

Joshua 2

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- [0 : 0 0] The following sermon is from Grace and Peace Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Grace and Peace is a new church that exists for the glory of God and the good of the northeast suburbs of Hamilton Place, Collegedale, and Ottawa.
- You can find help more by visiting gracepeacechurch.org. We have a treat this morning.
- As you know, we've been talking about Chris and Sarah Ammon and their family moving to Chattanooga and being a part of our church. And so Chris is getting to bring God's word to us this morning. He is official on staff, and we're working through all the onboarding things and getting him all up to speed.
- But I'm tremendously excited for you to be here. And so please continue to welcome their family, and let's give our attention to Chris. Thanks, Benji.
- Good morning. Good morning. Hey, we are so glad to be here. I have felt over the past couple weeks like one of those horses at a horse race that's kind of like pinned up in a stall, like ready to go, ready to go, ready to go.
- [1 : 1 0] And then this week we actually got official, and now I'm like ready to, I mean, the poor children Wednesday or Thursday and Friday at VBS, they got full on like Mr. Chris energy because I was just ready to teach them again.
- And so I'm so glad to be here. You'll meet my wife, Sarah, our four kids, Jake, Caleb, Kate, and Charlotte. If you haven't met them already, they will introduce themselves to you.
- They will find you. But I just want to let you know that we're coming here from Tuscaloosa, Alabama. We were there for 10 years. I was the kids pastor there, coming on as the kids pastor here.
- Really, in my mind, I sense children's ministry as a lifelong calling. I think it's one of the most important ministries that we can be involved in as the church, reaching the next generation for Jesus.
- And as excited as I am to be up here this morning preaching God's word to you, I would have much rather walked out those doors with those kids. I'm just going to be honest, okay?
- [2 : 0 9] But I will teach God's word as best as I'm able to this morning. But we're going to look in Joshua chapter 2. This is actually a story that our kids learned this past week at VBS.
- This is a story of Rahab, which may seem somewhat familiar to you. If you have been in church for any amount of time, if you haven't, it should ring clear.
- And so let me read this story for us from Joshua chapter 2. Hold on tight because it is a long one. And Joshua, the son of Nun, sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, Go and view the land, especially Jericho.
- And they went and they came to a house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. And 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.

[3 : 14] But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, True, the men came to me, but I didn't know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out.

I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof. And sneaky Rahab hid them under stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof.

So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as the pursuers had gone out. Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, I know that the Lord has given you this land.

And that the fear of you has fallen upon us all. 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 were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard of it, our hearts melted. And there was no spirit left in any man because of you.

[4 : 25] For the Lord, your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Now, then, please swear to me by the Lord that I have dealt kindly with you.

You also will deal kindly with my father's house and give me a sure sign. That you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters and all who belong to them. And deliver our lives from death.

And the men said to her, Our life for yours, even to death. If you do not tell our business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land, we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.

And then she let them down by a rope through the window. For her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. And she said to them, Go into the hills, where the pursuers will encounter you and hide there for three days until the pursuers have returned.

And then afterward you may go your way. The men said to her, We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down.

[5 : 40] And you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers and all your father's household. Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head.

And we will be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood will be on our head. And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be guiltless with respect to our oath that you have made us swear.

And she said, According to your words, so be it. Then she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned.

And the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. And then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua, the son of Nun, and told them all that had happened to them.

And they said to Joshua, Truly, the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.

[6 : 50] Let's pray. Let's pray. Our Father, there are some of us in this morning who hear this story of Rahab and we are overcome with guilt and with shame because we have made mistakes in our lives too.

And we have done things that we feel like might separate us from you, might separate us from the family of God, might put us outside of Israel. God, remind us again this morning that you have indeed knit our hearts together.

That you have drawn us near. Lord, some of us feel shameful because we may have encountered people like Rahab in our lives.

Lord, remind us of your perfect forgiveness, your goodness to us, and the fact that you lose none of your sheep.

That all who are yours hear your voice. So God, call us to yourself this morning. Call our hearts again to you.

[8 : 05] And we may be renewed in the spirit to follow you. It's in your name that we pray. Amen. Joshua chapter 2 is one of the most culturally disruptive, violent, it's one of the most spiritually unsettling stories in all the Bible.

There's one writer who writes about this story and he says that this is perhaps the clearest presentation of the gospel in the entire Old Testament. The story of Rahab.

And what I want to do this morning is I just want to take this story of Rahab and I want to just turn it around in our hands. I don't have three points. I don't have any fancy flourishes to give you this morning.

But I just wanted to take this picture of Rahab and look at it and see the gospel of grace more clearly. I want us to walk away from here knowing that the God of Rahab is our God and that we are a lot more like Rahab than we might think.

That's your application. Not to go and do something, not to go and become something or take on some new practice in your life, but it's just to enjoy God, to see the fabric of the gospel that he has woven throughout all the scriptures and is woven here today at Grace and Peace.

[9 : 30] The same God that is Rahab's is our God here today. Nothing to go do. Your story belongs in this story.

Not only is the gospel so present in Joshua chapter 2 and then following in the whole, really the whole book of Joshua, but this is also a story that comes in a very historically significant moment for Israel.

And here's what I mean. If you go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible, back to Genesis 1, God, you know, made the world. He made it out of nothing. And then he made two people and kids, what were their names?

Adam and Eve. All right. And he made a garden for them. He said, go and work in the garden. Name the animals. Take care of them and cultivate the land. Build this world that I have begun to make.

And then you know how the story goes, right? That sneaky snake slithered up into the garden and whispered in Eve's ear.

[10 : 32] Does God really love you? Look around you. Does God really care for you? He doesn't want you to eat of that tree over there. And then what do Adam and Eve do? What does Eve do?

She goes and she disbelieves and thinks, maybe I can do this my own way. And all of a sudden, sin enters the world. And here's the real heartbreaking thing that happens for Adam and Eve.

God says, you've got to leave home. This is no longer your home. This is no longer your place. And throughout the Bible, one of the very central themes of Scripture is the loss of home.

Where is home? Home. And you and I today, we still feel that, right? Like, I just moved from Tuscaloosa and I'm still, he's using GPS everywhere I go.

I can't figure out where the grocery store is and all this, you know? Like, where is home? I just long to be home, someplace that would be comfortable and would feel full again.

[11 : 31] It becomes such a big identity for Israel that when we get to Genesis chapter 12, God is talking to Abraham. And he makes three big promises to him. He says, I will be your God and I will bless you.

I'll be near to you. I'll be with you. You will be a great family. And then do you remember the third promise he gives to Abraham? It's so important to this story. He says, you will have a great land to call home again.

But, there's always a but, the children of Jacob rebel. They lose the land. They end up down slaves in Egypt. And then this group of people called the Canaanites come in.

And they invade God's land. They set up monuments and towers and homes and businesses. And all of it, though, it becomes one of the most evil societies in the whole history of the world.

Eventually, God rescues his people out of Egypt. And they wander in the desert for 40 years, cleansing them of sin. And then, God says, and this is my own paraphrase, but he whispers to his people in a sense, Hey, family, it's time to come home.

[12 : 47] It's time to come home. And God's people go to the edge of the Jordan River. Moses dies, and Joshua replaces him as the leader of Israel. At this point, there's over one million Israelites.

Can you imagine the logistics involved in that, of getting one million people, let alone just a couple of kids, through the desert for 40 years, hot baking, toes burning off?

It's wild. God. Unreal. And they get to the Jordan River, all million of them, and the river is at flood stage. It's not, you know, normal times of year.

It's not. But it was at flood stage. It was over a mile wide. This was no small task. And they can see right on the other side of the promised land that God has talked about, the land flowing with milk and honey.

It's right there. It's right there. I cannot wait to get across. And then the story slows down.

[13 : 46] Always pay attention in the Bible when the story slows down. God is trying to tell you something very, very special.

Before Joshua takes Israel across the Jordan, he selects spies and he sends them out across this flood stage river. Imagine them swimming across this big old river into enemy territory, walking across.

I mean, they don't have like, you know, satellites to tell them where their enemies are. I mean, they're just like going across the desert to Jericho, which was the first city that they would come to after they crossed the Jordan River.

And he sent them there to say, just go and get information. Tell me about Jericho. OK, go see, because that's the first place that we're going to go. And you would expect that when they ended up in Jericho.

Now, if it were me, I might say, hey, who's in charge here? Right. Who's the leader? Where's the city center? Where's the center of government? I want to go. That's where I'm going to learn the most about this city called Jericho.

[14 : 49] Where do they end up, though? In the house of a prostitute, Rahab. Wait, wait just a second.

God leads his people all the way to the edge of the Jordan River. They can see the promised land on the other side. And then he says, hold up, y'all. We're just going to wait here for a little bit, a couple of weeks, a couple of week delay.

And we're going to go. And these two men are going to spend some time with a prostitute. I mean, when I'm on a road trip with my family, if the kids take like two minutes too long on a bathroom break, I get really annoyed.

Right. Can you imagine how crazy this seemed for them, that this was supposed to happen? And you look at even the details in chapter two. We don't even get the name of the spies in chapter two.

The only name that we get in all of chapter two is the name of Rahab, the prostitute. It's pretty commonplace if you have done any study on Rahab or the book of Joshua to harp on Rahab's sin.

[15 : 55] To really dig into it and say, man, she was a mess of a person. And she was. She really, really was. But what I, and I don't want to downplay Rahab's sin. So don't hear what I'm not saying.

Okay. But I want to this morning treat Rahab how I would want to be treated if I were found in my sin. And I want to see Jesus in her.

And I want to see the best in her. I think that's appropriate for us to do, to see that she is a sister in Christ because she is. Rahab grew up in a society of Canaanites, as you might know.

As I've already said, Canaanites are one of the most morally corrupt societies in the whole history of the world. And so while Rahab was certainly living in sin at one time, Rahab was also a part of a society that condoned and encouraged sin.

It encouraged the mistreatment of women. She was probably born into a family business, probably against her will.

[17 : 02] At a very young age, she was made to do things that no child or adult should even willingly do. She had no upward mobility, no dignity.

Rahab was essentially a Canaanite slave. I mean, just look at where she lived. She lived in the walls of the city, which wasn't so that she had a nice view out of Canaan and the surrounding areas.

They put the lowest of the low in society in the walls because they figured if we get attacked, what's going first? The walls. So let's put the lowest of the low in the walls. That's where she lived with her family.

But God loved her. She was sinful, abused, and undignified. But she was a child of God. She was unmarried, but God treated her as the head of her household.

Culturally disruptive. If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

[18 : 16] And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than the ninety-nine that never went astray. It's that the will of my Father who is in heaven, it is not the will of my Father that any one of these little ones should perish.

Here's what God does. He pauses at the Jordan River, millions of Israelites behind him, to go find his lost sheep.

That's the mission of Rahab. Joshua and the spies, they didn't know who Rahab was, but God knew who she was. This was not just some random chance run-in with some random woman in Jericho.

She was faithful. She was a lost sheep. And God went to find her. Do you remember the story? Remember how they defeated Jericho in the end? Remember that? Your kids know, because they saw me do it.

They walked around and around and around the city. You know, for seven days, a seventh day, walk around seven times, blow your trumpets, shout real loud, and then the walls come tumbling down. Now, we all know that 28-foot-thick walls don't tumble down because of decibel levels.

[19 : 30] All right? That doesn't happen. That was God's plan. But here's the secret. God did not even give the battle plan until after the spies returned.

God didn't say, hey, spies, go and make sure that Jericho is of a circumference, that we could do this plan. Okay?

Make sure that there might be some trumpets, good acoustics, so that we could, you know, focus all the decibels on the walls so that they would fall down. Right? We know that God's the one who did it. But he gave the battle plan after the spies came back.

And so, James Boyce writes this. He says, it is reasonable to think that the spies are sent not merely to bring back information about how to defeat Jericho as if God needed the information.

Instead, it appears that they were sent almost exclusively to save Rahab. Joshua didn't need information about Jericho. What he needed were the arrangements for saving Rahab and her family.

[20 : 34] God stops Israel. They waited for 40 years to work out a rescue plan for a Canaanite prostitute and her family. Just put yourself in those sandals.

A multi-week delay? Are you kidding me? For an enemy? Rahab's story begs the question for me. Every time I read over this narrative, it just begs the question for me.

Exactly how big is God's grace? Exactly how scandalous is his kingdom? That it would bring in, stop the progress of a million to go and save one.

That's the story of Rahab. The Bible continually asks us this question. In Isaiah chapter 19, to the people of Israel. These are words written to Israel, God's holy people.

It says this, this is the vision of the new heavens and new earth. The Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel, my inheritance.

[21 : 49] Now you have to know that the Egyptians and the Assyrians were only known for their oppression, their violence, and their just absolute malice towards the people of Israel. And here in Isaiah, he has the gall to name those three groups side by side by side, saying all three of these will be worshiping together.

All three of these are my people. Your enemies are going to come into the kingdom. Are you ready for that? Are you prepared for that? Because that is what is coming. The very worst of humanity.

Kidnappers, slave drivers, abusers, users. Less like humans, more like monsters. As I read this passage in Isaiah and think, what is God trying to tell me personally?

Chris Ammon in my own life. I think what he's trying to do for me is, he's trying to say, Chris, you cannot read the Bible and avoid the plan of God.

The plan of God is that Jesus came to save the worst of his enemies. He came to save the worst of my enemies. He came to save people that we despise, people who have hurt us, people who have hurt those that we love, people who have done terrible things, people who have done things that are unmentionable, are all candidates for the redemption and the grace of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 12] If this were not true, then the grace of God could not have reached a man who came later in Rahab's family, King David. Right?

King David, a man after God's own heart. Also an adulterer. Also a murderer. Also a horrible person. Right? And yet he's celebrated in the Bible.

King David received the grace of God. This were not true. And Saul of Tarsus would not have met God on the road to Damascus, had his eyes open to the gospel.

He was a persecutor of the church, murdered people who were in the church, gave license to others who murdered people. And yet God was not finished with him and said, No, this will be the man who will write the most books in the New Testament, who will lead my church.

Grace of God came to him. And the grace of God reached Rahab. Notice the words that she says. She says, I know, I know that the Lord has given you this land.

[24 : 22] At that point in time, it's not even something that most of Israel believed at that moment. Right? She said something very faithful. It's just a little sentence, but it's so faithful to God.

She trusted that God was with these people. The fear of the Lord, she says, has fallen upon us and all the people have melted.

Jericho heard about the parting of the Red Sea. They heard about all that Israel had done to Sihon and Og and they melted. They broke into a sweat and they melted into fear.

But Rahab didn't melt into fear. She melted into faith. And this girl, who was a Canaanite by birth, would forever be treated as an Israelite, as a child of God.

She was brought into Israel because that is truly who she was. It wasn't about where she was born. It wasn't about who her mommy and daddy were. It wasn't even about her past.

[25 : 26] It was about the condition of her heart that had changed so much that she had faith in God and she belonged in Israel. And so she forever and her family would go and live with the people of God and enjoy the blessing of the covenant.

And one day David would come and later Jesus would come from her family. This is the greatest act of love that the world has ever known. Because this Jesus that would come from Rahab's family one day would not just live in the walls of the city, but Jesus would be pushed beyond the walls of the city.

Remember that? To a place called Golgotha or the place of the skulls. It was a place where criminals went to die. And Jesus would go there and be hung on a cross alongside two other criminals.

So that this would be true. It was read earlier. You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. In the story of the Exodus, you remember that the people were enslaved down in Egypt.

And then they were brought out by the Passover. The curse of the death of the firstborn son. And God said, slaughter a spotless lamb, take his blood, put it on the doorway, red blood on the doorway, and you will be passed over and saved.

[26 : 53] Here's the thing I want you to remember. They were brought out. They were brought out of a sinful society of their own sin by the blood of the lamb.

Rahab was brought out of Jericho by what? A red cord. God saved her. Right? She was passed over and brought out.

No longer a Canaanite. She would now be treated like an Israelite. And now in Jesus, the perfect spotless lamb, we have been brought out of our sin.

But not just brought out of our sin, but brought into the family of God. Ephesians says that if you have been brought out and into, that you have also been brought near.

The person that we are most similar to in this story is not Joshua. It's not the spies. It's not the king, certainly, hopefully, not the king of Jericho. But it is Rahab. Our lives pattern after Rahab.

[27 : 54] 1 Corinthians says, once you were alienated from God, you were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. Romans 5 goes on to say, for if we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his son.

How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life? We have been brought near, not just out, not just into the family of God.

We have been brought near by the blood of Christ. This is true for you. Jesus said on the cross, he said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.

And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. Here's the thing I want you to take away. Jesus treated you like he treats his worst enemies.

He died in your place. He died for your enemies. He came not just to cover you with stalks of flax, although that was great for the spies at the time.

[29 : 04] He got them by for the day. Right? He came to cover you in his love, in his blood. He came to unite you to himself so that you would not just be safe for a day or two, but that you would be safe for all eternity.

He came not just to bring you into national Israel, like Rahab was, but he came to bring you into the Israel of Christ, into Christ's own family, where your life can be changed and the trajectory of it can be different for all eternity.

And he came not just to bring you into the promised land. That was great for Israel at the time, right? Let's get out of this desert and into this, you know, land of milk and honey. That'd be awesome.

But he went one better for you. He brought you into eternal rest. Your eternal rest with God is not something ethereal, it's not something far off, it has begun now.

You have now been brought into the kingdom of God. He has rescued you, brought you into his fold, and you get to enjoy all the benefits of the kingdom now.

[30 : 15] Jesus came to save our worst enemies, people we despise, people who have hurt us, people who have hurt people that we love, people who have done terrible things, all are candidates for the grace and mercy and forgiveness and redemption of God.

I just want to share with you personally for just a moment, I started talking with Benji back in the fall. I mean, sometime around there. I want to tell you, we were not crazy about coming here.

The first time we talked to Ben, y'all know he's kind of weird. He's kind of strange. And then we talked to Natalie and we were, you know, a little bit more encouraged. That was good. That was good. You know, we had a great job in Tuscaloosa.

I was 10 years, you know, there, everything that we could have ever possibly needed. But what my wife and I saw happening here at Grace and Peace is that this has the potential to be a church where Rahab would be welcomed.

Where grace could really be experienced, on a level where it breaks down all the dividing walls of hostility and where we see people for who they are. We see people the way that God sees them.

[31 : 32] We don't see their sin. We see Jesus in them. And that captivated our hearts. That was the energy that we needed to pack up a moving truck and move our four kids here because we saw the gospel doing something really radical here.

and we saw where the grace and peace could be a place that loves all types of people. Rich, poor, old, young, men, women, adults, children.

And that's why we're here. So that our church could become a church where Rahab would be welcomed. Let's pray together. Our Father, what good news just seeps out of your Bible.

Comes at us at lightning speed it seems sometimes. Sometimes we have to marinate it and to enjoy it. God, would we become a church? Would we become people who when we see people we really see them.

We see their hearts. We see their souls. We see what you see. And you choose not to look at their sin. You choose instead to look to Jesus who is the perfect propitiation, the perfect sacrifice for us.

[32 : 49] God, make us a church that loves well. It's in your name that we pray. Amen. Amen.