

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Midweek Lent #1 – December 4th, 2013

Joshua 6:25 (NIV – 2011)

“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.”

Dear children of our Gracious God,

There is a story that goes something like this. There once was a rather rough-around-the-edges kind of guy who for some reason fell in love with a beautiful vase in a shop window. Eventually he bought the vase and put it on the mantelpiece in his room. There it became a kind of judgment on its surroundings. He had to clean up the room to make it worthy of the vase. The curtains looked dingy beside it. The old chair with the stuffing coming out of the seat would not do. The wallpaper and the paint needed redoing. Gradually the whole room was transformed. It is similar, when Christ sits on the mantel of our hearts, our whole life is transformed.

It is this kind of transformation we witness here in our text for today from the book of Joshua. As the Israelites were about to enter Canaan and claim their promised land, the first city they would have to face was the great walled city of Jericho. If they could take this city, they could easily split the country in two and then move from there to conquer the north and the south. Before they go about the business of defeating Jericho, Joshua sends spies to the city to gauge the mood of the people and to see whether or not they were ready for war. When these spies entered Jericho, they went to the home of a lady who wasn't, spiritually speaking, very nice. What they found when they entered the home of Rahab must have come as quite a shock to these two men. They found a woman who had been changed by the power of God. They met Rahab, but found out that she wasn't the girl she used to be!

For us, Rahab is a beautiful picture of the power of the Lord Jesus to transform any person's heart and life. What we will see today is how the Lord takes sinners and changes them by his power and grace. This is exactly what we will see today as we begin another Advent Season. We are going to use “Women of the Old Testament” to show us different aspects of our coming Savior. Today we are going to look at our Coming Savior together with the Old Testament woman, named Rahab and mediate on the theme:

Theme: The Savior Was To Be A Savior Of Sinners

- 1. Like Rahab -- we were lost sinners**
- 2. Like Rahab – we were spared by God's grace and mercy**

Rahab was a prostitute. There isn't really any nice way to describe her life. She was engaged in a wicked lifestyle whereby she sold her body to men for money. In her sinful lifestyle, we see a picture of every person who is lost in sin. You see, you and I may not be a prostitutes, but each one of us was born into this world lost in sin. It is sad and very harsh, but it is true. We are sinners, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23)**

Rahab lived in a city that was going to be destroyed! God had already determined that Jericho would fall! I'm sure there were some people in Jericho who felt pretty confident and reasonably safe behind the walls of their city, but God had already passed sentence upon them and they were doomed to destruction! The people of Jericho may not have felt that they were in great danger, but they were doomed nonetheless!

So it is with lost sinners! The lost person may feel secure today while living on this earth and may not believe that he or she is in any danger. However, the Bible tells us that those who are lost are

condemned already and are in great spiritual danger. They are under the wrath of God. Their ultimate destiny is eternity in Hell to be forever separated from the presence of God, if nothing changes. The truth of the matter is that is what we were like before God's love changed us.

Rahab tells the spies that they heard of what happened in Egypt and of the kings they have defeated along the way. Well, it had been 40 years since they left Egypt. God had spared the city for that amount of time, and still they had several more days before judgment came to them. Rahab had experienced the grace and patience of God in giving her time to come to faith in Him.

The question is, how many years has the Lord given us? Jesus will return soon and at a time when we are not ready. The good part for God's children is that we are safe in Jesus' arms by the faith that God has worked in our hearts. What a gracious God we serve! Somehow and from someone Rahab heard about the God of Israel. It was a message of judgment and condemnation that she heard, but it introduced her to the true and living God. The message that came was to her a message of life!

Think about this for a minute. There is still a message of life that God wants us to proclaim around the world. This is the only message that can take the worst sinner and make them into a new creation. That message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This message tells about a God who loved us so much that he sent his one and only Son to die for everyone's sins on a cross. This Son suffered in terrible agony and shed his blood that our debt of sin would be paid. Then, 3 days later, this same man who died for us on that cross rose from the dead to bring eternal life to everyone who will call on his Name. It is this message that you and I need to hear today and it is this message that so many lost souls in this world need to hear. It is the only message that will bring eternal life to a person dead in sin!

Not only did Rahab hear the message, but her heart was changed as well. This message produced a response of faith in the heart of Rahab. The fact that she believed the message is proven by what she said about God. In chapter 2:9, she calls Him "the LORD", using his covenant Name Jehovah. In chapter 2:11, she expresses her faith in him as THE God of Heaven and of earth. In verse 12, she again expresses her faith in him as she calls God to witness the pact she is about to make with the spies. Even Heb. 11, the great Hall of the Faithful, in verse 31 tells us of the faith of Rahab. She heard the message and God worked faith in her heart.

This is exactly what has happened in our lives. We have heard the message and God has changed our hearts. The Bible tells us in Romans 10:17 that **“faith comes from hearing the message and the message is the Word of Christ.”** As God's message of salvation is heard and the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of people who were lost -- salvation becomes a reality in the life of the believer.

After Rahab came to faith in the true and living God, her life was forever changed! What God did with her is a miracle of his love and grace. By the way, the wonderful news is that what he did for Rahab, he did for us also. He used her in a mighty fashion. He can use us as well!

One of the surest proofs that Rahab was genuinely converted is the fact that she involved herself with the work of the Lord. She hid the spies and covered up for them. We cannot condone her lie, but we must see it as protecting some of God's servants. It tells us that she hid the spies under some flax that was up on the roof. It is evident that she had trusted the Lord before the spies arrived. It may be that her life had been radically changed by the power of God before they arrived as well. Even James uses her as an example of the believer who show that their faith is alive by the works of their life -- James 2:25.

Notice how God took this lady full of sin and blessed her new life with the richest of his spiritual blessings. Because of her faith she was spared from the destruction that overtook her city. By the way, all those in her house were spared as well! When the walls of Jericho fell down flat, her and her whole family who were in her house with the scarlet cord out the window were spared.

What a picture is given here. When a new believer's heart is changed by God's grace, they are immediately delivered from the penalty of their sins, which is Hell. And, just as Rahab's home was marked by a scarlet rope, so our life is changed by the "scarlet rope". We are saved by the blood of Jesus that has been applied to our souls by faith. That rope told Israel that Rahab believed God and was to live. The blood of Jesus tells the Father that by the blood of God's Son, we too are to be spared! It is the blood

that makes the difference! It was the blood of a lamb that spared the firstborn in Egypt when the death angel passed through the land. It is the blood of Jesus that makes the difference between Heaven and Hell for each of us this morning!

When all the verses of the Bible are taken together, we have the rest of the story concerning Rahab. She married into the people of Israel and became part of all the covenant blessings of the Lord. She went from being part of a judged nation to being part of a holy nation!

So it is for us who were once lost but now saved. Instantly, we are transformed from sinner to saint. We are no longer under the curse of God, but we have become the children of God. As a result, we become the partakers of everything the Lord has for His children down here, and we become part of what he has for His children up in heaven. The point is, while the rest of Rahab's neighbors died in the war, Rahab lived not only when Jericho was destroyed but also when her earthly body was destroyed as she went to her eternal home in heaven. Guess what! One of these days, you and I, people who deserve nothing but judgment and death are going to be the honored guests at a wedding feast in heaven. When we were saved, we became part of a new family.

Rahab was taken from the house of shame and wound up in the hall of fame. This woman became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. She is listed in the genealogies of Jesus as a descendant of our Lord and Savior. God took her from the very spiritual gutter and made her eternally "famous". He gave this sinner a place in his eternal, divine plan.

What the Lord did for Rahab, he has done for us! You might think that God wouldn't want you because you have been so wicked and sinful. The truth of the matter is that the Lord loves you just as you are and that he has taken you, saved you and made your life one of blessing and honor for his glory. You see, God specializes in taking old, lost sinners, saving them by his grace and then using them to touch the world by his power. Here is the bottom line. God alone can change our sinful heart by his power and use us for his glory. He won't make you an ancestor of Christ like he did Rahab, but you can be assured that you will join believers as he one day will gather you with all the saints in heaven to worship and praise our coming Lord and Savior around the throne of God. You may not become famous down here, but God knows you here, and he most definitely will know who you are in Heaven! Imagine arriving in Heaven and being greeted by Jesus -- personally!

Rahab is a beautiful reminder of why we worship the coming Lord and Savior this Advent Season. Because we know he came once to save us with his blood on the cross and that he will return again to bring us to be by his side – even though we deserve none of his grace and favor. To God be the glory. Amen.