way she is introduced in Joshua 2:1. **I see her not as Rahab the prostitute, but as Rahab, a woman of faith.**

Doesn't it strike you as strange that of all the citizens of Jericho whom God could have chosen to save from destruction, he didn't choose the kindest grandmother or the sweetest little child, or an innocent baby, he chose to save a prostitute?

To complete this picture, however, we should also say a word about the city in which Rahab set up shop. There has been some archeological work done on the site. Jericho was located in a valley about 10 miles northwest of the Dead Sea at one of the largest freshwater springs in Palestine. It was probably not that large, at least when compared to cities today, but it had a huge thick wall around it that would have made it very difficult to conquer. Not much is known for sure about the Canaanite people who lived within those walls. But the scripture makes one point very clear. They were terribly evil, so evil that after the city was destroyed Joshua, undoubtedly moved by the Spirit of the Lord to pronounce a curse on anyone who rebuilt it.

*At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: "At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates."*

Now Jericho was a city in a land where throwing children on burning altars and going to bed with prostitutes were ways in which people practiced their religion. The fact that this city was singled out for such a curse should tell us something.

Clearly Rahab was a sinner among sinners. And yet the Lord showed mercy to her. Now, some might want to argue that she just happened to be in the right place at the right time. On the surface that might seem to be true. Yet, there are no accidents with God. As Christians we know things do not happen by chance. Of all the places the spies could have gone they chose Rahab's house of ill repute. And the fact that Rahab chose to cast her lot with them and not with her own people seems to be a pretty clear indication that the Spirit of God was at work in Rahab's house before the spies ever arrived and that that same Spirit moved the spies to go there. No, God chose to save this prostitute out of this evil city.

None of us have slipped so far from God that the Holy Spirit cannot reach us. The Bible is full of stories of how God reached down and rescued some pretty awful people: prostitutes, kings who murdered prophets, hypocritical kings who were guilty of adultery and murder, false prophets, persecutors of God's people. The list goes on and on. And that list continues to

grow today. Frankly, every one of us is on it. Do you have a son or daughter that you've almost given up praying for or maybe a parent or a brother or sister or a dear friend? She's made such mess of her life! His heart is just hard! Please don't stop praying. With God all things are possible. None of us are beyond hope!

Yet, none of this takes away our responsibility to believe. What does our text say?

*31By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.*

"By faith" Rahab was not killed, because she trusted in the one true God. How does Paul put it in Ephesians 2:8?

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith.*

In order for Rahab to be rescued she needed to have faith. But, what does it mean that she needed to have faith? What really is faith? Hebrews 11:1 says,

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

Think about it. What was Rahab hoping for? Obviously, she was hoping that when the Israelites destroyed Jericho, she and her family would be saved. Everything she did was done with the hope that the God of Israel and his people would have mercy on her and spare her family. Aaaahhhhhh, the lengths a woman will go to for her family.

But what did she have to go on? A few reports? How did she know for sure that what she heard about Israel's God was true? And remember she did what she did prior to having any assurances from the spies that her family would indeed be spared.

But, having said that, her faith was based on some knowledge. Listen again to the words of verses 9-11 of our scripture. This is Rahab speaking:

*I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.*

She believed in God because she knew what he had done. There is a strong connection between faith and knowledge. We cannot believe in a God we don't know or even know about. And for our faith to grow we must know more about him. We must know more about who he is and what he has promised. You can't feel your way to faith.

But faith is certainly more than just knowledge. What Rahab expressed in verses 9-10 was common knowledge in Babylon. And for most of the people, what was the result?

*a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you*

This reminds me of James 2:19

*the devils also believe, and tremble.*

But Rahab's faith didn't just end with fear. Instead she concluded,  
*the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below*

Because of what she knew, she turned away from the idol gods of the Canaanites and believed that God was God alone.

This is about attitude. It's about each of us searching our hearts and asking, "Do I truly trust in the Lord?" It's a question we need ask ourselves time again--when we hoard our money, when we overprotect our children, when we lay awake with our worries. Do I trust the Lord?

But, trusting is more than attitude. James points this out in his letter, James 2:25-26,

*25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

Rahab demonstrated her faith by how she treated the Israelite spies. When she hid the spies and lied to protect them, she hoped they would repay her kindness to them by sparing her and her family. She hadn't even asked them yet. And when she let them down the rope out of her window, all she had was their word that she and her family would be spared. But, even though she had no reason to believe their word, she trusted them, because she trusted the God to whom they belonged. Her faith is seen in the friendly welcome she gave to the spies. She trusted so much in the God of Israel that she committed herself to his people rather than to her own. In any nation, to do what Rahab did would be considered treason. Not only did she not report that there were Israelite spies in her house, she hid them, she lied to protect them, and then she helped them escape. If she were caught, she would have been put to death. She put her life on the line. Her faith was proven by her actions.

Her faith is also shown in the final words of verse 21,

*And she tied the scarlet cord in the window,*

Think about what it was they told her to do. *Bind a scarlet cord in her window.* Certainly it was something that the soldiers of Israel could easily spot. But, if they could spot it, couldn't the people of Jericho also see it? Their city was under siege and she had bright red rope hanging out of her window. The guards on the wall were bound to notice. Yet, she did as she was commanded.

But what about us? Can others see by what we do that we belong to Christ and not to the secular world around us? How evident is our faith? Or, would we rather that others not know we are Christians? Do we keep it a secret and maybe use the excuse that we are being humble and not bragging about our faith?

Listen to the price that some paid for being bold about their faith,

*Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37They were stoned, T; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins,*

*destitute, persecuted and mistreated-38the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. (Hebrews 11: 35- 38)*

These verses speak of saint in Old Testament times who suffered for their faith. But the writer of Hebrews goes on to say,

*These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised (Hebrews 11:39)*

They suffered these things before Jesus came. They only had a glimpse of the glory that we know and they were willing show their faith by such commitment.

God rewarded Rahab by giving her more than she ever asked. Not only did he spare her life and the lives of her family members, he gave them an inheritance with her people. Chapter 6: 25 tell us,

*But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho-and she lives among the Israelites to this day.*

But that's not all. Matthew 1:5 tells us that Rahab married an Israelite named Salmon and that they were part of Jesus' family tree.

Did you know that this honor is given to all who believe in Jesus in true faith?

Listen to the words of our Lord,

*But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matthew 12: 48)*

Rahab was not an Israelite. Her inclusion into Jesus family tree reminds us that from the beginning God's purpose was to bring faith and salvation to all the nations.

As those who are also part of Jesus' family tree, we know that he is especially fulfilling that purpose today. And he has called us to have a part in that task. Just as Rahab had a part to play, so do we. Just as God had a calling for her, so he has one for us. He has strategically placed us in this part of the world at this time to expand Jesus' family tree and graft in more branches. She accomplished her mission because she believed. Will future generations be able to say that of us? More importantly will our Lord? For today he says to us,

*For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. AMEN!*