**THE LORD YOUR GOD IS THE TRUE GOD**

August 11, 2019

Joshua 2:1-24
Key Verse 2:11 – *“When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”*

In today’s passage, we witness how God used the faith of the most unlikely person to accomplish His world salvation work. In Rahab’s confession, we shall see how her genuine faith in the True God gave her both courage and wisdom in the face of death and even inspired an entire nation. Likewise, I pray that we may have such faith and assurance in our God so we may boldly proclaim His name to the many throughout this campus in desperate need of the life-saving Gospel and inspire a new generation of people who will devote their very lives to the Lord.

**Part 1: Joshua Sends Spies To Jericho**

Look at verse 1a; “**Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.””** After 40 years of wandering in the desert, the Israelites, led by Joshua, were finally at the doorsteps of the Promised Land. In Chapter 1, the Lord spoke to Joshua and gave him the command to follow the Lord’s leading absolutely (1:7-9). Though Joshua was the general, even he had someone above him. God was calling on Joshua to trust Him in all things so that the Israelites would win the victory. So how exactly did Joshua demonstrate his trust in the Lord? As verse 1a tells us, he secretly sent two spies to scout out the land paying special attention to Jericho. Some may argue that sending out the spies in this way demonstrates a lack of faith. Since God already gave them this land and promised to be with the Israelites, shouldn’t they just go in and take it? After all, had not God promised Joshua that He would give him success? Was this necessary if he really was trusting in the Lord?

We need to remember that there is a big difference between faith and foolishness, between being faithful and being foolhardy and reckless. Though God had already promised His deliverance, He still wanted Joshua to intelligently prepare for the battles ahead. As a wise military leader, Joshua needed to gather information concerning the layout of the enemies’ defenses, the condition of their morale, and other factors that would be important to any military campaign. Moreover Joshua was not to presume on the Lord, i.e. he was to trust the Lord but in that trust, he was also to use the resources God gave him such as the training, the men, and the wisdom he had gained instead of doing nothing but waiting for God to perform one miracle after another.

The same could be said for our life of faith. While we always have the promise of God’s provision and protection, God still wants us to be wise mangers of our God-given resources (Matthew 25:21) by devoting ourselves to prayerful planning and faithful thinking (“*Plan prayerfully. Think faithfully*”). Take a moment to look at things in your life right now such as family, work and especially ministry. Do you honestly and earnestly pray for the plan God has in mind for you even when it differs from your own? Do you really trust in His way being the best, His presence being ever-near and His provision being always abundant? And when the Lord does call you to action, do you proceed without hesitation or remain held back by reservation? While we are not literally fighting a war like Joshua, our life is one big spiritual battlefield where we too need to accept God’s promise to Joshua as our own and fight the good fight in Jesus’ name. Currently we have been devoting our whole summer to preparing for the upcoming club fair and the new school year. We are even studying a book literally named “Tactics” so that we can be well-equipped to share our faith with students we will encounter, inviting them to see and experience more of who Jesus is through our ministry. But I myself have prayed very little for I still fear we’ll face the same old rejection and disinterest from students. Having such an attitude means I am already defeated before the battle has even begun… a battle that God has already declared we will be triumphant so long as we give our hearts wholly to this mission and entrust all these things to Him. Lord, help me overcome my fear, my unbelief and my secret indifference to the needs of your flock here all across the St. George campus. Lord, richly bless our humble preparations and sincere desire to lead students to knowing and believing in You.

However, like campus ministry, scouting and spying on Jericho felt like Mission: Impossible! In fact, the rest of the chapter feels just like a thrilling, action-packed spy movie. The city itself was a massive, impenetrable fortress with its fortified walls and fearsome inhabitants. How on earth were the two spies to successfully complete their mission given that they knew nobody in Jericho, may not have spoken the language and would easily have stood out if they ran into any guards or vigilant citizen? The Bible makes no mention of how exactly they snuck in or what they did while in there except for saying that they entered the house of Rahab the prostitute (2:1b). Back in those days, brothels, like inns, bars and taverns were great places to gain information but also provided additional secrecy to avoid suspicion from the locals. However, it was still the house of a woman of ill-repute and this meant a heavy stigma even in a godless city like Jericho. The last place you would think of finding a righteous person is in a place like that, yet to the spies’ shock they found in Rahab a believer in the God of Israel. She even protected them by hiding them on the roof among some flax and lying to the guards (2:2-7). The danger! If the spies did something as small as sneeze or another citizen spotted them on the roof, they’d be killed. Rahab and her entire family would also have been killed for treason. One wrong word, move or even look meant certain death. So why was Rahab willing to risk everything!?

**Part 2: The Faith of Rahab**

Look at Rahab’s words in verses 9 and 10, **“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. 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.”** Somehow Rahab knew how the Israelites were led out of Egypt and that it was the product of the sovereign power of Israel’s God. Though she had not seen any of these events with her own eyes, she believed in the God of Israel based solely on the accounts of other people. Centuries later, Christ Jesus remarked on how great it is when one person comes to genuine faith based solely on the testimony of what others had seen Jesus say and do; **“Then Jesus told him [Thomas], “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed””** (John 20:29). Rahab did not attribute Israel’s success to their military genius or dismiss it as being an elaborate fake news story. Instead, she saw all this as the amazing work of the Almighty Creator.

Rahab knew the Lord was giving the land to the Israelites and that the morale of her countrymen completely evapourated before them. Yet astonishingly, when confronted by God who moved with the nation of Israel, everyone else in the city of Jericho still held onto their own gods and idols. Everyone except for Rahab and her family refused to repent and turn towards the God of Israel for salvation. So why was Rahab different from all of Jericho? The answer lies in our key verse, “**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.”** Rahab did not see God as another god to add to her collection. She did not see God simply as the guardian of the Israelites. Rahab saw Yahweh as the One True God, the ruler of all heaven and all the earth. When confronted with this God, she was willing to cast aside her own home, her people, her culture, her religion and even her own life just so she could be on the side of the One True God. Furthermore, her statement in verse 11, **“… for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath,”** is more than mere word. God and God alone is the True God ruling over all creatures of the earth and governs all the ways of man. Even though she was a Gentile, she readily accepted God’s sovereignty over the world and over her own life. Her absolute faith in God enabled her to act boldly in a moment of crisis (2:4-6). How many of us would simply have given in to fear and tried to save ourselves the moment the guards arrived at the door? But Rahab drew her strength from her faith in the Lord and that strength helped to her both stand firm and think wisely in protecting the spies (Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25).

After Rahab had sent their pursuers on a wild goose chase, Rahab spoke further with the spies. Look at verses 12 and 13, **“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 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.”** Rather than focus only her own safety, Rahab’s chief concern was that of her own family. She knew that only death and destruction awaited if they remained in Jericho and wanted a promise from the Israelites that her kindness would be repaid. In some way, Rahab sets a great example of evangelising. It is easy to forget that the first mission field God gives us is our network of family, friends and co-workers. While it is good that we go out and seek those who are far from us in order to that they may know Christ, we must not do this neglecting the spiritual needs and struggles of those right next to us. Indeed, personal faith is not meant to be something kept to ourselves for the sake of our own personal salvation but is to be used for the purpose of bringing others to salvation as well.

How did the spies respond to Rahab’s request? Look at verse 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.”** Just as Rahab risked her life for their safety, the spies would do the same when the Lord would hand Jericho over to the Israelites. And as she let them out the window and down the rope they added, **““This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 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”** (2:17-18). There is great significance in the scarlet cord. Just like how God commanded to Israelites to paint their doorframes with blood in order that they would spared from God’s judgment (Exodus 12:13), Rahab’s scarlet cord out of the window would be for the same purpose. And it is through being covered by Jesus’ blood and that we too are spared from destruction and are given new life in Him (Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:14).

The spies took Rahab’s actions and advice to heart, eventually returning to the Israelites’ camp (21-23). Instead of focusing on the myriad of problems before them, they recounted the remarkable testimony of one woman, a prostitute with an absolute faith in the God of Israel as said in verse 24, **“The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.”** All it took was for the words of one sincere believer to inspire the spies, Joshua and the entire nation of Israel to rise up and prepare to enter the Promised Land. They could clearly see how that hand of God was putting everything in place to assure them victory. Even though there wasn’t one big flashy miracle for them to marvel at and cause them to believe, God used ordinary people doing extraordinary things to bring about a different kind of miracle. Think of the entire sequence of events that led them to Rahab, to hiding and escaping from the guards (again, Rahab’s wisdom). Everything had to go perfectly right and God in all His infinite wisdom made it so. But let us turn our attention back to Rahab.

Her entire life is a testament to God’s amazing grace in using anyone for the sake of His world-salvation plan no matter who they are or what they have done. Rahab’s reputation alone should have been an instant disqualification. Yet even she appears in Hebrews 11, the chapter often described as “The Hall of Faith” among the greats like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joseph. This is the beauty of God’s redemptive love in our lives and the grace available to all who believe in Him absolutely. God created each and every one of us with a purpose for our lives. God wishes to use us no matter how far we are from Him or how many times we have stumbled for God looks to what we will ultimately become in Him when we give ourselves fully to Him. And just as Rahab received the ultimate honour of being the ancestor of King David and Jesus Christ Himself, we too are given the opportunity to be included in God’s family as beloved sons and daughters who will reign with Him for all eternity in His glorious kingdom.

So if Rahab could to all this only hearing about God second-hand, what is our excuse? She was an outsider with no claim to God's promise yet had faith far greater than the very people who saw God lead them out of Egypt and through the desert with their very own eyes. She had no Old Testament, no New Testament, neither Prophets nor Epistles yet she had what Jesus describes as true “Gospel faith.” In Rahab, we see the hope God has for all who call on Him and place their lives in His hands. While on one hand we view this story of Rahab reaching out to God, it is God extending His mighty hand to save Rahab and her family from the oncoming destruction. In a sense, God was willing to use an entire nation to save one person and one family so think of how amazing it is that God was willing to even lay down His own life for our sake!

Therefore, let us entrust Him with everything we have; our hopes, our fears, our joys and even our sorrows with the full belief that God can use all these and transforms them into blessings that reach far beyond what we can ever fathom (Genesis 12:2-3). Let us follow in Rahab’s footsteps by boldly proclaiming our faith and how wonderfully God has transformed our lives through Jesus Christ. And let us not give in to fear and insecurity for we know that God, our Refuge of courage and strength is always for us… and if God is for us, who can ever stand against us (Romans 8:31-39)!? We have the True God on our side so let us go forth in the world every day of our lives in keeping with this faith because all it takes is one person of faith to inspire a nation.