



## JOSHUA 2:8-21 | For What Reason...?

Sunday, September 7, 2014 – Pentecost 13A

<sup>8</sup> Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> “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 <sup>13</sup> 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.”

<sup>14</sup> “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.”

<sup>15</sup> So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. <sup>16</sup> 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.”

<sup>17</sup> Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.”

<sup>21</sup> “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..

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It was reasonable that spies would hide themselves in a house of prostitution. Houses of prostitution were known to be places of refuge for the dishonorable and depraved. And so it made sense that spies would stay at a place like this, too. After all, even today spies aren’t necessarily given a warm welcome by host countries. Plus, to make things better, not only would these houses provide good “cover” for an evening, but the “perks” while hiding there were certainly enticing, too.

It was reasonable, too, that this prostitute, Rahab, would try to cut a deal to preserve her life in the face of the Israelite onslaught that the whole city knew was coming. Prostitutes weren’t considered reputable and upright members of society. Like today, prostitutes were considered some of the lowest of the low, selling their bodies as a product, often taking whatever amount they could make just to be

able to make ends meet. And, just like today, prostitutes were considered dishonest and shady. Deceit and lies slip would slip off the tongue of a lady of the night if it meant avoiding jail or trouble.

But here's the amazing part of today's lesson: what reason was there that she hid these men from Israel—virtual enemies of her own people—out of faith in the LORD? That simply didn't make any sense! She had so many things going against her: her profession, her lifestyle, her nationality, her social circles. Looking at Rahab would not instantly shoot up flags screaming, "Christian!"

But we're told that she loved her Lord. And we're told that she housed these men and helped them avoid capture while in the city. But she did more than that! She also provided them a way out of the city; and, she gave them insider information about the surrounding countryside and area. She looked after their well-being with the love of a fellow believer and Christian. Why? Because she had faith in her Lord.

But what reason did she find to have faith in the God of free and faithful love? I don't think we have to go very far to find the answer to that question. Again, look at who she was. A prostitute, living a life of sin over and over again every day. Additionally, she was surrounded by vile and disgusting men, looking for momentary pleasure at whatever expense. Her coworkers were not people that could be socialized with outside of the workplace. They were people who couldn't be trusted. But apart from all of the externals, she knew exactly what kind of a person she was. She knew that regardless of her occupation or culture, she was sinful. She understood her natural status before the Lord. And this was the reason for her faith in God, the God of free and faithful love. She knew of the promises that had been made, the promises of sins forgiven and eternal life. The promise of a savior from sin. The promise that through faith, she was righteous in God's sight.

Frankly, there's no reason for that but the unreasonable gift of God worked in her heart by the living and active Word of God. There was nothing in the people of Canaan that would have drawn her to God. There was nothing in the idol worship of her people that would have led her to God. There was nothing inside of her sinful heart that would seek God out. But God sought her out. We don't know how. We don't know when. We don't know where. What we do know is that the living and active Word of God found her and created faith in her heart. And God used that faith to work wonders for his people.

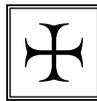
But he didn't stop there! What reason could there be that this foreign woman, this prostitute from a godless country, that hers would be the womb through which line of the Blessed Seed would descend? There is blessed irony here: through the this foreign prostitute—a member of one of the lowest classes in society—the Savior from sin would be born. In his own lineage exists this sinner. What joy! There is no reason for that at all. That can only be grace. Grace meant for people like you and me.

You see, we are all like Rahab. Our previous lives were nothing that God would want. Our previous lives, like Rahab's, were filled with selfish and vile thoughts. They were lives that wanted nothing but carnal satisfaction. They were lives that didn't just ignore God, but wanted nothing to do with him. They were lives that were destined for the fires of hell.

But simply out of his love, God found you. Through the waters of Baptism he washed all of those vile, dirty, disgusting sins away. Through his Word he planted the seed of faith. And through that faith he blesses you with the promise of life in heaven with him. There was no reason for that at all. In fact, it was completely unreasonable that God would save someone like you. But he did. He has. And he will. There's no reason for that at all. That can only be grace. Grace meant for all people.

Clearly, God meant his Church to be for all people. And like Rahab all those saints who have went before us, God is using you to bring people into his Church. It's true, "God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." It's true, Christ died for the sins of the whole world. It's true, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13) But then comes the question: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:14-15)

God is sending you. God is using you. God is calling you to preach. Like Moses or Paul, maybe you don't consider yourself eloquent with words; then preach with your actions. Like Jonah maybe you're reluctant; then preach through adversity. Like Peter, maybe you're ambitious; great, go with God! What amazing grace that God uses clay jars like you and me to carry the golden gospel message of grace to the sorry sinners of our society! It's completely unreasonable that someone like you and someone like me should be given such responsibility. There's no reason for it. The only reason is grace. Pure and simple grace. Amen.



*Soli Deo Gloria!*

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