

Hebrews 11: Can I Trust God? Can God Trust Me?

Part 8: What a Step of Trust Looks Like (11:30-31)

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army
had marched around them for seven days.

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

Hebrews 11:30-31

Quick background to the story: God's people are enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years. Then God raises up Moses and he leads them out of Egypt into the wilderness, where they spend forty years whining, grumbling, and complaining. And now, they are on the threshold of the land God promised them. The Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Moses hands over the leadership to Joshua and Joshua sends two spies to scout the land, especially the city of Jericho. So we arrive about 3,300 years ago and we stand at the outskirts of the great city of Jericho and we look in.

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, "Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho." So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

Joshua 2:1-2

They likely stay with her to avoid detection. But then something happens. Someone found out and told the king of Jericho.

The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 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."

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them.

Joshua 2:2-4

This is an unbelievable act of courage. If found, she and her family are as good as dead. She sends the king's men on a wild goose chase.

Then she goes up to the spies and makes a long, reverent speech to the spies, showing how she had heard about the name and fame of the God of the Israelites and how he rescued his people. She calls this God Yahweh, which shows she knew about and believed and trusted in this God.

She is betting the farm on this God.

She is putting all her trust, her future, her security, her very life in the hands of this God.

Apparently, everyone in the city knew about this God, but only one pagan, Canaanite prostitute, was willing to put her trust in Him. And you'll see this theme throughout the Bible – God's message is being brought to people from all backgrounds and the unlikeliest of people hear and respond. God uses people like Gideon and Samson and Jonah and Esther.

You see this in the life of Jesus – tax collectors, Samaritans, lepers, demon-possessed people. People from all sorts of backgrounds flock to Him and amazingly He welcomes them and they become a part of His community.

The spies tell Rahab to hang a scarlet cord so she can be spared. You can see this visual of the scarlet thread in the ram that took Isaac's place at the altar, the Passover lamb; there was a scarlet thread that was part of the curtain in the tabernacle, the sacrificial system that existed for centuries, all the way to the New Testament when we hear John the Baptist say, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" It goes all the way to the cross when Jesus said, "It is finished."

Not only did Rahab settle down with God's people, she married a man named Salmon. And they had a son named Boaz. Rahab becomes the great great grandmother of King David. And she is listed as an ancestor of Jesus.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of Himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of Himself that He had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave.

Philippians 2:6-7

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the key takeaway for you from this weekend's message?
2. Read the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 and 6:22-25. What was the basis of her trust in the God of Israel?
3. Do you agree that in our society, people can often be grouped and assigned a "zone"? How does that contrast with the teachings of the Bible?
4. Do you agree that a great temptation for our church (or any church) could be to become a church that has it all together for people that have it all together? Why is that so lethal?
1. Read the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14. Why was this stunning to the audience? In what ways can this story be told in today's world?