



What Will You Risk?

Joshua #3 • Joshua 2:1-24 • January 18, 2026

Opening



“Someone came to Jesus with this question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

“Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep the commandments.”

“Which ones?” the man asked.

And Jesus replied: “ ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

“I’ve obeyed all these commandments,” the young man replied.

“What else must I do?”

Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.” (Matthew 19:16–22, NLT)

This interaction that we find in the Gospels is hard-hitting. It's a short encounter, a brief conversation between two men who (on the surface) seem similar. They both have an eternal focus; they both have a high regard for God's Word. But their exchange shows a vast gulf between their hearts.

Jesus knew that true love for God requires *everything*. He challenged the man to take a risk – exchanging the material wealth he had... and trading it for a treasure he could not hold. It was a trade that Jesus had already made:

“You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9, NLT)



Yet for the rich young man, it was too much. He walked away, valuing his *gold and his good works* more than his God.

Church, following God requires risk. It is not easy! Anyone who tells you otherwise is giving you a cheap imitation of Christianity. If you want to follow God, it requires you to risk everything you hold dear...and to trust that *the reward is worth it.*



“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!” (Matthew 13:45–46, NLT)

What will you trade...what will you risk...to follow God?

Recap

Two weeks ago, we started a sermon series on the book of Joshua. We wanted to learn from **Joshua the Person** and his real-life example, to see how he embodied God's command to “*be strong and courageous.*” We wanted to see how he led others to serve the Lord.

Joshua gives us great material to learn from. And so, we have been studying the opening chapter... as Joshua is equipped by God to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land, as he receives God's commands and then immediately sets things in motion, preparing the people to cross the river and receive God's blessings.

At the beginning of chapter 2, we overheard Joshua quietly sending two spies on a mission to check out the land. He wanted to get some tactical information to help them accomplish what God had guaranteed.

At the beginning of the chapter, in Joshua 2:1, he sets this mission in motion:

“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”...”
(Joshua 2:1, NLT)

At the end of the chapter, in Joshua 2:23-24, he receives their report:

“Then the two spies came down from the hill country, crossed the Jordan River, and reported to Joshua all that had happened to them. “The Lord has given us the whole land,” they said, “for all the people in the land are terrified of us.”” (Joshua 2:23–24, NLT)

The land is ripe for the taking! The spies' report confirms God's intentions!

We could easily move forward in our sermon series with that information, but instead I want to pause and take more time here...because the story of how they got that intel is worth telling! And if we are talking about **taking a risk to follow God**, chapter two has one of the best case-studies in the entire Bible!

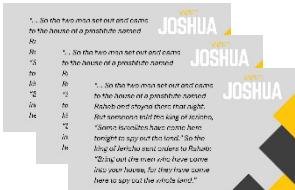
Today we will be in the BOOK of Joshua, but we will not be talking ABOUT Joshua. He fades into the background today. Our focus instead will be on a different person, a woman named **Rahab**. And her story is **a story of risk**.



Risking it Against the King (Joshua 2:1-7)

A Risky Mission

Turn if you will to Joshua 2:1 and let's continue in the Word as we find Rahab risking everything to go **against** the king.



... So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night. But someone told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: "Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land."

Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, "Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them." (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.)

So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut." (Joshua 2:1-7, NLT)



Rahab's story in Joshua gives us a tale of intrigue! It's a story worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster. Two daring spies infiltrate a maximum-security complex, and then need the help of a daring, seductive woman to escape. Not only is there action, but there is emotional weight. The woman, by

helping these men, is wrestling with the emotional drama of choosing her own safety over that of her people. The narrative highlights close calls, a daring escape, and a big “will she or won’t she” ending! It could be a movie...

...but it's not. It's real history!

Rahab was a real woman with a real past (and present!). If she was currently working as advertised (as a...uh ...AHEM... “madam”), then her home might have been a place where frequent male visitors would arrive and not want to draw attention to themselves. Her business had allowed her to establish a living in this town, living in a home of her own on the thick, defensive city walls of Jericho with no husband to support her.

The spies stopped by with no expectation of finding an ally in the owner of this inn/brothel. They had either hoped to find a strategic hiding place where no one would notice them...or... they were guilty of a serious indiscretion while on the job! Regardless of their motives, God took their path and He blessed their mission.

God was working this encounter for good!



Bonus Truth: *God can be at work through whatever mess you are in, using it to bring blessings to the ones He loves. He can take your mistakes, missteps, and even your sin...and work through them to accomplish His will. Even if you don't understand how, take heart that your failures will never derail God's plans! Your God is more creative, more insightful, more merciful, and more generous than you can imagine, just like it says in Romans 8:28.*

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28, NLT)

God was working this encounter for good...even though it seemed risky and dangerous at the time!

A Riskier Ally

What was Rahab willing to risk?

The spies discovered that their host wasn't just aware of the Israelites' identities; she was willing to protect them at any cost.

I'm not an expert in ancient Middle Eastern culture, but I will venture a guess and say that Rahab was breaking a few laws here! How?



- She **welcomes foreign nationals**, who enter the city to spy on it and plot its downfall.
- She **lies to the town's security forces**, offering false claims that obstruct their investigation.
- She **aids and abets these fugitives**, hiding them where no one would look (on the roof, under some crops that were drying out).

Rahab engaged in risky business against the king of Jericho!

What would happen if she was caught?

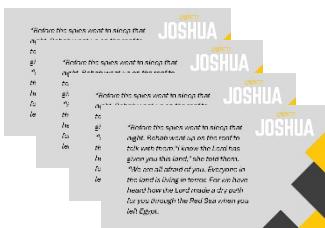


Just this past week, you've seen news reports from the country of Iran as protestors have been pushing back against economic conditions and inflation caused by their government. Modern-day "treason" (as the government there sees it) has been handled with violence and killing. Nearly 3000 people have been killed during the protests (...maybe? Reporting has been difficult). The Iranian government calls these protestors "terrorists" and "enemies of God," trying to justify their tactics of shooting into crowds and tracking people down across the country. The rest of the world sees it as brutality and murder.

If Rahab was caught, she might *wish* for a sentence like the Iranian protestors. as quick as a bullet to the head. In Jericho, she could have faced brutal consequences for going against her monarch.

What was she willing to risk with this decision?

Safety. Security. Life. She risked her own good to send the police elsewhere while she hid the spies. That's *what* she risked. But in the next verses, we discover *why* she risked it.



"Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them.

"I know the Lord has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the

courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

“Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.”

“We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,” the men agreed. “If you don’t betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land.”” (Joshua 2:8-14, NLT)



Risking it for the KING (Joshua 2:8-21)

The rooftop conversation that evening was short but revealing. We discover that Rahab knew more than anyone would expect. The spies hiding in the flax didn't have to reveal the identity of their people or their God.

Rahab already knew.

And as she talks, she reveals why she is risking everything: she's **risking it for the real KING**, God Himself.

The testimony from Rahab shows that she knows several things about God, things we would not expect from a pagan non-Israelite:

- She knows that **Yahweh God has given the land of Canaan** into Israel's hands (v. 9) – it is a done deal because He decided it.
- She knows how the **population views God** in Canaan – they are dreading Israel, **full of fear**, because God is with these people (v. 9)
 - They've heard the **prior history** of the Exodus and rescue from Egypt
 - They've heard the **recent news** of Israel's defeat of kings across the Jordan River
- She knows that **no one can stand against God** – He is the supreme God over heaven and earth (v. 11)

Knowing that, **what was Rahab willing to risk?**

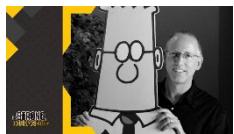


With a clear picture of God and His imminent victory, she's willing to risk her past beliefs so she can be on the winning side! By making this decision, Rahab is shifting her allegiance.

It's one thing to **gamble on your ability to avoid punishment** for a crime; it's another to **gamble on your affiliation with the gods.**

Some people have called her newfound loyalty to God into question. They think Rahab is just an **opportunistic tramp**. They think she is a prostitute who lies and manipulates in order to get her way. Her fear of destruction for herself and her family leads her to cover her bases and tack Yahweh into her pantheon of deities...but not to express full trust in Him *alone*.

Christians often ask similar questions when we hear stories of deathbed or foxhole conversions.



Just this past week, in news of interest, cartoonist Scott Adams (of "Dilbert" fame) passed away from cancer. In an open letter written before he died, he shared the following words:

Next, many of my Christian friends have asked me to find Jesus before I go. I'm not a believer, but I have to admit the risk-reward calculation for doing so looks attractive. So, here I go:

I accept Jesus Christ as my lord and savior, and I look forward to spending an eternity with him. The part about me not being a believer should be quickly resolved if I wake up in heaven. I won't need any more convincing than that. And I hope I am still qualified for entry.

So... do we trust his faith? Was that letter a sincere confession? Or a tongue in cheek "just in case"?

I don't know. It's hard to know with confidence.

But what I do know is that the good news of Jesus doesn't depend on perfect faith and flawless action, nor does it have a statute of limitations. I simply know this:

"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners." (Romans 5:6, NLT)

From the creator of Dilbert to a murderer in prison to the thief on the cross...and now even Rahab... sinners cry out to God at times of crisis. And Jesus listens to sinners.

Is Rahab a sinful, lying prostitute or a picture of sincere faith? I think it's safe to say that she is both!

Later writers in the Bible point out Rahab as true believer.





“Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road.” (James 2:25, NLT)

Just like you, just like me (aside from the prostitute part), Rahab was a sinner in need of a Savior.

And her actions showed that she was willing to risk EVERYTHING to follow God, to find that Savior.

Rahab is willing to trade her allegiance to the king, her reputation, her loyalty to her neighbors, her own religious background...for Him. She lived out the truth of Romans 8:18 centuries before it was written:

“Yet what we suffer now [or what we are willing to suffer] is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.” (Romans 8:18, NLT)

Her attitude is worthy to be copied and lived out in your life.

What will you trade...what will you risk...to follow God?



Risking it for the King of Kings

What will you risk for the King of Kings?

Jesus makes it clear throughout the Gospels that His Kingdom is worth the risk. He tells story after story that illustrates the point: the field with a hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, etc. He also states it plainly.

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.””

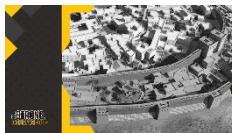
(Matthew 16:24–28, NLT)



What is your story of risk? What are you willing to give up – or what HAVE you already given up - to follow Jesus? It won't look the same for each of us, and the stakes are different for some of your decisions.

- **Will you risk your life?** In many countries, Christians have felt Rahab's fear as they risked the wrath of their government or their neighbors of a different faith. Their choice to follow God risks their lives and their families' lives. **It's worth the risk.**
 - o ***Say it with me: "It's worth the risk."***
- **Will you risk your reputation?** In some industries, Christians have had to face ridicule for their refusal to participate in the work culture. Their choice to follow God risks their career advancement and insider status. **It's worth the risk.**
 - o ***Say it with me: "It's worth the risk."***
- **Will you risk your time?** There is work involved investing in the lives of people around you. The choice to follow God risks your own free time as you share about Jesus and build relationships. It can risk years of investment with no conversion, no payoff. **It's worth the risk.**
 - o ***Say it with me: "It's worth the risk."***
- **Will you risk your marriage?** Your spouse may not be interested in pursuing Jesus the same way you are. They may think it is silly, or wrong, or too restrictive...or they might not want to think about it at all. Following God might risk marital harmony. **It's worth the risk.**
 - o ***Say it with me: "It's worth the risk."***
- **Will you risk your finances?** You might like to make money; God might want you to invest in a ministry career. The job comes with a lot of burdens and not a lot of BMWs (or at least it shouldn't!). Following God might risk wealth. **It's worth the risk.**
 - o ***Say it with me: "It's worth the risk."***
- **Will you risk your comfort?** You might like things as they are. God might put it on your heart to go overseas on missions journey. Or be nice to the jerk next door. Or take on a foster child. Or give that homeless guy a meal and a hug, even if he is on drugs. Following God might risk your comfort. **It's worth the risk.**
 - o ***Say it with me: "It's worth the risk."***

Conclusion



The two spies made it out of Jericho alive. They hid in the hill country and brought the report back to Joshua – the land was ready for conquest, just like God planned!

Rahab stayed behind. But she stayed with a promise – if she kept silent, she would be spared when Israel conquered Jericho. They gave her instructions to drape a scarlet cord out her window so they could pinpoint her and protect Rahab and her family.

It was a risk. But it was worth the risk.



Rahab was saved. Scripture doesn't talk about her much after this, but it does throw in some intriguing references later. She ends up marrying an Israelite names Salmon,¹ a legitimate marriage now that likely signals the end of her business. And she and Salmon have at least one child – a son named...Boaz. Yes, the same Boaz who marries Ruth! And because of Rahab's risk in following God, just a couple of generations later her great-great grandson would be crowned king over Israel. And more importantly, even further down the line, Matthew 1 tells us that her great-great-great – (etc) – grandson would become King of Kings, aka Jesus.

It is always worth the risk to follow God! You never walk away sad like the rich young ruler.

I don't know how God will use what you trade, but if you exchange your life or career or comfort to follow Him, it's always good deal.

Church, I invite you to ask, **“What will I trade...what will I risk...to follow God?”**

And I promise: It's worth the risk!



¹ I know...I know... he sounds fishy. LOL



Prayer

Invitation

Take some time to think about what you will risk while we sing our invitation song this morning.

Sermon Notes

Risking it Against the King (Joshua 2:1-7)

(Matthew 19:16-22; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Matthew 13:45-46; Romans 8:28)

Risking it for the KING (Joshua 2:8-21)

(James 2:25; Romans 8:18)

Risking it for the King of Kings

(Matthew 16:24-28)

What will you risk?

Sermon Discussion Questions

- What is the best trade you ever made in your life? What did you give up? What did you gain?
- Read Joshua 2:1-7. If you were making a movie of this story, who would play Rahab? The spies? The King? Explain your choices.
- Make a list of the actions of the spies in Joshua 2. Categorize each action as incredibly smart or incredibly stupid, then discuss your reasoning.
- Make a list of the actions of Rahab in Joshua 2. Categorize each action as incredibly smart or incredibly stupid, then discuss your reasoning.
- What elements of faith do you see in Rahab's words to the spies? (Joshua 2:9-11)
- How do the New Testament writers view Rahab's faith? Look up James 2:21-25 and Hebrews 11:31
- Why does God take such great pleasure in accepting the often-shaky faith of people with a checkered past and present?
- What risks have you had to take in order to follow God?
- Is there anything you wouldn't risk as you follow Him? If you hesitated to answer, read Matthew 16:24-28 again.