

Rahab, a woman of courage, faith, and love

This morning we are going to be studying the life of Rahab. The bible tells us in Hebrews 11:11, and Hebrews 11:31 that she and Sarah were the only two women named as heroes of faith. Let us begin by reviewing the book of Joshua and the story of the battle of Jericho. We can't fully begin to understand the courage that Rahab had until we examine where her story takes place and what was happening in her world at that time.

Read Joshua 1:1-10 NIV

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. **4** Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. **5** No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

7 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **8** Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: **11** "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the

Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.””

Read Joshua 2: 1-21 NIV

Rahab and the Spies

2 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

2 The king of Jericho was told, “Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” **3** So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.”

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. **5** At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.” **6** (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) **7** So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, “I know that the LORD has given you this land 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. **10** We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] 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.[b] **11** When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 “Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.”

14 “Our lives for your lives!” the men assured her. “If you don’t tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land.”

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. **16** She said to them, “Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.”

17 Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us **18** unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. **19** If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. **20** But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.”

21 “Agreed,” she replied. “Let it be as you say.”

So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

The Fall of Jericho

Joshua 6:1-24

6 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. **3** March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. **4** Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’

horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. **5** When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.”

6 So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it.” **7** And he ordered the army, “Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD.”

8 When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the LORD went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the LORD’s covenant followed them. **9** The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. **10** But Joshua had commanded the army, “Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!” **11** So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.

12 Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. **13** The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding. **14** So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

15 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. **16** The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! **17** The city and all that is in it are to be devoted[a] to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. **18** But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. **19** All the silver and gold and

the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.”

20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. **21** They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her.” **23** So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

24 Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD’s house. **25** 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.

Footnotes

- a. Joshua 6:17 The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them; also in verses 18 and 21.



Discuss Jericho

Jericho was a city in the land of the Canaan 4 miles from the west bank of the Jordan river. Bethlehem was about 28 miles, or a 15 hour walk from Jericho. Jericho was a key city in the land of Canaan because of the palm trees and many natural springs. Jericho was surrounded by massive stone walls to protect the city from flooding, to preserve the water, and provide fortification from their enemies. There were several reasons for two sets of walls, the first being that the city grew over time. Scholars believe that the first, or inner wall is the oldest known protective wall in the world and that Jericho was the longest continuously inhabited permanent city as well.

When I learned about Jericho as a child I pictured a timber structure that was about ten feet tall with a wide gate. The reality of what archeologists have discovered is almost unfathomable unlike anything you or I may have seen in our lifetime. The temple and the wealthy people lived within the inner city. The wall that surrounded that part of Jericho was about 38 feet high, or about the size of the world's largest fork in Springfield. The working class, craftsmen, inn keepers and poor lived in the outer area. The outer wall was 46 feet high or about the size of Hammons Tower. Archeologists believe that there were several thousand people inside the walls when the Israelites came against the city. The city was about 3 miles in

circumference. This is what loomed high above the Israelites as they marched around the city each day for seven days. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for the Israelites to penetrate Jericho.

Ancient Jericho

Towns became bigger as their populations increased. This made their architecture and urban planning more complex and they required more space to expand. The possibility of storing food surpluses meant that part of the population quit agricultural activities to devote their time to other things. Artisans, priests, traders... The wealth of flourishing cities attracted greed of the nomadic tribes and forced their inhabitants to build protective walls around their cities. This was the case of Jericho, in the West Bank, Palestine. With a history of more than 11,000 years, this was the first fortified city known ever and, up to the present day, it is considered the first city in history.

Jericho, the first one

Natufian hunter groups settled in this spot in 12,000 BC before it became the city of Jericho. Towards 9,400 BC, the settlement had more than 70 houses with around a thousand inhabitants and something unprecedented; a 3.5m high and almost 2m thick wall and a stone tower that reached a height of 8.5 m.

7000 BC
The round houses made with adobe, similar to igloos, were substituted by rectangular ones. Sanctuaries and ovens appeared.

Glory and collapse

The apparition of the Canaanites implied changes in house planning. This people absorbed the original culture and took Jericho to its most glorious times. According to archeological records, the city was destroyed by 1500 BC to be re-founded in the 9th century BC.

Houses
They had stone foundations, clay brick structure, 50 cm width walls and the roofs were covered with a mixture of reeds and clay.

Courtyards
The buildings usually had a 7 metre square courtyard used to cook and preventing smoke from entering inside the house.

Double fortification
Similar to medieval fortifications, these were 3 m wide and more than 4 m high by 1700 BC. They were reconstructed at least 15 times.

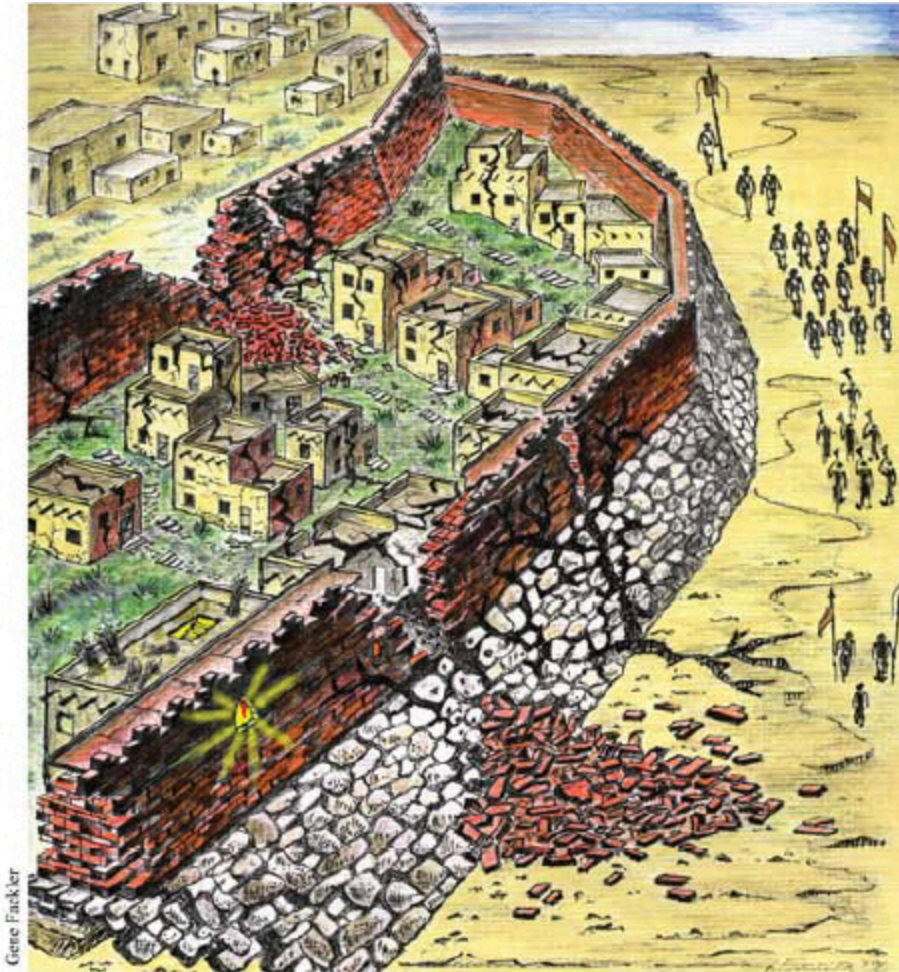
Resources
There is evidence of cultivated plants and possible sheep breeding since 7220 BC. There was a water canal system.

The Jordan River
Jericho was favored by the river and trade. Its walls became thicker and were surrounded by a moat.

Two storeys
Two storey houses had a working area in the first floor and the rooms on the second floor.



According to the Bible, Rahab's house was built into the rear wall ([Joshua 2:15](#)). The city wall formed the back wall of the houses, from this location on the north side of the city it was only a short distance to the hills of the Judean wilderness where the spies hid for three days ([Joshua 2:16, 22](#)). Not the best place to live in time of war! It was probably the poorest area to live in.



Let's examine the way that the Canaanites were living within the walls of Jericho. Now the people of Jericho had basically isolated themselves inside the walls except for the trading of goods and such. The wall took 108 years to build, or looking at it another way **5 generations** of servants and slaves were used in the construction. The people living inside the walls of Jericho worshiped Baal and Asherah. They considered the Baal god of fertility as well as weather, specifically storms and rain which they needed to grow their crops. They considered Asherah the goddess of fertility and motherhood. They performed all sorts of carnal rituals and considered them proper worship. They considered their way of life, partying, fornication, etc pleasing to the deities they served. They saw no evil in their behavior. These were

people who had forgotten about the God of Abraham. Apparently sometime during the generations their ancestors didn't pass along their faith, or if they did the stories they passed down were looked upon as myths. They were not concerned with what the outside world thought. Pastor Mike has talked about how by the third or fourth generation most people don't know or remember much about their relatives. The story of the Canaanites reminds me of that because even though they were descendants of Noah, they no longer followed the Lord.

Now Rahab was probably a child when the walls were completed. Fast forward a few years and she is an adult. We don't know about her lineage, it was not spoken of in the bible. We don't really know how she came to have an inn within the walls of the city. But we do know that as an innkeeper she had access to information about the outside world. That was a valuable commodity in those days and times. She had flax on her roof, she supported others and had her family living with her which suggests she was a caregiver.

Her profession back then was considered to be an elevated position, pleasing to their gods. She was known by the King, he sent messengers to her doorstep. She had much to risk in her support of the Israelites. Earlier we read that she was in fear of the Lord and had faith based on what she had heard that he could do.

Joshua 2:11

The Israelites perception of Rahab

Now outside the city walls according to the Lord's commandments, Rahab is a woman, she is a sinner, and a heathen therefore she would have had little to no value. I think that the spies and others in Joshua's tribe must have been astonished

by the turn of events. Who would've ever thought that someone like her would help them achieve a victory and not just any victory, but the first victory written about in a book about Israel's conquest.

It is significant that the first story in a book about Israel's conquest of Canaan is the story of a Canaanite prostitute confessing faith in Israel's God. Rahab's faith not only saves her from Jericho's fate but includes her in God's chosen people.

By faith and obedience alone, God's promise to Israel comes true. Joshua's obedience and faith, as well as Rahab's faith.

God promised Abraham that Israel would own the land of Canaan and bless the whole world. (Genesis 15:15-21) Rahab is God's promise to Abraham coming true.

She is listed as a hero of faith along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. She had faith in God and willingness to act on it. When she trusts God she becomes a founding mother of the nation of Israel when she married Salmon.

15 You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. **16** In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. **18** On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi^[a] of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— **19** the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, **20** Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, **21** Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

Hebrews 11:31

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

Once again the bible tells us a story of a person who is seemingly unqualified, and undeserving, the least of these, someone on the wrong side of God's battle lines becoming a member of God's family and a woman in the direct lineage of King David and Jesus.

Matthew 1:5-6

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,
6 and Jesse the father of King David.

Which just goes to show that God qualifies the called. If that is true of Rahab, it can be true of us so no matter what you may have done in your past, you too can be a mighty warrior for God. God has a plan for all of us, he is all seeing and all knowing. His plan for our lives is predestined. Can we make decisions that muddy the waters and bring about unintended consequences? Yes but if we submit ourselves to him, he will make all things new.

We need to pray for faith in God and willingness to act on it.
James tells us that faith without works is dead.

James 2:24-26 (NKJV)

²⁴ You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?

²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Jesus says "Whoever does the work of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister and mother."

Matthew 12:50

Perception and which side of the wall you live on

How we view others is important. I think we have to be careful about our perceptions when God places people in our lives. Remember, he has our lives planned for us and we have to seek him and his will for our lives continually. We have to be careful about standing in judgment of others. After all, we all have sin and we know that God sees it the same. I have a really hard time accepting this sometimes, especially when I hear about things like violence against children or (violence against) vulnerable people, I think it is particularly evil. Sometimes I'm tempted to think, well I'm just selfish, or lazy etc. I'm not as bad as so and so. What if because of her sin the spies refused to listen to Rahab and didn't hide on her roof? Or what if they hadn't trusted her? Have you ever walked away from someone you may have been able to help because you thought it would cause too much chaos in your life, or that they were untrustworthy? I know that I have. From inside the walls of Jericho, Rahab was respected. From outside the walls she was a sinner. People who live outside the walls of christianity don't understand most of what we say or do. Just as we don't understand how people can live without Jesus. If we think of our faith as something that separates us from sin, something that we live inside of and look down on others who live outside of our walls we may never be able to let down a cord to help someone else. Also we have to remember that if God calls us he will equip us, we don't have to be "good enough" or "smart enough", he will help us just as he helped Rahab.

Rahab's faith and love

The faith that Rahab had amazes me. She didn't have the encouragement of the birth of Jesus nor the salvation he provided when he died on the cross for us. She didn't have letters from Paul, or James, or Luke. In truth, she probably didn't even know a thing about the 10 commandments or the promises of the Lord. She was a woman who wanted to protect her family, who was called by God. She chose to obey and step out in faith believing that he would save her family and that Joshua and his people would keep their word. She risked everything she had, her wealth, her political standing, her home, and her family to serve God.

Serving God doesn't mean that she had an easy life. She probably faced many challenges. She married a man who was part of the conquest of Canaan, so I imagine she must have led a nomadic life to a certain extent. She went from holding a revered position in Jericho to being called a harlot among the Israelites. Some of them must have been grateful for the role she played in aiding the spies, others must have scorned her. She would have had to learn new customs, she would have had to learn how to prepare kosher food. Her extended family and friends were all dead, the grief must have been a heavy weight to bare. I can imagine that she must have felt alone at times and confused. She had to confront the sin in her life and learn to live for God.

We have to confront sin in our own lives too. I don't know about you, but just when I think I'm making good progress God will shine a spotlight on or hold up magnifying glass on an area in my life or a personality trait that is not pleasing to him. If you are dealing with an area of sin in your life I encourage you to bring it to the Lord. Confess your sin and repent. He will help you deal with whatever it is you are walking through.

- 1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

We know that Rahab confronted the sin in her life because she raised Boaz, who was a faithful man. I'm sure she had hopes and dreams for her son. I am almost positive she never knew that she would be the great, great, great grandmother of King David. She never knew that she would be related to the light of the world. She was just a woman, who loved the Lord and her family fiercely. She passed along that faith and wisdom, and it stood the test of time. We have a responsibility as women to love, nurture, and teach our loved ones about Jesus. We may never see the fruit of our labor and love, but nevertheless we must prioritize planting the seeds.

I know that I am in a church full of women (and men) who love their family and friends fiercely. Imagine what seeds we could be planting in our loved ones that we will never know about. I can think of many women who have poured into my life. As women we are called to love. Love God and love people. Let's get out there, plant some seeds, throw down some ropes and love!

Matthew 22:37-40

New King James Version

37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." **38** This is *the* first and great commandment. **39** And *the* second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

1 Corinthians 13:13

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. —1 John 4:7–8

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. . . . This I command you: love one another. —John 15:12–14, 17

When we put God first and love him with our souls and mind we will do our best to obey him and to learn about what pleases him. We are commanded to love others. Please think about ways in which you can show love to others outside of your walls. If you need any ideas about how to do that , spend some time visiting with members of our congregation, they are the most loving people I've ever known.

Just as God was with Rahab, he is with you. In the week ahead remember what God said in Isaiah.

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.