

Joshua 2 - God Chooses Unexpected People

1-7 An Offer of Unexpected Help

8-14 A Heart of Unexpected Faith

15-24 A Promise of Unexpected Salvation

Introduction

- the bible and all Christian history is full of examples of God using unexpected people
- obviously not unexpected from God's sovereign perspective but a limited human one
- God loves to do the unexpected, takes our preconceptions, turns them on their ears
- we all stories of God's love & power transforming lives of people we would least expect
- in a sense that's all of us, before Jesus we were dead in sin & had no hope
- all the same from a divine perspective, but from a human perspective it seems worse
- maybe people everybody had written off as losers, hopeless, lost causes, too far gone
- those in deep bondage to sin, in crime, addictions, in occult, abused, diehard atheists
- reminded of 1 Cor 1:26-31, *'For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*
- that's what God does, he's in the business of redeeming lives for his kingdom and glory
- love the bible for realness, doesn't gloss over past sin & failures of people
- accounts of real people, struggling with real issues, God chooses & redeems them
- Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David, Peter, Paul, Mark, Timothy
- today we'll take a look at a great example of this in the account of Rahab and the spies

1-7 An Offer of Unexpected Help

1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. 2 And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 3 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." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 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." 6 But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. 7 So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

- last passage, Israel done wandering in wilderness, ready to enter Promised Land again
- Moses who led them this far has died, not able to enter
- God commissions his successor, Joshua
- promises that he will be with him like Moses, will never leave or forsake him
- commands him to memorize & obey the law, in doing so he'll be successful
- exhorts him to be courageous in the Lord, to not fear, but to trust in God
- armed with the blessings, promises & word of God, Joshua prepares to enter Canaan
- wise military commander, first thing does, gain intelligence about the enemy, experience
- sends two spies into land to scout, report on strengths & weaknesses
- secretly, in case bring bad report, won't discourage the people
- go to city of Jericho, geography of Israel, surrounded by mountains, few easy ways in
- entering Canaan from east, Jericho main city, Jordan plain, guards way over mountains
- warfare, never leave enemy stronghold behind you, Jericho must be dealt with
- spies go into city, divinely planned meeting, stay at house of Rahab a prostitute
- makes sense, city on alert, place that strangers wouldn't attract too much attention
- don't know much about Rahab's past, why she was prostitute, possibly a widow
- some try to sanitize Rahab, say she was just innkeeper, no evidence in text
- doing so diminishes impact God's work of redemption & transformation (Han Solo)

- maybe an uncomfortable truth, many things are in our fallen world, need to deal with it
- back to text, news travels fast, king hears spies came in, sends men to Rahab's house
- king asks Rahab to hand the spies over, amazingly she doesn't
- she sides with the Israelite spies, hides the men on the roof and lies to the king's men
- says yes they were there but left & went out of the gate
- urges guards to pursue them, and they did, classic misdirection
- was it ultimately right to lie, no, not to excuse, she's a pagan in a pagan city
- never been taught the law of God, how can she be judged on something doesn't know
- responsible to the truth of God presented to us, greater revelation=greater accountability
- we all will stand before God, give account of our words and actions
- trust God, Righteous Judge, takes everything account, will judge us accordingly
- thankful as followers of Christ, he has taken the punishment of God's wrath for sin
- we stand before him justified and made righteous through the blood of Jesus
- what have we done or not done with the truth that's been presented to us?
- for now God works with sinful, fallen people, able to redeem our choices & failures
- little did the spies know that God was working in the heart of a pagan prostitute
- preparing her for this moment, that they would have an unexpected ally in an enemy city
- isn't God so awesome, how he sovereignly works things out for his purposes, amen
- see more of how God was working in Rahab's life, her faith and hope in the true God

8-14 A Heart of Unexpected Faith

8 Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof 9 and 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. 10 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. 11 And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. 12 Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign 13 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." 14 And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

- Rahab comes up to the roof to talk to the spies
- makes two amazing declarations of faith, knows God has given the Israelites the land
- and that the Lord is the one true God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath
- also amazing is the reason for her faith, hearing of the wonders God did for Israel
- of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea coming out of Egypt
- of the Lord helping them to defeat the armies of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og
- these things were not ordinary everyday things, defied description
- it was obvious the Israelites had supernatural help from their God, he was for them
- and they were coming to Canaan, the land God had promised them
- this struck fear into the residents of Jericho, how could they fight against God
- they couldn't of course, you can try, it's a losing battle
- Proverbs 9:10 says, *'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'*
- the purpose of godly fear is to drive us to our knees before a Holy God & worship him
- if we stubbornly stay in our pride & fear, it turns to resentment, then bitterness and anger
- right now we see the world gripped by fear, how will we respond to it
- Rahab chose the first path, to humble herself and worship God, to put her faith in him
- it wasn't a strong faith, or a perfect faith, but it was sincere & God accepted it

- in Hebrews 11:31 she is commended for her faith among the other OT heroes
 - looking back its easy for us to judge her on the surface as a harlot and a liar
 - God looked deeper, at her heart, he saw her faith and was pleased
 - not unlike her great, great, grandson David (we'll get to that later)
 - 1 Sam, 16:7b God said to Samuel, *"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."*
 - she was also commended for her faith by the apostle James
- James 2:25, *'And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?'*
- she wasn't saved by her works, but by her faith
 - she had a true faith, her faith spurred her to works, to help the spies
 - where is our faith at, do we have a faith that works, are we spurred to do God's work
 - Rahab also had a faith that hoped, and trusted God as the one to come to for help
 - her heart is for her family & she intercedes that they might be saved from destruction
 - many of us have unsaved family members also & their salvation is our hope also
 - Rahab asks the spies for a sign that her family would be spared
 - the men promise on pain of death that if she doesn't betray them to the king
 - they will be faithful to save and be kind to her family when they take the city

15-24 A Promise of Unexpected Salvation

15 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. 16 And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way." 17 The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. 18 Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. 19 Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." 21 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.

22 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. 23 Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. 24 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."

- after she had secured a pledge to save her family, Rahab helped the spies escape
- says she lowered the spies down the wall with a rope from her window
- as the account says her house was built into the wall of the city
- throughout various archeological digs over the past 100 or so years
- archaeologists able to picture what ancient Jericho would have looked like
- built on top of a hill (tel) surrounded by a sloped earthen embankment
- 12-15 ft stone walls at base of embankment, 20ft mud brick walls above that,
- 20 ft brick walls around upper city at top crest of embankment
- most of lower brick wall gone, piles of brick as base of embankment, fallen from above
- part on north side still stands, houses built into lower brick wall, maybe Rahab's house
- again archaeology confirms the biblical account
- Rahab tells the spies to hide in the hills to avoid patrol, then head to their camp

- men swear to keep their end of the bargain with Rahab
- instruct her to have all of her family in her house & not to go out
- give her red rope to tie in window, so the army would know to spare her house
- not unlike red blood on doorposts at Passover to be spared from destruction
- many commentators saw the red cord as a symbol of the blood of Jesus
- without the scarlet cord she wouldn't be saved
- without the blood of Jesus applied to our hearts we can't be saved
- Joshua would save Rahab, because she trusted in God, but judge of the rest of Jericho
- likewise Jesus saves those who trust in Him, but will judge those who reject Him
- Rahab put her faith in the salvation the cord represented, immediately tied it on
- also trusted the word of the two spies, according to your words, so be it (amen)
- they left, hid in hills for 3 days then went back to Joshua, told him all that happened,
- gave a good report, God is with us, given us the land, the people are afraid of us
- we don't know much about Rahab's past, but we do know some of her future
- she was saved from Jericho's destruction & brought into the nation of Israel
- married a man named Salmon, had a son Boaz, who married Ruth the Moabitess
- Ruth and Boaz had a son Obed, who had a son Jesse, who had a son named David
- she is an ancestor of David and therefore in the lineage of Jesus himself
- one of four women in Jesus' genealogy, all women with checkered pasts
- shows no one is beyond God's mercy & grace, God can work in anyone's life
- maybe you're listening thinking, that's great and all, but God can't use me
- I've failed, I've sinned, I'm too old, too young, I'm not talented, I'm disabled, I'm broke
- you're in good company, look through the bible & history, these are people God uses
- God doesn't look for perfection, but for devotion, to be faithful, available and teachable
- for those who give their broken hearts for God to cleanse, heal, transform, reign in & use
- these are definitely challenging times, the most many of us have ever seen
- many in our community & church are struggling financially, physically, emotionally
- may we surrender to God & be the conduits to bring his love & gospel to a broken world
- to challenge people's expectations, so they will say look at what God did through them