

Characters: God uses People to make a Difference

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Preacher: Anne Kemp

- [0 : 0 0] So we've been looking at, from our storyboard, how God has worked out his story.! And today we're going to look at three Old Testament characters, Daniel, Rahab, and Ruth. They show us a great variety of people have experienced that despite difficulties, in the end, God proves himself to be faithful. So we can experience that same in our lives. God's faithfulness to us. So in the first week, just to recap, if you weren't here, this is our storyboard. We looked at creation and Chris took us through how creation was spoiled and then how God made a plan to save his creation. And then last week, Peter looked at how God didn't just watch from a long way. He communicated with his chosen people. So they heard from him and stayed a part of his story.
- [1 : 1 6] And he communicated with them in various ways, as Peter explained last week. So this week, we're going to look at the three characters from the Old Testament who trusted in God. And by the way they lived, they made a difference in his story. Daniel was a faithful man living in exile in Babylon. Rahab was a Canaanite woman living in Jericho as a prostitute. And Ruth was a Moabite woman who became a stranger living in a foreign land. So let's look at the video of Daniel, first of all. So there we are. There's the story of Daniel. Daniel, he had an impressive CV, didn't he? He was wise. He interpreted dreams. And he achieved a very high position, despite being in exile in Babylon. So all the various kings that he had served also had acknowledged him and acknowledged that the God of Israel was the most high king, the most high God.
- [2 : 4 1] King Darius had placed Daniel, along with two others, as chief administrator in the land. And Daniel had lived a lifetime of service and integrity. He trusted God and was obedient in his daily life of prayer. But God, and God was faithful to him. And even when people who were jealous of his position schemed to remove Daniel, God did not forsake him. Daniel remained faithful to his God in his prayers. He was thrown into the lion's den. And God protected Daniel. And when King Darius witnessed this, he then wrote a decree that everyone in his kingdom must fear and honour the God of Daniel.
- [3 : 4 5] Daniel was a big influence on the rulers of Babylon while he was in exile. And a lifetime of prayer is the thing that I'd like to sort of underline. A lifetime of prayer protected his life and the people of Israel. Now, Peter is going to come and read the story of Rahab from Joshua 2.

Good morning. So we're reading from Joshua chapter 2. In chapter 1, Joshua's just been installed as the new leader of the Israelites.

He's taken over the job following Moses' death. And he's the obvious man for the job, really. He's got all the right credentials. But it's a big job. Big shoes to fill.

And there's still a lot of God's story to unfold and for them to move into. And so this is kind of his first move. And this is where we meet Rahab who has a completely different background and different set of credentials.

[4 : 59] 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 city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went.

Go after them quickly. You may catch them up, catch up with them. But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.

[6 : 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 you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us so that all who live in this 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.

When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you. For the Lord, your God, is God.

in heaven above and on the earth below. Thank you, Peter. So Rahab. In the story of Rahab, we read that she had heard how great the God of the Israelites was and how God had rescued them from Egypt and brought them out through the Red Sea.

And after their 40 years of wandering in the desert, they were finally just the other side of the River Jordan within sight of the Promised Land. The city of Jericho was full of fear as they saw the Israelites approaching.

[7 : 54] But when the spies came to Rahab's house, which was also an inn in those days, she took them in knowing that it was a dangerous thing to do.

She hid them and then sent the king of Jericho's soldiers off on a wild goose chase. She said that they had left the city at dusk when it was normal to close the city gates.

Rahab must have known that when an army comes to take over a city, the inhabitants don't stand a chance and would either be killed or enslaved.

So she saw a chance to protect herself and her whole family. Before she sent the spies on their way, she bargained with them to spare her household from the invading army.

Rahab believed in the God of Israel and by so doing, she saved her whole family. the spies in the meantime returned to their camp and told Joshua all they had seen and that the people of Jericho were melting in fear.

[9 : 09] I wonder what that looks like, melting in fear. and the land was surely going to be theirs and we know that the land did become theirs and the Israelites had a home at last after being exiled in Egypt and their long journey home.

Rahab became part of God's story. Later, she married Salmon of the tribe of Judah and was the mother of Boaz and is also mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus at the beginning of Matthew.

So whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord and not for human beings. Now, moving on, another story, another testimony.

testimony. This is the story of Ruth, another Old Testament character who was able to prove God's faithfulness.

And we have a video of the story of Ruth to watch. So that's our third character, Ruth. So they had been faced with a very difficult choice, hadn't they?

[10 : 39] Whether to go with Naomi or to return back to their own people. And Ruth decided to stay, to stay with Naomi.

She was loyal to Naomi. They wept as they left and they parted. But despite Naomi's strong persuasive words, Ruth was loyal to her mother-in-law and said, your God will be my God.

And because of that, she became part of God's story. And as the video rightly says, she was the great grandmother of King David.

So let's go back to the beginning where we started and read Colossians 3. And this time we're going to read Colossians 3, 23 and 24.

I think it will be on the screen. And I'd like us to read it together. whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord and not for human masters.

[12 : 09] It's just 23. 23. So what does that scripture say to us? We trust in God and each one of us is invited to be part of God's story.

In Jeremiah 29, verse 11 says that God has a plan for each one of us to prosper us and not to harm us.

Plans to give us hope and a future. And Ephesians 2. 10 says that God created us to do good works which he has prepared for us to do.

So let's trust in God who is faithful, who keeps his promises, who leads and guides us throughout all of our lives.

Let's pray every day for ourselves and for each other in whatever God has given us to do. Let's pray for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done.

[13 : 21] God has will be to be done. going to storyboard. You can come and have a look at it closely later.

It's a picture that was taken outside of church some time ago probably but this is a picture of everyone who was here on that particular Sunday.

I'm going to put it up there afterwards so you can look at it but this is these are the characters we are the characters who God has in mind to use so we just need to pray for him to guide us and lead us