



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 30, 2023

Weekly Prayer

O God who calls us to take risks, give me the courage of Rahab as I continue to seek after your call. Be with me throughout this week; help me to be bold, courageous, and merciful. Keep me open to your presence and work around us. Amen.

Note: Scriptures this week are from *The Message* translation.

Monday, July 31

Scripture: Joshua 1:1-18

After the death of Moses the servant of God, God spoke to Joshua, Moses' assistant:

"Moses my servant is dead. Get going. Cross this Jordan River, you and all the people. Cross to the country I'm giving to the People of Israel. I'm giving you every square inch of the land you set your foot on—just as I promised Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon east to the Great River, the Euphrates River—all the Hittite country—and then west to the Great Sea. It's all yours. All your life, no one will be able to hold out against you. In the same way I was with Moses, I'll be with you. I won't give up on you; I won't leave you. Strength! Courage! You are going to lead this people to inherit the land that I promised to give their ancestors. Give it everything you have, heart and soul. Make sure you carry out The Revelation that Moses commanded you, every bit of it. Don't get off track, either left or right, so as to make sure you get to where you're going. And don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get where you're going; then you'll succeed. Haven't I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don't be timid; don't get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take."

Then Joshua gave orders to the people's leaders: "Go through the camp and give this order to the people: 'Pack your bags. In three days you will cross this Jordan River to enter and take the land God, your God, is giving you to possess.'"

Then Joshua addressed the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He said, "Remember what Moses the servant of God commanded you: God, your God, gives you rest and he gives you this land. Your wives, your children, and your livestock can stay

here east of the Jordan, the country Moses gave you; but you, tough soldiers all, must cross the River in battle formation, leading your brothers, helping them until God, your God, gives your brothers a place of rest just as he has done for you. They also will take possession of the land that God, your God, is giving them. Then you will be free to return to your possession, given to you by Moses the servant of God, across the Jordan to the east.”

They answered Joshua: “Everything you commanded us, we’ll do. Wherever you send us, we’ll go. We obeyed Moses to the letter; we’ll also obey you—we just pray that God, your God, will be with you as he was with Moses. Anyone who questions what you say and refuses to obey whatever you command him will be put to death. Strength! Courage!”

Observation

The book of Judges begins after Moses’ death and tells us the beginning of the “next” chapter. Joshua is guiding the people to the land God promised. The chapter ends with a response from the people - giving us a clue of what to expect in pages to come:

“Everything you commanded us, we’ll do. Wherever you send us, we’ll go... Anyone who questions what you say and refuses to obey whatever you command him will be put to death. Strength! Courage!”

The future is yet uncertain, but two things are named: The people will go with God, and they will carry strength and courage with them.

Application

“Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can’t practice any other virtue consistently.” - Maya Angelou

Do you consider yourself a courageous person? I learned recently about “everyday courage,” which is a way of living that is adaptable, honest, and faithful. It means to show courage by: (1) standing up when an injustice occurs or others are treated unfairly, (2) remaining steadfast in the face of challenges or failures, (3) challenging previously held assumptions and being open to learning new things, and (4) acknowledging personal bias and being open to growing in understanding of others. How have you shown everyday courage today?

Prayer

God, help me to show everyday courage. Remind me that living authentically in you requires daily strength and confidence that you abundantly provide. Amen.

Tuesday, August 1

Scripture: Joshua 2:1-14

Joshua son of Nun secretly sent out from Shittim two men as spies: “Go. Look over the land. Check out Jericho.” They left and arrived at the house of a harlot named Rahab and stayed there.

The king of Jericho was told, "We've just learned that men arrived tonight to spy out the land. They're from the People of Israel."

The king of Jericho sent word to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you to stay the night in your house. They're spies; they've come to spy out the whole country."

The woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, two men did come to me, but I didn't know where they'd come from. At dark, when the gate was about to be shut, the men left. But I have no idea where they went. Hurry up! Chase them—you can still catch them!" (She had actually taken them up on the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax that were spread out for her on the roof.) So the men gave chase down the Jordan road toward the fords. As soon as they were gone, the gate was shut.

Before the spies were down for the night, the woman came up to them on the roof and said, "I know that God has given you the land. We're all afraid. Everyone in the country feels hopeless. We heard how God dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you left Egypt, and what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you put under a holy curse and destroyed. We heard it and our hearts sank. We all had the wind knocked out of us. And all because of you, you and God, your God, God of the heavens above and God of the earth below.

"Now promise me by God. I showed you mercy; now show my family mercy. And give me some tangible proof, a guarantee of life for my father and mother, my brothers and sisters—everyone connected with my family. Save our souls from death!"

"Our lives for yours!" said the men. "But don't tell anyone our business. When God turns this land over to us, we'll do right by you in loyal mercy."

Observation

Joshua sends spies out ahead, but the King of Jericho learns of them. The King learns that they are staying in the home of Rahab and directs her to reveal the spies. Instead, Rahab hides them and helps them flee.

Application

This reminds me of the story of the Magi, after Jesus' birth. They too, acted in ways counter to the orders of the King. And in doing so, they aided the people of God in securing their lives and freedom. God invites us to be bold in our living, especially in our care of others. The actions of Rahab and the Magi both protected the lives of others at a risk to themselves. How might God be calling you to take a risk, so that others might be protected?

Prayer

God, you call me to be bold and courageous in following you. Help make my love of you and neighbor stronger than my fears. Give me opportunities today to practice being bold in faith. Amen.

Wednesday, August 2

Scripture: Joshua 6:17-27

When the seventh day came, they got up early and marched around the city this same way but seven times—yes, this day they circled the city seven times. On the seventh time around the priests blew the trumpets and Joshua signaled the people, “Shout!—God has given you the city! The city and everything in it is under a holy curse and offered up to God.

“Except for Rahab the harlot—she is to live, she and everyone in her house with her, because she hid the agents we sent.

“As for you, watch yourselves in the city under holy curse. Be careful that you don’t covet anything in it and take something that’s cursed, endangering the camp of Israel with the curse and making trouble for everyone. All silver and gold, all vessels of bronze and iron are holy to God. Put them in God’s treasury.”

The priests blew the trumpets. When the people heard the blast of the trumpets, they gave a thunderclap shout. The wall fell at once. The people rushed straight into the city and took it.

They put everything in the city under the holy curse, killing man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey.

Joshua ordered the two men who had spied out the land, “Enter the house of the harlot and rescue the woman and everyone connected with her, just as you promised her.” So the young spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, and brothers—everyone connected with her. They got the whole family out and gave them a place outside the camp of Israel. But they burned down the city and everything in it, except for the gold and silver and the bronze and iron vessels—all that they put in the treasury of God’s house.

But Joshua let Rahab the harlot live—Rahab and her father’s household and everyone connected to her. She is still alive and well in Israel because she hid the agents whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Joshua swore a solemn oath at that time:

Cursed before God is the man
who sets out to rebuild this city Jericho.
He’ll pay for the foundation with his firstborn son,

he'll pay for the gates with his youngest son.

God was with Joshua. He became famous all over the land.

Observation

Skipping ahead a few chapters, we read that Joshua has returned to Jericho and God is helping them overtake the city. But remembering what had happened earlier, Joshua sends the spies inside to rescue Rahab and her family. They stayed true to their word.

Application

I'm remembering the quote from Maya Angelou earlier this week — that courage is what makes every other virtue possible. Because of Rahab's courage, Joshua and his spies are responding with courage and mercy of their own. When last were you a recipient of another's courage or mercy? How did that feel?

Prayer

Almighty God, you surround us every day with opportunities to practice loving our neighbor. Sometimes, this looks like courage and mercy. Thank you for these gifts, and for the people that embody them to us. Amen.

Thursday, August 3

Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17

The family tree of Jesus Christ, David's son, Abraham's son:

Abraham had Isaac,

Isaac had Jacob,

Jacob had Judah and his brothers,

Judah had Perez and Zerah (the mother was Tamar),

Perez had Hezron,

Hezron had Aram,

Aram had Amminadab,

Amminadab had Nahshon,

Nahshon had Salmon,

Salmon had Boaz (his mother was Rahab),

Boaz had Obed (Ruth was the mother),

Obed had Jesse,

Jesse had David,

and David became king.

David had Solomon (Uriah's wife was the mother),

Solomon had Rehoboam,

Rehoboam had Abijah,

Abijah had Asa,

Asa had Jehoshaphat,

Jehoshaphat had Joram,
Joram had Uzziah,
Uzziah had Jotham,
Jotham had Ahaz,
Ahaz had Hezekiah,
Hezekiah had Manasseh,
Manasseh had Amon,
Amon had Josiah,
Josiah had Jehoiachin and his brothers,
and then the people were taken into the Babylonian exile.

When the Babylonian exile ended,
Jeconiah had Shealtiel,
Shealtiel had Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel had Abiud,
Abiud had Eliakim,
Eliakim had Azor,
Azor had Zadok,
Zadok had Achim,
Achim had Eliud,
Eliud had Eleazar,
Eleazar had Matthan,
Matthan had Jacob,
Jacob had Joseph, Mary's husband,
the Mary who gave birth to Jesus,
the Jesus who was called Christ.
There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David,
another fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile,
and yet another fourteen from the Babylonian exile to Christ.

Observation

Reading genealogies might not be your favorite pasttime. But did you notice this: Rahab is one of four women included in the genealogy of Jesus. Why do you think Matthew included her? What is the significance of her inclusion?

Application

One thing we might learn is this: Rahab acted in ways that were brave and potentially costly to her life. She could have easily followed her King's orders and revealed the spies. Instead, she acted in ways that not only saved them — but eventually would be part of the family tree that brought us Jesus. Perhaps God is reminding us that it is by our courage, our mercy, and our care of others that the redemption of God is revealed. And also this: never underestimate how God will be at work in and through you!

Prayer

God, thank you for the generations of people who have gone before. For ancestors of faith in scripture, and in my own life. Help me to celebrate and honor them today. Be at work in my life, just the same, that future generations will know your mercy and grace. Amen.

Friday, August 4

Scripture: Hebrews 11:31-40

By an act of faith, Rahab, the Jericho harlot, welcomed the spies and escaped the destruction that came on those who refused to trust God.

I could go on and on, but I've run out of time. There are so many more—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets.... Through acts of faith, they toppled kingdoms, made justice work, took the promises for themselves. They were protected from lions, fires, and sword thrusts, turned disadvantage to advantage, won battles, routed alien armies. Women received their loved ones back from the dead. There were those who, under torture, refused to give in and go free, preferring something better: resurrection. Others braved abuse and whips, and, yes, chains and dungeons. We have stories of those who were stoned, sawed in two, murdered in cold blood; stories of vagrants wandering the earth in animal skins, homeless, friendless, powerless—the world didn't deserve them! — making their way as best they could on the cruel edges of the world.

Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.

Observation

"By an act of faith, Rahab welcomed spies and escaped the destruction of those who refused to trust God." That's quite an opener! By faith, God gives us the courage to do great and hard things! They are not always the things applauded by political or societal norms of the day. And yet, as Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr said, "the arc of the moral universe is long but bends towards justice." When we act in the ways of God, we partner with God to bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

Application

What acts of courage, by yourself or others, have made an impact in your life? Throughout history, it has been the courageous acts of people, who have led the way toward a more inclusive and just future. Give thanks for that, today! And consider this: what action might you take today, that brings about a glimpse of God's peaceful, inclusive kingdom on earth?

Prayer

God of justice and peace, give me courage today. Guide my living to be one that embodies your love of neighbor and seeks to make a positive impact in the world. Amen.

Saturday, August 5

Scripture: James 2:14-26

Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?

I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, "Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I'll handle the works department."

Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove.

Do I hear you professing to believe in the one and only God, but then observe you complacently sitting back as if you had done something wonderful? That's just great. Demons do that, but what good does it do them? Use your heads! Do you suppose for a minute that you can cut faith and works in two and not end up with a corpse on your hands?

Wasn't our ancestor Abraham "made right with God by works" when he placed his son Isaac on the sacrificial altar? Isn't it obvious that faith and works are yoked partners, that faith expresses itself in works? That the works are "works of faith"? The full meaning of "believe" in the Scripture sentence, "Abraham believed God and was set right with God," includes his action. It's that weave of believing and acting that got Abraham named "God's friend." Is it not evident that a person is made right with God not by a barren faith but by faith fruitful in works?

The same with Rahab, the Jericho harlot. Wasn't her action in hiding God's spies and helping them escape—that seamless unity of believing and doing—what counted with God? The very moment you separate body and spirit, you end up with a corpse. Separate faith and works and you get the same thing: a corpse.

Observation

The book of James focuses on the practical side of faith, answering the question: If we believe, how do we live and act? In this passage, James couples faith with action, telling us: "faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove" (v 18).

Application

How does your faith “fit together hand in glove” with the actions of your life? How is your living - your work and play, words and actions - an embodiment of your faith in Jesus Christ?

Prayer

God of all creation, thank you for daily showing up for me. Thank you for your redeeming love in Jesus. Help me to follow you more closely today, that my faith is put into action. Guide me, that my faith and actions “fit together hand in glove.” Amen.