

Getting to see the two sides of the story!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 April 2025

Preacher: David O'Shea

[0 : 00] The passage this morning is Joshua chapter 2. Then Joshua, son of Nun, secretly sent two spies from Shittim.

! Go look over the land, he said, especially Jericho. So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. 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. She said, yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the gate, they left.

I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them. But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof.

[1 : 09] So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan. And as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in the country are melting in fear because of you.

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 Sion and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.

When we heard of it, our hearts sank and everyone's courage failed because of you. For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

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 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.

Our lives for your lives, the men answered her. If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land. So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.

[2 : 38] She said to them, go to the hills so that the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there for three days until they return, and then go on your way.

Now the men had said to her, this oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 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. 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. But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.

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. When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them.

[3 : 52] Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river, and came to Joshua, son of Nun, and told him everything that had happened to them.

They said to Joshua, the Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands. All the people are melting in fear because of us.

Thank you very much, Norma, for doing our reading this morning. Good to see everyone here this morning.

Thank you. Well, there's an old saying which says, it says there's two sides to every story. And when we look at the story of Rahab, this is a story of two sides. On the one side, she walked as a prostitute up to this point.

[4 : 58] But on the other side, we get a picture, and we see that God chose Rahab before the dawn of time. And while she was trapped in a hidden society and a life of immorality, yet the Holy Spirit was beginning a work in her heart and was opening her eyes.

And when the time was right, Joshua sent two spies to spy out the land and to go to Jericho. But on the other side of the picture, we see God sent the two spies to reach Rahab.

I heard someone once say that Joshua had the promises of chapter 1 and should have gone straight in as he did in chapter 3.

That in a way, there was no need to send in spies. That in fact, it was sort of a lack of faith. But that is not the case. Joshua did the right thing in sending in the spies.

Although he had the promises of God, he was very aware of the responsibility to use what God had given him and to use the military strategy of sending in spies to give an advantage to see the weaknesses of the enemy.

[6 : 26] And on the one side of the story, the spies went in to see the land and try to work out the weaknesses of the city wall.

But on the other side of the story, it was not the real mission. Because God knew what was going to happen to those walls. Those walls were going to come tumbling down.

The real mission was Rahab, to find Rahab and to give her the opportunity to avoid the destruction that was coming. It was vital that the spies met Rahab and that she had the opportunity to help the spies.

This was all working out in God's plan. Someone said that these spies, well, they weren't very good spies because they were found out pretty soon on.

But I think that's not the case. I think Joshua sent in the best spies. He had the experience of spies in the past when the 12 spies went in. He was one of the spies who brought back a good report.

[7 : 30] And he knew how to pick spies. And these spies went in. They did their job and they picked Rahab's house because it was a house where people came and went without any suspicion.

But the reason they were detected and people reported to the king was the fact that they were on the watch out. There was fear had come of the children of Israel being across to Jordan.

And they were watching out, probably knowing that spies were going to come. And they were watching out. But these spies got to their destination, got to their mission and came back again.

So, you know, when you think about Rahab and the life that she had and the circumstances that must have led to her becoming a prostitute, we don't know the full story.

But life, for a lot of people, can be difficult. We can make wrong decisions. Things can work against us. Things can drive us a certain way.

[8 : 36] And we never know where we could end up. Someone once wrote, they said, wouldn't it be great if I could go back again over my life?

I've made so many things that I wouldn't wish to do. And it was in one of these kind of self-help books, I think. I don't know where I saw it. But their suggestion was, which was kind of ridiculous, but I thought it was interesting.

They suggested that if they could start at the opposite end. So they said, if I could start with debt and get that out of the way. And then I'd head to the nursing home.

And when I was too young for the nursing home, they'd probably kick me out. And I'd get a lump sum of money, a gold chain, and a watch for all the years I worked.

And then I'd go to work. And when I finished work, I'd end up in college. And then I'd be back in secondary school and back to primary school. And that was their ridiculous sort of way of looking at life.

[9 : 41] C.S. Lewis said, you can't go back, which of course you can't. You can't go back, he said, and change the beginning. But you can start from where you are now and you can change the ending.

And you know, we need faith. We need God and we need faith to change. And faith changes everything. And faith comes by hearing. And hearing by the word of God.

And Rahab, she heard the stories of God. Our source wasn't very good, but still she heard about God. And how God stood with the children of Israel.

And you know, every other one that heard those stories as well. How God stood, they stood against the children of Israel. They stood against God. But God, she knew, was standing with the children of Israel.

Who were going to come against the land. And her faith resulted in her hiding the two spies up in the roof. And she now has two spies hiding in her roof.

[10:46] And she had the king's men at her door asking questions as to where they were. And it could cost her her life if she went against king and country.

But she knew that salvation for her and her family was only in the true God. Who is God of heaven and earth.

In heaven and earth. And can we imagine for a moment the way that she must have felt? It was a moment of exceptional circumstances.

Is it possible that we could be ever in that situation? I think the way the world is going. You never know. I think we pray in the Lord's Prayer, lead us not into temptation.

You know, we never want to be in such a situation. Because it's a very difficult situation. She had the responsibility for the men who were trusting her up in the roof.

[11:46] And she had the questions of the men that wanted to kill them. It was really a war situation. What could she do? Her hands were tied.

She had experience of what she did in tricky situations in the past. And I think that's where she went. She had always done things in her past when she found herself in tricky situations.

And I think in Proverbs chapter 7 and verse 10, King James Version, it says, it tells us what the heart of a prostitute is like.

And in the King James Version, it just uses the word to describe it as supple. No, I never really heard of that word. So I looked up the meaning of it. And it says it means that the heart of a prostitute is deceptive and crafty.

Hiding her true intentions behind the facade of charm. So Rahab could be very convincing. And she knew the king's men and she was very convincing to them.

[12:58] And they believed her. But she had lied. And so, I think I was in the kitchen this week. And Shirley said to me, are you okay?

And I think I was stuck in this question. It's a question that has been discussed down through the years. So Shirley, that's what's wrong with me at that day. There was a lot of discussion.

Was she right or was she wrong? In those extreme circumstances, because she told lies. Some have said she was wrong, full stop, because she told lies.

Some have said because of the circumstances that she was in, it was justifiable because of the situation.

My own view is that she was wrong to tell lies. However, she did not have the full picture of what was pleasing and displeasing to God.

[14:02] She did have a picture of faith. She had heard about God. She had known about God. And she needed to protect God's messengers.

And she did it the only way that she knew from her past. So I think she was at a very early stage of knowing God.

But she was trusting God. And she knew these were God's messengers. She was in a tricky situation. If I go to Proverbs 12 and verse 22.

I'm going to run through a few scriptures just quickly. And it says there in Proverbs 12 and 22. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.

But they who deal truthfully are his delight. And in Hebrews 6 and verse 18. It says it's impossible for God to lie.

[15:05] And we as imitators of God should be conscious that lying is not something that we are about. And you know shorting John 8.44.

What it basically says there is. Jesus said you are of your father the devil. For he abode not in the truth. Because there is no truth in him.

He is a liar. And he is the father of lies. And the story goes. There are tricky situations. I haven't read the book. But there's a book. Corrie Ten Boom I think is the book.

I haven't read it. But there's a story in it about her sister Betsy. Who was truly convinced that it was never right to tell a lie. And some of her family I believe would have said there was situations where there was a case to be made.

But they were hiding Jews under the floorboards in their house. And they had I think they had the floorboards nailed down and they had the table over it. And one day the Germans came in and they asked Betsy.

[16:13] Now Betsy felt it was wrong under any situation to tell lies. And they said to her are there Jews here? And she looked at the soldier and she said yeah they're under the table.

And the soldier looked at her and turned around and walked out. He thought she was being sarcastic. There is a story as well I read of a situation in North Korea.

Where a pastor who was arrested and was facing trial. And he was in his cell one night when an officer came up to him. And he could face death.

And the officer said to him tell me the truth. Are you a Christian? And he was faced with a situation. Where if he said yes he could face death. And he believed that lying was never right.

And he said what will I do? And he said yes I am a Christian. And the officer said to him I used to be a Sunday school teacher.

[17:20] And I have a plan to get you out of here. And you know that's just the way that when we come to the New Testament. We come to Rahab and she's commended for what she did.

She hid the spies. Because she was protecting the spies. In both James 2 and 25 and Hebrews that great chapter of faith. She's down as a great woman of faith.

And she's commended for what she did. She did the right thing in hiding the spies. But it's silent about her lies. And you know in we look at James chapter 2.

This morning we're in Joshua chapter 2. I think I don't know what the NIV says. But in the King James Bible it's just interesting. In Joshua chapter 2 it says the two went out as spies.

And in James chapter 2 it says the two went out as messengers. They went out and they came back as spies. James says they went out and came back as messengers.

[18:28] And I think that's the two sides of the same story. They went out as spies to spy the land for military purposes. But they went out as messengers to deliver a message for Rahab.

And they came back with a message. And that message was that the heart of the enemy was melting for fear. It was a message of encouragement.

God is working out things for good in verse 24. Rahab was given a token. She asked for a token. That her and her family would be saved. And she was given a scarlet tread. And that scarlet tread she was to put in her window.

And all her house, all her house, everyone that was in her house would be saved when Jericho fell. Rahab, she wasted no time putting that cord in the window.

[19:30] And when she looked out her window, she saw things as she did before. She saw the hills and the mountains and so on. But now she also saw the other side of the story.

Because there was a scarlet cord or tread in her view. Her past was there. You know, she didn't need to go in reverse to get rid of her past.

So the rest was there. But her future was there. And this cord was speaking into her life. The scarlet cord was speaking into her life.

It was saying, you are safe and you are secure now, Rahab. And you will be safe even when destruction comes. And it was a reminder to her.

And it was a reminder to her that unlike everyone else in Jericho who had no hope, she had hope. Because her hope was in God, who is God in heaven and earth.

[20:37] She would be safe and secure when all around her would crumble into a pile of rubble. And she did not need a self-help book to tell her to go backwards in life.

She had God who told her to go forward in life. And she was going forward from that time on with God as her God.

And just like the Passover, the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and on the lintel was a token of safety and security in God.

So was that scarlet robe pointing to the Passover, pointing to the blood of Christ. And I think we could go deeper into that. So look at that. But destruction was coming to Jericho.

The children of Israel were marching around the walls. They blew the trumpet and the walls fell down. Did all the walls fall down completely?

[21:42] Part of the wall did not fall. Joshua 6, 20, 25. It was a part of where Rahab's house was.

And you know, if you look it up, archaeologists acknowledge that fact. Rahab's house in the wall was still standing.

And that part of the house did not fall. The house with the scarlet robe, scarlet tread, the house of Rahab. You know, I think the title that I picked rather quickly was just this, getting to see the two sides of the story.

You know, life can be very difficult. You may be seeing one side of your life and the difficulties that you have and the way things worked out for you.

And life was difficult for Rahab. But there was a moment. There was a moment when she realized in that moment that God was God.

[22 : 54] And I think, you know, you might say that wasn't a great discovery. It was a massive discovery. A lot of people don't realize that. That changes everything. That God is in control of everything.

And she saw that. And you know, from God's word today, I hope that we all see that God is God. And your situation and mine, no matter how hard they are, no matter how hard they will become, God is God.

And you can trust him. And God is able to deliver. And he will deliver. And what God has promised is yours. We have been singing this morning about that freedom that he has given us.

Freedom to live your life for him. To go forward with him. You know, we see Rahab, she was brought into the line of Christ, the ancestry of Christ in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 1 and verse 5. And how she was in the line of Christ, the great-great-grandmother of King David. She came from that place to this place.

[24 : 07] And was all the work of God. You know, we're seeing our life every day. We're seeing the difficulties. We're seeing the good. We're seeing the things we're enjoying. The things we're not enjoying.

The things that are going for us. The things that are going against us. But God is for us. And if God is for us, who can be against us? I would urge us this morning, you know, with the words of Romans 12, where it says, don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed.

And that transformation comes from the word of God. You know, some people will hear it. It'll have no effect on them. But I pray today that the word of God would have its effect on you today.

And all of us here. That we go forward. We have a future. It is a great future that God has given us. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. It's secure. It's guaranteed.

Everything will fall down. But your house will remain standing when you are in Christ. Amen. Amen.