Joshua and Rahab

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[0:00] So, Hebrews 11 and 12 is what we've been looking at. And we're looking specifically at faith, which makes sense, given that the word by faith is repeated so much through these chapters.

And Hebrews has reminded us that the whole history of God's people has been by faith. So, from the very beginning all the way till now, walking with God is about trusting in His promise and His power.
So, we've had a chance the last weeks to see what faith looks like at work in God's people as they follow Him. And I'm just going to remind you of a few of the different things that we've learned over the last weeks.
So, we've learned that faith is reasonable. Faith is reasonable. So, it's reasonable because it's grounded in God's promise by His word, which is the thing that we can understand and the thing we can trust.
So, we don't have to jump into the dark and just hope that it works out. We can understand the things that God has promised us. We can trust in those. Second, faith is reliable.
[1:06] So, this is because faith is based not on the strength of the subject. It's not based on my faith. It's based on God's power. So, when I trust in Him, it's strong because it's grounded in His strength.

Third, we've learned that faith is obedient. And so, that means that when we have faith, it means that we act differently. So, if I believe something, I'll live it out.
And that's an aspect of faith as well. And then last week, I don't know if you remember this, we talked about faith. And I'm going to say that this is about faith being hopeful. What David talked about. And this is trusting in that invisible future.
Trusting that it's more real than what we can see around us. This kind of supernatural vision. That's what Dave called it. And last week, we learned about that with Moses. So, those are some of the things that we've learned about in faith.
And I think you could probably illustrate all of those things out of Joshua 6 if you wanted to. But if you look at these verses in Hebrew, and I invite you to actually open your Bibles and look at Hebrews 11.
[2:07] Verses 30 to 31. It's at page 1008. If you look at how the author of Hebrews talks about faith in these two verses, it's actually very interesting. And I think we can add actually two more descriptions of what faith is from these verses.

And the first is that faith is patient. And the second is that faith is available. Faith is patient. It's slow and it's long-suffering and it's continuous. Faith is available to anyone from any place.
I'm going to read those verses for you since you didn't hear them read. It says, By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.
By faith, Rahab, the prostitute, did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. So, faith is patient.
I just think it's interesting how sparing verse 30 is in details. So, it doesn't mention any of the specific promises of God. It doesn't actually mention Israel's obedience very directly.
[3:19] Both of those are really strong themes in Joshua 6 as we heard about. But they're not mentioned here. It doesn't even mention Joshua, which is very interesting.

Joshua is their God-appointed leader, their general. Joshua was an amazing and faithful man through scripture. It doesn't mention him. It says, By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.
I think after seven days is the key there. And what it's speaking to is this patient and circular grind of walking and waiting on God. Enduring.

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Holding on to God's promise as they circle the city day after day. Through their discomfort and their doubt and the heat. And our reenactment, I don't know, it wasn't that long. It took a few minutes. It was pretty entertaining. But imagine being Israel. Imagine every day for seven days, Israel wakes up and they walk. They walk around the city.
[4:20] And this means that they're not doing anything to directly solve the problem that's in front of them, which is Jericho. They're not building siege engines. They're not fortifying. They're not digging tunnels.

You can't even call this a military strategy. It's not even a proper attack. They don't even really attack. Instead, they walk in circles. Right?
Literally and metaphorically. There's no progress. By day two, there's no progress. By day three, four, five, six, seven, nothing happens. No progress. They've not done anything about the problem that's in front of them.
They walked. Nothing happened. They must have looked insane. They must have felt ridiculous. I think our wall of Jericho was much more friendly to the Israelites.
Probably the real, the Canaanites in Jericho were probably mocking them. I don't know. What are you doing? You're walking in circles. But each day they walk. And as they walk, they're casting their hope and their energy into God's plan and promise.
[5:22] And they continue to walk and put the result of what they're doing entirely in God's hands, relying on what he said. This is literally walking by faith. And our lives of faith are the same.

We endure. We trust. We pray. We walk. We wait on God together. This is a characteristic of faith. It's patient.
It's enduring. It's long-suffering. And it's encouraging to me to know that it's not just me in my situation that feels like this is a slog. Right?
This is a pattern of faith. This is what faith is like. They had to encircle it for seven days before they saw anything happen. And I love that Jericho is this kind of indelible, like, demonstration of this principle of faith that's just there.
Just imagine waiting for seven days for God to act. That's the lived experience of God's people in our daily walk is waiting. Faith endures in the present in order to lay hold of the promise that God has given.
[6:23] How do we do this? There's a few ways. I think one of the ways is what we've been doing in this series, which is to rehearse the history of faith in God's people and in Jesus.

And so we look at Hebrews 11 and 12 when we remember that all faithful people have to do this walk. They have to walk this way, patiently, enduring. We look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and say that we see it was the same for Jesus.
He had to walk patiently and slowly through suffering. So we can rehearse this history and remember it. We can also remember God's promises. That this is the way of things, that we have to trust God to do it.
We would like it if our transformation and our salvation were in our own hands. But those are things that can't be conquered by direct assault. There's no siege engines or fortifications that I can build to accomplish my salvation.
I have to wait on God. I have to trust his promise. We can also continue to walk in God's word. So even when we don't see the results, we don't see anything directly, it's not a measure of, we don't measure the progress according to what we see.
[7:36] I guess would be the way to say it. We measure it according to what God has said. And I think finally we walk together. So this is very important because I think if I was an Israelite, I would have woken up one morning and said, I think I'm going to skip the walk this morning around Jericho.

But they all got up together and they walked together and they looked and they looked to their sides and they looked in front and behind. And they were all walking and they were there to encourage each other and do it together.
And we can't underestimate how important that is. And it means that it's important for us to be here. It's important for us to be together and to be living lives of faith together.
So faith is patient. It's not just you. It's part of what it means to trust. Point two, faith is available. Faith is available to anyone from any place right now.
So I think this is probably the first time that we've said prostitute in a family service. It's a new record. We've just said it. But while Hebrews doesn't name Joshua, it certainly names Rahab and

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her profession.
[8:53] She's not only a prostitute and thus, according to God's people, living a publicly immoral life. She's also a pagan. That is, she's outside the promises of God.

She's also a Canaanite specifically in this engagement and enemy of God's people as they seek to take the land that God has promised them. But all that said, Rahab appears not only here, but three times in the New Testament.
She's listed in the genealogy of Jesus. So that is, she's Jesus' great, great, great, great, et cetera, et cetera, grandmother, way back in his lineage. She's also mentioned in the book of James, where she's commended as an example of faith that works itself out in obedience.
And here the author of Hebrews, who only takes two verses to talk about faith happening at Jericho, chooses to highlight Rahab instead of Joshua, which is very surprising because Joshua was very faithful.
But he's telling us something very interesting about faith. Rahab is in the hall of faith. She is a hero of faith. So what does she have to teach us about faith that only she could teach us?
[10:05] Well, Hebrews says that she was among the disobedient. That is, she's in a city marked by God for judgment and destruction. She's a person that didn't know God's law.

She'd never heard anything about God's law. She has no pedigree. She hasn't been to Bible college. She hasn't been catechized. Out of the whole city of Jericho, nobody would have picked Rahab as an example of a faithful woman.
Because her entire life and profession cuts against faithfulness. She's the definition of unfaithfulness. But, says she didn't perish along with her contemporaries.
Because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. I'd encourage you to go home and read Joshua 2. It talks about Rahab's, I guess you could call it conversion.
Her leap of faith. And just to wonder at it. Because I think the reason the New Testament mentions her so often is because they find it wonderful.
[11:13] It's, it's, it's the, the wonder of surprising grace at work. We should wonder at Rahab too. Because essentially what happens is, in Joshua, it speaks about how Rahab in Joshua 2, how she hears the terrifying stories of God.

Of plague and fire and flood. Of dried up rivers and scattered enemies. And that this people is coming down on her like a storm cloud.
And she says to herself, she looks at that and she says, that's the true God. His purpose isn't going to be stopped. And if I have any chance at all of being saved, I have to protect his people.
These spies, I have to welcome them, not betray them. I have to turn against my own people. I have to turn against my own king. I have to risk my life in the process. And throw myself onto God's mercy.
That God. The scary one. I have to throw myself onto his mercy. Put my fate in the hands of his agents. His spies. It's amazing. She trusts her whole future into the hands of the spies.
[12:22] I'm going to do you a good turn first. And hope that you do a good turn back to me. So I think we should just stop and say that there's many of us here that know that Rahab's story is our own personal story.

And what I mean is that there's many people in the church, if not most, if not all, that had no business coming to know and trust God. There are many of us, our families, our backgrounds, our life experiences, you would think there's no way.
There's no way. But we're all people that were plucked from the fire. Just like Rahab. Grafted into God's people through the grace of God that we found in Jesus.
And the reason Rahab is so astonishing is because she highlights something in particular about God. It highlights the fact that the height and the width and the reach of God's grace is impossible to measure.
It always exceeds our expectations. It's always beyond our reach. It's nobody is too far. Nobody is too sinful to have faith and be found in him.
[13:34] Nobody is too entrenched or too much of an enemy of God that they can't be converted and come to know him as a friend. If Rahab can throw herself into God's hands, knowing almost nothing about the God that she's trusting in, and be saved, it means that faith is truly available to anyone.

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Faith is available to you. We can put our faith in God and experience his grace. It's open to us. And I think there's two applications on this that I'd like to pursue.
And I'm going to turn around and tell the children about a minute or two, and then your drawing time will be over. I'm really excited to see your pictures. Okay, two applications. So, perhaps you haven't found God's grace yet.
You haven't thrown yourself on God's mercy. You haven't found forgiveness in Jesus. You haven't been brought into God's people. That's this story. The story of Rahab is for you.
Rahab says, don't delay. Don't be put off. Throw your trust on him. And we could think, you know, well, I'm an unlikely Christian.
[14:42] Like, no, like, this is never going to happen. I could never be forgiven or accepted for this. I wouldn't fit in here. And yet, Rahab teaches us that faith is available for you.

There's no barrier. And I think the second thing to say is that from Israel's perspective, if you're the people of Israel and you're marching around that wall, all you can see is the wall.
All you can see is what stands between you and God's promise. But God's purpose wasn't just taking down the wall. God had more than one purpose.
Israel could see the wall. God had another purpose. God was saving Rahab and her family from destruction at the same time. So he saves Rahab.
The spies are sent in to find her and her family and bring them out safely in the midst of this battle. They're brought out. They're purified outside the camp according to the law. They're brought into the people of God.
[15:47] And not only are they, like, they're not just, like, kind of accepted into the people of God. They're written into the genealogy of God's son. So Yeshua, the name for Joshua, the name for Jesus.

Rahab is the great, great, great, great grandmother of the Messiah. She's the, she is in the genealogy of the true Joshua. Joshua isn't.
Rahab is. Rahab is. And I guess the question is, are we willing to be surprised by God's purposes? Are we willing to be surprised by faith and grace when it springs up in these places where we aren't expecting to look for it?
Or are we looking at the wall? If you know what I'm saying. So I think it's easy right now to be, as Christians, to be very defensive and to be very, we can look at a lot of the world and see that it's an enemy.
And yet, is it possible that God's purpose is saving our future friends and families in those people that we would be tempted to see as enemies?
[16:58] That's what Rahab is telling us. That there's not a person that's outside of God's reach. That God doesn't just bring down walls to prosper his people. But he's also seeking to prosper our enemies and to make them our family.

Faith is available. Faith is patient. And the children have been patient. So we should stop there and see what they've been working on.

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