

Joshua 2 "Repentance is always an option!"

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[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Just bow our heads in prayer, please, for a moment. Father, we read these stories over and over and they just sort of wash over us, but we know that they form us at some level. But we thank you for these very old stories that you have put in your Word. We ask, Father, that you would so grip us with this story and the truths in them, and the beauty and the wisdom and the goodness in them. May they grip our hearts in the context of the gospel and so change us, Father, that we will be people not of the lie but of the truth, not of evil, but of goodness, not of ugliness, but of beauty, not of injustice, but of justice. Father, may your Word form us. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

I just, I'm really fortunate. I'm really just fortunate. Bless. Keep praying for me. But, you know, there's lots of times during the week that I get into conversations with people. And I can say that every time, like this week, I had several conversations in coffee shops. And every week, they've just been a real blessing to me. They've often really challenged me. The people have, you know, insight and good questions and they're good, respectful conversations. And this week in particular, God used two people outside the Christian faith who asked me questions about this sermon to help me put my sermon together a little bit. So if by chance, either of them are watching, like a shout out to you. Thank you for asking me questions and engaging in really, really good conversation. And one of the conversations that I had was with a person that, you know, saw me studying and everything like that, asked who I was and what I did. And, you know, I told her I was a pastor of a church and, you know, what I was about to do. And then I asked her a little bit about her spiritual connections, traditions, or whatever, you know, goals. And she, like a lot of people beyond a certain age, sort of had a tiny bit of Christian experience a long time ago when she was young, now would consider herself spiritual, not religious, and sort of interested in Buddhism. And so we got talking about why I would be looking at a

[3:32] Bible text and why we would look at it on Sunday morning. And I said to her, and this is what was really helpful, her asking me these types of questions, like, especially as it was just God's providence as I'm trying to put my sermon together. And I said, well, you know what, in a lot of Christian traditions, when it comes to the Bible, because at the end of the day, they just, they think they're just some human reflections, and therefore they're very time-bound, they'll either just dismiss them, maybe take a little phrase and then sort of run with it with their own types of ideas. That's, I said often, what happens in a lot of Anglican and United churches and others like that. And then I said, on the other hand, you get some churches that it's almost as if they're doing, they think they're doing a documentary about the ancient world. But that has nothing to do with us today. And I said, what I believe and what I try to do is, and I said, if you think about it, this Sunday, we're going to look at a story that might very well have been written 3,300, 3,400 years ago. So why is it that for

3,400 years, people have read this story? She said, oh, that's an interesting idea. And I said, the reason is that the stories touch on something very deep connected to the human condition. And not only do they touch on something in the human condition, they touch on something so that you can see examples of that talked about all the time, but they put it in a transcendent frame, and it's a story that it opens up into far bigger things than just like other types of stories in terms of God and the eternal. So I said, this week, in some ways, the story that we're looking at is a little bit like a rom-com.

And depending on the type of rom-com, I'm not going to say that much about it, because as my wife will tell you, I don't normally pick a rom-com to watch ever. So I like guns and stuff like that, and tension and drama. Classic guy in that sense. But often, there's a couple, or maybe there's a couple, and you can see very early on that there's an attraction between the two of them, but they spend the entire movie fighting that attraction, until at the very end, if it's a happy ending, they end up connecting. And I said, sometimes in those types of rom-coms, there's a parallel couple who also have attraction to each other, but they don't end up connecting, and it ends up not being very well for them. And I said, so rom-coms explore the idea, why is it that we can be drawn to somebody and love them, but want to fight against that? And then I said, it's connected to other types of movies, like maybe trying to discover the truth more than movies I like to add. This is something I've just added since then, thinking about it after. Because this person, very, very helpful, pushed me in a certain direction, where people are resisting the truth. So why is that such a part of the human condition that we all can relate to? Well, the story that we're looking at today actually speaks into this, and it also speaks into this in a way that's going to touch on really, really, really big issues of the heart and of the mind. So it'd be a great help if you get your own copy of the Bible and look at it, because I want to help you read the Bible. So turn to Joshua chapter 2.

We're going through the book of Joshua. And the context is that the first five books of the Bible, amongst other things, they'll describe, especially the second, third, fourth, and fifth book of the Bible, which is just before this, God delivering his people out of slavery in Egypt by Moses, and they cross the Red Sea. They refuse to go into the Promised Land. And as a result of that, God says, because you haven't trusted me and won't go into the Promised Land, you're frightened.

You're going to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. And at the end of the 40 years, I will bring you into the Promised Land. Your children will be the ones, not you. And that's what happens. And at the end of Deuteronomy, because of some other things, Moses, who's like the super, super, superstar of all of the Old Testament, he dies. And so the book of Joshua begins with a funeral. It's the aftermath of the funeral of Moses. And here we have the superstar, superstar of superstars, the goat of the Old Testament. Moses has died, and his lowly, lowly assistant, Joshua, is said to, you are going to go into the Promised Land. And one of the reasons, lead the people, and one of the reasons the book of Joshua is so important is because it's a book time and time and time again that's challenging us from when the Lord calls us to do hard and seemingly impossible things. And so God promises Joshua that he's going to be with him. In a sense, he's going to fight for him, and the land has been given to the people by God. Now, already some of you might be a little bit nervous about that, and some of you might know that Joshua is a book that people often go to in the Bible now as to why you shouldn't trust the Bible or be a Christian, because the book of Joshua seems to encourage genocide, ethnic cleansing, violence, imperialism, colonialism, stealing land, and a whole pile of other bad things. And as it comes up,

[8:46] I'm going to deal with some of those objections. And I want to deal with them because if you are worried about the objections, you won't get the really beautiful things in the book. And so anyway, let's look. God's promised them the land. What's going to happen next? Well, I mean, we might just expect that if God's already promised the land, they just go in, they just go in, and God does all the fighting. But no, that's not how the story is going to go. Look at what happens in verse 1. And Joshua, the son of Nun, sent two men secretly from Shittim, as spies, saying, Go, view the land, especially Jericho. That was the closest big fortified...

Jericho is like a city-state. It's like Singapore. Canaan was like a region of Singapore's city-state. So there'd be often a fortress or a citadel at the center, or a strategic part, and then farmland around. And so Jericho is the closest. So Go view the land, especially Jericho. And they went and came into the house of a prostitute, whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. Now, just sort of pause.

So first of all, the next part of the story, in the level of the original language, makes clear that the spies didn't go there for sex with the prostitute. That's not what happened. It's clear in the Hebrew

that that's not the case. But she's both a prostitute and probably running something like an inn. So something where somebody could get some alcoholic beverages, maybe some food to eat, and there would be some rooms. And then, of course, because she's a prostitute, there's that other aspect of it as well. But I guess the spies, they go. I don't know what... They don't tell you why they picked that, but they go to her house. God leads them. That would be ultimately what I would say. And then we see something really, really surprising. And this is going to be an important, constant theme. And it's very, very helpful to us. Because the problem that we can have as Christians, maybe if you're outside the Christian faith, you don't know this about Christians, we can be really intimidated by, like, superstar types, and think that everybody in the Old Testament are like superstars. And we're duffers. We're not very good Christians. And so, like, they can do all these things. But then there's us down here, not like them. No. But look, it's really funny what happens next. Verse 2 and 3. And it was told to the king of Jericho, so that the spies go in to the inn, and they're going to get some lodging. And then verse 2, it was told to the king of Jericho, behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land. Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land. Now, what's so funny about this? These are the world's most incompetent spies.

They're there like 15, 20 minutes, and already they blow in their cover. Already they blow in their cover. Like, 20 minutes, they're exposed. Completely, utterly, massively incompetent. That should be an encouragement to every single one of us, that God can still do things even with massively incompetent people. So incompetent that they send the message immediately to the king of Jericho. And the king of Jericho, obviously, as you're going to see in a moment, he's unbelievably, he's really, really frightened about these guys, the Israelites. And he sends to capture them, and he would do bad things to them. And so they completely and utterly blow it immediately. And so the next bit is actually one of those, you know, those of you who come to the church often know that I constantly have asides.

[12:36] And I think one day it was the staff who said, you know, George, you're preaching always have asides, but you can't talk to anybody without having asides. So you just preach like the way you talk.

But there's this aside that's about to happen that really gets a lot of people worried that I'm going to spend next to no time with. But you'll see why it gets a lot of people worried. Look, look what happened. So they go and they're talking to Rahab, you know, probably a couple of, you know, armed guys, because they want to capture these spies. And what happens next? Look at verse 4. But the woman, Rahab, had taken already. I'm guessing what happened, she thought to herself, these guys are so incompetent. They just said that in public. And saw the local snitch going out. She had to do something to help these massively incompetent men. So verse 4, But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said to the soldiers, the king of Jericho's men, True, true, the men did come to me, but I did not know where they were from.

That's a lie. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. That's a lie. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them. Lie, lie, lie, lie.

[13:57] Lie. Because it says in verse 6, But she had brought them up to the roof earlier, implied, and hidden them, hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof.

So the men, the soldiers' men, pursued after the spies on the way to the Jordan, as far as the fords. And the gate was shut, that was the gate of Jericho, as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

Now, you can obviously see why this exercises a lot of Christians. You could well imagine that if this was read at a coffee shop or in your Bible study group, it seems to imply, especially in the rest of the story, that Rahab was right to lie. And so you can get onto a big whole series of discussions around that. I'm not going to say anything about that other than to say that just because something happens in an Old Testament story doesn't mean you should go and do it.

It's just something that happens. And it's also going to be very important because, you know, one of the things that we have as ideas about people who become Christians or something like that is that... So here's the problem. A lot of times the world and Christians themselves think that Christian is another way of saying a good person. And so the objection would be, this person's a liar, not a good person, right? But it's... That's not what Christianity is all about at all. So that...

So the reason I'm not going to say anything more about it other than to say it's not making any comment about whether lies are good or bad, and I'm not going to get into it because the whole

literary structure... Sorry, geek moment of grammar, there's a very clear in the original language structure to the story. Sorry, geek moment. And you can have them in five parts. And it's like A, B, C, B with a little mark, and A with a little mark. So there's a pattern. Something happens, something happens. The key to the whole story, a similar thing to the thing just before the key, and then a similar thing to the beginning. That's how the whole story is structured. And the key to the entire story is verses 9 to 11. I mean, it's in a sense... We just celebrated. Some people remembered 9-11 on Friday.

[16:09] The key to this story is a different 9-11. The whole story revolves around 9-11, and the whole story around 9-11 is going... In this book, is going to help you understand what's going on and what's going on with the whole story of Israel going into the Promised Land and why it's going on and why these things are happening. It's the key to the whole story. So for me to spend a long time on the lie would be as if... Louise knows that I'm maybe having some people over, and I come home, and it's just been one of those things I can't help her get things ready. And she's made... She says, you know, go downstairs, and I made a really, really wonderful thing. There's wonderful desserts. There's maybe a wonderful antipasto tray, hummus, all those things. And she says, go down and have a look at it, because she's all proud that she's done this to help me. And I go down, and as I'm opening the fridge, I look at the top of the fridge and see dust. And I spend the next 10 minutes talking about the dust on top of the fridge rather than the feast inside the fridge. And then afterwards, she said to you guys, you know what

George did? He called, George, what are you worried about the dust on the fridge when there's all this food? That's what's going on in the story. The story's hurrying on, and it's going to emphasize that we're made right with God completely and utterly by mercy and grace. And it's hurrying on to this remarkable thing, the heart of the entire text. So what is the heart of the text? Verse 8, before the men lay down, she came up to them. They were thinking they were going to sleep, by the way. Before the men lay down to sleep, she came up to them on the roof. And here's 9 to 11. And she said to the men, I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. Just pause before any go anywhere any further. It's not as obvious in the English translation. It's there if you look in 9, 10 to 11. But what she's going to tell them is that she's aware of what the Lord has done for them. And she uses two sort of big summary points. The parting of the red, the delivery from the world's most power, that region's whole most powerful empire, Egypt. Their delivery from slavery. The defeat of Pharaoh, the crossing, the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. And at the end of the day, the Sihon and Og story, it's a little bit, because of the huge number advantage of Sihon and Og, and the technological advantage, I think a little bit, almost like people with pointy sticks going after people who have armor and swords and muskets and cannons. And the people with the pointy sticks winning the battle, even though they're outnumbered. And so she's going to tell them that she's knowing about that. But the emphasis all upon is not just the news, but a sense of God's presence that's fallen on them.

[19:14] It's not just the you in terms of the people, it's the you including God, that there's a sense that has come upon the people that the Lord is present with power. The Lord is present with power, and it's the Lord who's done these things. So I'll read verse 9 again. It's not as obvious in the English, but in the original language, and some translations do it better than others.

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who are beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And I'll say something about that in a moment. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted. And the sense here is their hearts melted because the language in the Hebrew is they melted in the presence of the Lord.

There's a conviction of the Lord's presence that melts their hearts. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there's no spirit left in any man because of you. For the Lord your God, now this is a remarkable confession of faith, and if you're curious, you can catch the echoes of it in Exodus and Deuteronomy. For the Lord, that's the name that Yahweh, the Lord your God, he is the God. He is God in heaven above, heavens above, and on the earth beneath.

That he is God in heavens above and on the earth beneath. So the implication here is that there's only, she's come to the recognition that there's only out of all the gods, they're not really gods,

there's ultimately only one God, and that is the God of Israel, the Lord. Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. In Hebrew, they guess the way to pronounce it is Yahweh. He is the only God. He is the one who has done these things. He is the one, because he is over all the heavens and over all the earth, he is almighty. There's an implicit sense there in the original language that there's something majestic about him. So he's mighty, he is majestic, and he acts into his creation, and he's acted in his creation on behalf of these Jewish people, and he has brought them there, and the sense that he has done this has fallen upon all of the people. That's the heart of the text. That's this remarkable thing that's happened. Now, this is one of the issues then. I'm not going to talk very much about devoted to destruction. I'm going to leave that for a couple of weeks when it's sort of more important, but remember, why do people not want to read the book of Joshua? Well, they don't want to read the book of Joshua because they believe, amongst other things, that teaches genocide, ethnic cleansing, violence, imperialism, taking of land, stealing of land, all of those types of things. It's just a matter of brute force.

Why does God do this? Why aren't there some other types of options? And the second chapter of the book says there is an option. There's a contrast between the king of Jericho and Rahab. The king of Jericho and Rahab both know about the Red Sea. Both know about Sihon and Og. Both have a sense of God's presence, and it's causing them a sense of fear. Both have the exact same thing, and they react in radically different ways. The king, in a sense, says this to God. Rahab does this. And in a sense, actually, I'm not going to do it because I'll fall off camera. What she, in a sense, does at a spiritual level, at the level of the heart, is to get down on her knees and do this. The king and the majority of the people sense God's presence and know what he's done, and they do this. But Rahab, there's no...you don't have to do that. Rahab, in a sense, at the level of the heart, gets on her knees and does this, or maybe like this. She acknowledges the Lord and casts herself on him for mercy. She recognizes that he showed mercy to the people of Israel when they were in bondage of slavery in Egypt. And he showed mercy to them in defeating the Egyptian army, and he showed mercy to them when he parted the Red Sea so that they could go through. He is a God of mercy, and she casts herself upon him that he might have mercy on her.

[24 : 32] Her faith expressed in verses 9 to 11 is what you now know drove her to do the things before and all of the things after. It's not that...so it's her 9-11 faith that drives her into hiding the men.

Just the bottom line is, the Bible does say you don't lie. Don't lie. It's not justifying her lie. But if you want to understand everything she did before and everything she does after, it's because of who she knows the Lord is and her plea to him that he would show mercy, her hope that she would show mercy. That's what drives her. And it's not...you can't read the story and just think, well, she's just being opportunistic. Once again, remember, the people in Canaan are technologically superior and numerically superior and they have the home field advantage and they have large fortified cities over the people of Israel. And it's not just opportunism that's driving her. Her conversion is real. And how do we know her conversion is real? Because she's given as an example of faith in James, the book of James in the New Testament. If you go back later on and read through Hebrews 11 in the New Testament. Hebrews 11 is that it goes of all the heroes of faith, people who've had faith in the Lord and they're heroic. And Rahab is listed on the list as a person of heroic faith. And the most dramatic thing, go back later on and read the first chapter of Matthew. And the book of Matthew begins with a genealogy on the human side that goes...that is going to culminate in Joseph, the adopted father of Jesus. And who is one of the people in that genealogy through which the Messiah comes is Rahab.

She's mentioned by name. She's become part of God's worshipping people. This is her conversion. And God accepts her in his mercy. It's real. And so one of the things here which the story is telling us is...remember that one of the complaints...remember every week...not every week, but most weeks I'm just going to take one little strand of the problem that people have with the book and try to deal with it.

You know that it looks like there's just this no choice before the Canaanites that God's just going to do these massive things. But what we see here right at the beginning of the book, chapter two, is that repentance is always an option. And in fact, it's always the best option.

[27 : 09] And that's one of the things that we can take a home away for ourselves, by the way. What's the best option when you've done something wrong? Repentance. That's the best option always. Acknowledge you've done wrong.

Call out for help to amend your life. You know, pray for the Holy Spirit. It's one of the...one of the call-ups or part of the book of Common Prayer, I can't remember where it is, where we pray for the Holy Spirit and amendment of life.

Like that's a such a brilliant biblical summary. Ask for the Holy Spirit and amendment of life. That's repentance, turning to Christ. And so the book of...before we get into anything to do with him entering, the task before is, will you react to God's presence and his miraculous power?

Will you react to that like the king, or will you react to it like Rahab? Repentance is always an option, and it is the option that the Lord prefers.

You see, you might...some of you, if you were here last week, or if you've listened to my sermon, one of the things I said about the people of Israel going into the Promised Land is that what you need to understand is that on one level, God doesn't care about biology or genetics.

[28:30] He doesn't care about Jewish people per se. What he cares about are worshippers. He wants the land to be filled with worshippers under his rule. And that's what you see here in this story, that it's not so much about Jewish people, it's about worshippers. And I shared with you that one of the big themes in Joshua, which is a big theme in the Bible, if you go back and read Genesis 1 and 2, you're seeing the story of how God has made the earth and the entire cosmos for the, for human beings to inhabit under God and in fellowship with God. And then you see that's breaking. And all the way through it, there's this constant theme, and it ends with the book of Revelation with God, the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling amongst his people in the new heaven and the new earth. Because a big theme of the Bible is that the Lord's people in the Lord's place, in the Lord's presence, under the Lord's saving rule. That's his heart. He wants to call people to himself. He's going to put us in a place, in the, in the Old Testament it's Israel, after Matthew chapter 28, after the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus says, go to every single people group on the planet. In a sense, I have people in every people group on the planet. And where you are in my will, that is your place. And I want you to be my people in my place, in my presence, under my saving rule. And so, you know, I know some of you are from all over the world and, and all over the, but for now we're, we're here. This is where God has called you to be, us to be, and we are to be his people in this place, in his presence, under his saving rule. We are here to seek the good of the city. We are here to speak truth and model love and goodness and justice and mercy and practice it. And we are here to share the gospel so that more and more people will come under his saving rule and be his people in his place, in his presence. Because he wants worshippers. Why do more people need to know about Jesus? Because he wants more people to enjoy his presence and worship him. And he picks people like you and me.

And so what you see in the book, and this is touching another heart issue for us, is the Lord does not make treaties with idols or with sin. The Lord does not make treaties with idols or sin. I'll finish the quote in a moment. You see that, that's the, that's part of the Christian growth, right? So maybe some of you, you have had a long besetting sin. Maybe it's pornography. Maybe it's gambling. Maybe it's resentment. Maybe it's unforgiveness. Maybe it's ungenerous, it's being completely ungenerous because you worship money. Like whatever your besetting sin is, the spiritual danger for us is to make a treaty with it. We say, okay, I'll just be, okay God, I'll give you, yeah, yeah, I know I worship money and it's an idol in my life, but I'm going to make a treaty with that and I'll get, you know, I'll be generous with like 10 bucks a week and then I can have the rest because I want to make a treaty with sin or with an idol. And the book of Joshua shows God makes no treaties with sin. He makes no treaties with idols. Never does.

But he will redeem we who worship idols and we who sin when we repent and believe. Rahab's not making a treaty with the Lord. She repents and believes. You're going to see later on in the story, people want to try to make treaties, but they want to make treaties where they keep their idols, keep their sin. God doesn't make treaties with idols, doesn't make treaties with sin. He wants us to repent and to believe. And so this whole story shows this remarkable insight about human nature.

J.C. Ryle, one of his famous quotes in lots of his books and articles and sermons is, the same sun, that's S-U-N, like the sun out in space, the same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay.

The same sun that melts the clay. The Lord's presence melts Rahab's heart.

[33:07] She is wax. But in some mystery, it hardens the king's heart. And so there's an invitation here. You might say, well, George, I guess that's just, I'm just, I'm just clay and all this stuff just hardens me. But the, I, the, repentance is an option.

It's the Lord's preferred option for you. Like there's no time better now than to say, Lord, I don't want to be the clay, I want to be wax. I want you to melt me into belief.

Father, I, I, I come before you and I, in my heart, everything in me is clay. It is, I am such a clay person and hearing these things hardens me. Have mercy on me. I throw myself on your mercy and may you melt me. May I be wax. May I be Rahab, not the king of Jericho. That's what the Lord wants us to desire us. You see, if the Lord's presence and the truth about him melts your heart with fear, not, not everybody has this, but especially in many parts of the world, fear of judgment and stuff like that. If the Lord's presence and the truth about him melts your heart with fear, it is only so you will make that you will seek him and have him as your saving refuge.

That's, that's, that's what his heart is for you. I have to sort of wrap things up. Another person that I had, I told you there were two people who really helped me with my sermon.

There was another fellow that I've just really, really fine guy, really, really fine, fine man. And he asked me about my sermon and it turns out he's from a Muslim, he's a Muslim and he's read the Bible now. And he said this remarkable thing to me. He said, when I heard, I told him what I was going to be preaching on. He said, you know, read the whole Bible. He said, the first part is brutal. That's what he said. The first part is brutal. The second part is beautiful. And I didn't know he was going to say that. Some of you were praying for me. Thank you. Keep doing it. And I said something roughly like this, which I'm going to say to you. I said, you know, for Christians, we don't just stop with this story. But it's all one big story, including the end. And I said, you need to know the end of the story and how knowing who Jesus is and what he's done for you on the cross changes everything. And you have to see how this story here helps you to understand who Jesus is better. In other words, the beauty of Jesus is what informs and infuses the surface brutality of the text. I've added that.

[36:01] I wasn't that articulate with them. Don't think I was that articulate with them. I was probably blah, blah, blah, blah, the odd little word of wisdom when I was actually trying to talk to him. But, you know, the fact is that the cross shows... You see, so the thing about the resurrection is it not like... So, you know, here's the thing, right? Here's the thing about the story. Good grief. If people knew and actually came to believe that God was able... There was a God who existed who could part the Red Sea, like, shouldn't that make you, like, not want to run from him? Like, shouldn't you at least be more curious? Like, why is it that we're not curious? If Jesus really did rise from the dead, that has to change everything. Like, then it means it really is a God. It means that the true God is the God described by Jesus. It means we should be listening to his teachings. Like, why would we fight that or run from that? Like, and are Christians somehow special than others? That, no, no, we're not special. God somehow does his work of miracle because many of us, we fight at first wanting to know God. And even in our Christian life, part of discipleship is we fight God. We resist the truth, the call to be generous, the call to be chaste, the call to be forgiving, the call to do justice, the call to share the gospel.

We resist these things and we fight against them, but we shouldn't because our heart's longing should be in those places and really is. When we actually do it, we realize this is the true, the good, the beautiful, the loving, the just, and that is where we were meant to dwell. And we acknowledge that there's part of human beings that run from God and part of them are attracted for God. And these stories are reminding us that God just wants us to come to him, that he, and he will do things with his Holy Spirit to help draw us there, something bigger than ourselves and helpful, like a wave that helps to carry us or wind that blows us. He does things in our lives and don't fight it, but let him draw you into himself. And here's the thing, Jesus Messiah was devoted to destruction so that in him you are delivered from destruction and devoted into his presence. I'm going to say more about devoted to destruction in a couple of weeks, but that's what this story is pointing us to in Christ. Devoted to destruction? Who was the most devoted to destruction? One set aside for destruction? Who did the whole people of Israel and the whole Roman Empire want to destroy? It was Jesus. And he was devoted to destruction so that in him you are delivered from destruction and delivered into his presence.

I said this story is a little bit like a rom-com. I mean, what the Bible here story is telling us that at a very big level, the most important level, we are, parts of us are always, parts of us are the King of Jericho and parts of us are Rahab. And that's part of the human condition. Just as in a sense, in a rom-com like Jericho fighting love or fighting the truth like in spy movies or detective movies and Rahab accepting love or accepting truth. And there is this battle and it's because at a very cosmic,

transcendent, eternal level that is true of the entire human condition.

And when at the highest and deepest level of the true, the good, the beautiful, the just, the merciful, the kind, the generous, the end of our longings and our yearnings and we're messed up with that, we're going to be messed up with the lesser truths and lesser goods and lesser beauty and lesser mercies.

[40:00] And so our hearts need to be reordered at that very, very final level. And the final takeaway from this sermon, many, many people worry that if they become a Christian, they will become less concerned with truth. They will become less concerned with beauty. They will be less concerned with justice.

They will be less concerned with mercy. But, and there's reasons why people fear that which are valid because often Christians, I was just sharing with somebody a little while ago, if they're here, they know who it was, that one of the things that haunts me is Martin Luther King's letter from a Birmingham jail where because he was fighting the terrible segregation in the South, he was thrown in jail and a group of white pastors told him he should shut up. And he wrote a very famous response called Letters from a Birmingham jail. And I said, I never want to be that pastor, that white pastor in Alabama. I want to be with Martin Luther King in the jail. That's who I want to be. I want to be in favor of justice and goodness and truth and mercy. And I want to be a church that we say, you know, we're going to be against anti-Semitism and if that means we have less people, then so be it. We're going to speak against injustice and we have less people because it will so be it. Not about numbers. But what is in fact this story showing from the beginning to the end of the Bible that once you give your life to Christ, what is the current of the Holy Spirit? Where will the Holy Spirit push you? Even if you're kicking and screaming, even if you're fighting against, but where will the Holy Spirit constantly push you to be like Rahab at a deeper level? It's going to push you to delight in God's presence, not run from it.

To delight in the truth, to know the truth and not run from it. To delight in goodness and not run. To delight in justice. To delight in beauty. To delight in generosity. To delight in forgiveness.

That is the current of the Holy Spirit in your lives when you put your faith and trust in Jesus. And let us pray for each other that we will be a Rahab congregation, not a King of Jericho congregation. And that whether it's our youth groups or our women's groups or our men's groups or our small groups or our friendships that we will, or whether at a whole level of a church, that we will encourage each other to be a Rahab church and not a King of Jericho church. I invite you to stand. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you don't weigh and count our merits, but you pardon our offenses. And we give you thanks and praise that you put pressure on our lives and the pressure that comes on our lives from you, whether it's through conscience or whatever it is, Father, that your desire is always that we will repent, always that we will turn to you, always that we will seek refuge in you, always that we will seek mercy in you, always that we will let you form us in the ways of the true and the good and the beautiful, the just and the loving, the generous and the kind and the forgiving, that that's how you desire to form us. And so, Father, we ask that you help us to be like Rahab and not approach you in the truth and goodness and beauty with fists up, but on our knees with open hands, that you might work deep within us for our good, for the good of this city and for your glory.

[43:30] And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.