

12/13/20 - Joshua 2:1-24, 6:15-25 - "The Tapestry of Rahab"

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[0 : 00] So, as we go into Matthew, Daniel read a section of passage that is highlighting a genealogy.

And genealogies are often the most skipped portions of Scripture ever. These Toledotes of Scripture, these are the generations of XYZ and going all through the list.

And after all, I mean, think about it, the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are all genealogies. Nine chapters of genealogies.

Yeah, I get pretty excited about that when I come to my Bible reading plan to 1 Chronicles. I'm just like, yep, a couple of page flips over and we're on to 1 Chronicles chapter 10 in no time, right?

You just bank those and you just cruise right through. I'm, maybe this is a moment of confession, but I'm there right with you. Genealogies are very, very tough. They just don't often appeal to our interest very often.

[1 : 02] Matthew seems to record the ancestors of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. And he does it in Matthew in such a way that lists three groups of father-son relationships and dynamics of that being passed down throughout history.

And within those three groups, you have 14 generations in each of them. D.A. Carson writes about this genealogy. He says, They were all part of the Messiah's line.

For through grace does not run in the bloodline. God's providence cannot be deceived or outmaneuvered. He says this based on a couple things that we see in this genealogy specifically, and that is the four women that appear in this genealogy.

Often it's a struggle to get excited about genealogies. But I hope after this Christmas season, after this Advent series, that we will get excited for a couple genealogies within Scripture.

But they serve very important roles. Not only does it prove the historicity of Scripture, that it points back saying, these are the generations that point right back to real people, real history, but it also confirms prophecy.

[2 : 23] It traces forward to Jesus Christ and regarding the lineage of Jesus. But most importantly, I believe of what we see of these four women within this genealogy is that it contains great insight to the character of God.

And especially in the lives of those who we think might be unworthy of such a divine list that leads to Jesus Christ.

I mean, we live in such a culture today. I don't think I have to go into much detail, but it's kind of like a highlight reel culture. If any fellows or ladies out there like to watch SportsCenter, you know, just those highlight reels of the Browns game?

I don't know if the Browns have highlights anymore, but if there is any stretch of the imagination, there might be a highlight from the Browns. I'm a Browns fan. I'm not knocking on you guys. We're in this together, all right?

But, good, but you get those highlight reels of those things that capture your attention and that have been sort of vetted. And we live in this social media highlight reel culture, which we capture those photogenic moments.

[3 : 38] My wife and I, we went on a date last night, and we captured a moment together and put it out there for everyone to see and say, oh, they're on a date, wonderful. You know, just the wonderful social media dynamics to include other people within our lives.

But this is often a stage where anything that we choose to be put upon this platform has been vetted by our conscience. And through that vetting, we think of how it will appeal to our audience.

And so, we think of genealogies in that way, I think, that as if we would look at this genealogy of Jesus and think, why are these women in here?

There's nothing much to brag about it. But maybe it's not the women that we're to be observing and bragging about, but maybe the character of God, of his benevolence, of how he uses broken narratives similar to that of a tapestry.

It's often hard for me to imagine that some of us may find ourselves including Tamar. If you were to approve of this list, we might say, Tamar?

[4 : 52] Are you kidding me? You know what she did? You know what Judah did? And you know what they did to each other? And you know just this mess of a narrative? Why would you include that?

To include Rahab, the prostitute, Ruth, the Moabite, in verse 5, and even Bathsheba in verse 6. Why include these women? Why not include Sarah? Why not include Rebecca? Why not include Rachel or Leah? Well, genealogies tell a story.

Where we might see those Scrabble-winning names of Aminadab, you know how we play Scrabble and we make up names on the fly and say it's a word? These are Scrabble-winning names.

But where we see those long, confusing names, where we see scandals, where we see outcasts, where we see prostitutes, and very much more, we are assured to understand that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the sin and chaos that we observe.

[6 : 04] And this is important. To accurately observe the broken sinfulness of humanity being included in Jesus' ancestors, we can be assured in the broken sinfulness of our own lives that often haunt us, that we want to conceal from anyone to know about in our own lives, that we put away all the skeletons in the closet and kick it shut, as if we don't want anyone to have a distorted view of maybe who we are trying to become.

Jesus is the epicenter where sin meets grace. And when sin is met by grace, our past reminds us of who we truly were apart from Christ, so that we may have confidence in who we become in Christ. It would be a real shame to skip over these genealogies. Not only just because of the historicity or the fulfillment of prophecy, but lest we skip over the very character and nature of who God is, and we miss what he's doing through this genealogy.

This Christmas, we are choosing not to skip over the introduction of this lineage of Christ, but to investigate what we're titling the tapestry of Christmas.

And tapestry, we put a video out on Instagram, but a tapestry, just as the video that you saw before we read the Word of God, tapestry is an absolute chaotic mess, as you saw.

[7 : 47] There's cords everywhere, winding, there's knots. It's often hard from our viewpoint to look at that from one perspective and see just an absolute chaotic mess.

That doesn't make sense. But however, on the other side of that tapestry, that is God's view of what he's making. He's making a masterpiece where we only see from our perspective the chaos.

God's perspective is perfection. And we see that in this genealogy specifically. It began in our series with Ruth, the outcasted Moabite woman, and Judah and Tamar that we preached on last week in Genesis 38.

And today, we're entering into the tapestry of Rahab. I want to pray before we go into the Word.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this time.

Thank you for taking me out of a fishbowl. Father, we need all of our attention upon your Word this morning. Our very lives depend upon it.

[9 : 01] Father, if there's anything distracting, Father, help us to pinpoint it, to alleviate distractions, to put our phones away, to put do not disturb on.

Calls can wait. We are in your Word. Father, help us to zero into this time and let us to cultivate and mine the soil of your Scripture.

To see the beauty of who you are and see the brokenness of who we are. Let us see that clearly today. Let us see Christ. Help us today.

In Jesus' name, amen. All right, I'm going to break this up into two separate sections. The first section is Promise Maker, and we're going to be looking at Joshua 2.

And Joshua is a story of great advancement, great movement. Turn with me at this time to Joshua 2, and watch as we follow along as we read.

[10 : 04] But as we plug into the narrative from Deuteronomy to Joshua, it's all movement. It's a lot of advancement for God's people known as Israel, the nation of Israel.

And this was a chosen nation who were the means of carrying out God's judgment and to be set apart from the wickedness that they judge, lest they fall into false worship of idols that the Canaanites lived by.

We get a glimpse of that in Leviticus 8, the sexual perversion of the Canaanites, that these people were not just, oh yeah, they slip once in a while, and they have a good day, and then they have a bad day.

No, their intentions were evil. If the Canaanite people were given even extra two milliseconds to repent of their wickedness, they would have not.

They were very evil, completely depraved. They even committed child sacrifices listed in Deuteronomy 12. They were very evil people.

[11:11] So I think from our perspective, looking at this judgment being carried out, please understand that the Lord God is judging a wicked people who will not repent. But we will see in this narrative that there is hope for those who do repent.

And the beginning of this conquest occurs here in chapter 2. Joshua in verse 1, he sends out some spies to Jericho, similar to Moses sending spies in Numbers 13.

However, that ended a little bit poorly. This narrative seems to go a little bit better. And the spies hide in the city of Jericho. They make their way through this great massive protected barrier of a wall and they hide in the house of a prostitute.

It's at this moment that we meet this woman, Rahab, the prostitute. And that she was. There's some detail in the text that alludes that she really was a prostitute.

And it's interesting. Ruth and Rahab share common identification. It's Rahab, the prostitute, as the author seems to want to remind us, as they say Rahab, the prostitute, just as Ruth, they said Ruth, the Moabite.

[12:30] It's as if the author intended us to constantly remind us of who they were, which I believe illuminates God's grace all the more. And when we identify God's hand of provision and benevolence in the narrative, and we know that this is Rahab, the prostitute.

Really, God? Like, you don't want to put them hurt with the others that are doomed to destruction? That's not how the narrative carries on at all.

In verse two, carrying on through seven, Rahab is approached by men that the king of Jericho sent out to find the Israelite spies in fear of their potential demise.

So the inquirers, these pursuers, inquired Rahab. They come to her door, and they said, bring out the men who have come to you and entered your house, for they have come to search out all the lands.

And in verse four, continuing, Rahab responds to these inquirers, true, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And I want to take a pause there for a moment, that this is really Rahab.

[13:48] She was really a prostitute. She gave herself her body for men. And so we see that this narrative comes together in that sort of sexual perversion because this seems like a believable narrative for these pursuers to be like, oh, okay, and I'll be on my way now.

Like, we're not gonna search your house. Like, this was common in her life. True, the men came to me, just like the other men always came to me. But I did not know where they were from.

They didn't say that they were Israelites. They were just men. That's my job, how I make a living.

And in verse five, and when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out, just like all the other men.

I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them. In a breath of a little bit of confidence for these pursuers, go before they get away, before we reach our demise, hurry.

But what they didn't know is that while all things seem status quo with Rahab, her inner allegiances have begun to shift.

[15:01] From the outside, Rahab has been given many titles. And that's based upon a lifetime of living as a prostitute.

We often cringe at the word prostitute, don't we? It's even hard to say it from the pulpit. I'll be completely honest. If it weren't in God's word, I wouldn't say it. But it's often a very hard concept. It's something that makes me cringe even to this day. However, we don't want to condone the sinful acts, but I believe that we can see why this lifestyle may have been chosen by people like Rahab.

During this culture, this lifestyle was often pursued as a means of survival, utter survival. It's something that we can't really grasp. There wasn't a McDonald's to possibly make minimum wage and things like that.

This is a whole different context, a whole different culture, whole different type of history. This was her means of survival, or else she would die.

[16:06] She'd be a beggar on the street. It was a life that many vulnerable women chose who had no family or no husband to survive.

Again, very culturally specific. But we find so much about Rahab in this passage, don't we? There is a moment at Rahab's door where she could literally probably earn the favor of the king of Jericho that she is the one who turned in the Israelite spies.

Consider her situation, means of survival. You think that she might capitalize upon this moment, and man, this is it. I have the spies in my house. I told them they'd be safe, but man, I'm gonna get them, and I'm gonna maybe have a throne room in the king's castle.

I'm gonna have a bed. I'm gonna have everything that I need. This is my moment to shine. But it seems as if something else is binding the conscience of this surviving, single, lonely, prostituted woman.

It was during the calmness of night, after the pursuers had left, that her heart was revealed to these two spies. A heart that began to shift away from survival to revival.

[17:40] And we see that in verse 12 and on. She says, 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.

She references on the Red Sea and the destruction of the two Amorite kings. And in verse 11, she says, and as soon as they 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. 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 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.

Clearly, Rahab's loyalties were not the king of Jericho. They were turning to king of kings. Rahab was beginning to shift to worship, not her condition or her status on earth and just accept the status quo.

She is going to great leaps and bounds of turning to Yahweh, the Lord. It's yearning for the king of kings.

[19:21] And so the spies respond to this peace treaty. They said, 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.

The work that the Lord had been doing in and through the Israelite nation, catch this church, melted the hearts of the enemies of God, melted the hearts.

And that same fiery judgment to come was refining the hearts of this sinful woman. A peace treaty was made between Rahab and the two spies, a promise built upon the foundation of Rahab's faith, and we will soon see God's grace.

And so the narrative falls in action as the two spies escape. However, one last instruction was given to Rahab before the departure. Look with me in verse 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. 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.

[20:47] But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us.

And she said, according to your words, so be it. And this was Rahab's oath. The men of the city escape after this following their plan of protection for Rahab and her father's house.

And they return with good news to Joshua, the commander of their army. And the Lord has indeed melted the hearts of the enemy.

Jericho, basically facing their demise. They're shaking. There's no hope against the Lord and they sense it.

If you're not in Christ today, do you sense maybe the Lord in these times when you're faced with the reality of God's judgment of sin? Possibly the reality, you can ignore, you can pack it away in your closet all you want, but sin is sin and judgment is judgment.

[22 : 05] This is all within God's character, but within the same character is God's grace. Do you feel the Lord, maybe even at this time, melting your heart, softening your heart?

It might today be that day of salvation for you if you are not in Christ. And we see in this passage, similar to the command of God to Egypt at Passover, to place a sign of allegiance that they would be spared.

For Rahab, it was not blood over her doorpost, but a scarlet cord, a red cord out her window. It's all in God's hands now.

And from this point on, the narrative continues for three chapters. And you know how cinema kind of plays it well. You have that picture in picture. You got this going on when this is happening. Basically, this little story of Rahab is like a sub-story of like this greater narrative. And we see the crossing of the Jordan. You see that the celebration of Passover all within these passages and scripture chapters to follow chapter two.

[23 : 13] But it's like the camera pans to Rahab for a moment. And then it's three chapters and then it pans back to her. And we're gonna pick up where Joshua advances the city in the infamous children's story of the walls of Jericho.

And we see in section two, promise keeper. We see in Joshua six, we arrive in verse 15 on the seventh day of the Israelites, marching around with the Ark of the Covenant as the Lord directed for the seventh day here in verse 15.

And the narrative swings back around to Jericho's demise. And Joshua commands his army. He says, Shouts, for the Lord has given you the city and the city and all that is within, it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.

Only Rahab, the prostitute, and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers whom we sent. But you keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.

But all silver and gold and every vessel of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord. Now keep in mind, the Israelite nation is to be set apart.

[24 : 48] Joshua is saying, don't be dumb. Go in, do as I command, devote them to destruction. Don't dabble in their artifacts and all the things.

It's gonna look very appealing. It's a delight to the eyes as the serpent told Eve and it's a trap for you. Don't look at that, devote it to destruction as I command and as I command, the Lord commands through me.

And so we see that. They go into this entire city of Jericho. They approach the walls and as you can imagine, just the vastness of this city and Joshua instructs his army as you're approaching this vast wall, this massive structure, pay attention to one thing.

We have a little bit of an embassy suite in this city and you must protect it. And so the army responds to his marching orders.

And in verse 20, so the people shouted and the trumpets were blown. And as soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, the people shouted a great shout and the wall fell down flat so that the people went into the city, every man straight before him and they captured the city.

[26 : 11] Then they divided it all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, donkeys with the edge of the sword.

I am a fanatic of war films. One of my most favorite growing up was Saving Private Ryan and I don't think I have to really paint a picture for you of what I am talking about as far as a war battlefield scene, ground zero of the battle.

Now, I might struggle with this part, but if you could picture, even in your mind, this big city wall come crashing down.

If you could imagine the rubble, if you could imagine the fire that's burning the city down, if you could imagine the smoke put yourself on ground zero.

Now, imagine the screams of God's judgment. Imagine the blood. Imagine the people pleading all God's judgment upon the sin of man at ground zero.

[27 : 45] And then if you could imagine charging through that wall and as you see the intervals of smoke clearing within the one interval, the nation of Israel looks up and they see nothing but a scarlet cord waving in the wind in the midst of the screams.

In the midst of the screams, the midst of the rubble. And it was at this moment that Joshua commanded the two spies to go and save this prostitute from his judgment.

And in so doing, it was Joshua who God used to execute judgment on Jericho and it was the same God extending grace to this family.

Church, God keeps his promise. He is a promise keeper. And the narrative comes to a close of the reality of God's judgment and grace.

And Rahab who deserved every bit of God's judgment as that was detailed in verse 25 or in verse 24, they entered into a covenant of grace through her faith as the passage closes in verse 25.

[29 : 21] But Rahab, the prostitute, just in case you need a reminder of what God is doing in the life of this woman. Everyone else is dead but Rahab, the prostitute, in case you need a reminder, church, and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive.

And she has lived in Israel to this day because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

God's grace melted the heart of Rahab, the prostitute. Rahab, the prostitute who should have been destined to sin, God melted her heart and that melting was a refining process.

The time when most have turned to fear but for Rahab she turned to faith. It was through the faith of Rahab that she entered into the family of God.

She was grafted into the nation of Israel through her faith. We see this in Hebrews 11, 31. By faith Rahab, the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

[30 : 47] her faith was so great that it was mentioned in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11. And it is the same God who continues to justify wretched sinners deserving of destruction and saving them through faith.

It is the same God doing the same work and at the point of God's grace being poured out is the moment Rahab is identified by her faith which is greater than her failures.

Yeah, she's Rahab the prostitute but she finds that identification not in her failures but her faith and that is why we read her name in Hebrews 11.

In this we can truly understand what Christmas is all about. Can't we church? Do we have to read Matthew the genealogy of Jesus Christ?

one more time to see this Rahab the prostitute's name listed in there. The tapestry.

[31 : 57] This is a tapestry where unrighteousness meets mercy. In this tapestry it is the engulfed flames of Jericho the rubble that came crashing down the death the blood and the cries were all the chaotic threads of that tapestry but within all of that surrounding black and darkness you see one scarlet cord coming through that tapestry.

Rahab's faith. I believe it's difficult for us to understand the gravity of sin.

It takes narratives like this like Joshua to see that sin is nothing to be minimized. Heck our culture even celebrates sin.

our culture minimizes sin. But it also takes narratives like a bloodstained cross that Jesus Christ bore the penalty for sin.

The penalty for our sin. Maybe you're not in Christ. Maybe you aren't a Christian. Maybe you've never heard a sermon like this ever before.

[33 : 30] Like man this is new. You guys teach from the Bible? Not common these days anymore from pulpits. Let's be reminded if you are not in Christ that sin is actually a big deal.

It's nothing to minimize or celebrate. Romans 3 23 says for there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

Joshua put forward spies. God through Joshua put forward the means of judgment upon these sinful Canaanite people in Jericho.

But for those who receive God and the good news of his mercy and grace are received by faith.

And this is why Jesus Christ was put forward as a propitiation, a satisfaction for sin, for your sin, for mine. And while our culture, like I said, suggests a highlight real sort of life and disguises our failures, kind of like always seeing the best in life, but could it be that the gospel actually calls us to own up to our sin, to open the closets, to unpack them?

[35 : 13] Who are we trying to preserve our own image when we're the image of God? The gospel calls us to own up to our sin, to live without a mask on.

Remember, Ruth, the Moabite, Rahab, the prostitute, Tamar, the deceiver. God's calling us to be identified by our faith, but not our failures.

God is most glorified when our sin is exposed, when we're confessing our sin, not hidden and oppressing our sin. Better for us all to remember who we once were so that we are reminded by the grace of God, which grafts us into a new identity, into the family of God.

Better for us to identify maybe our sin as so-and-so the sinful in different means. Maybe so-and-so the gossip.

Maybe so-and-so the pornography viewer. Bring it to light. So-and-so the prideful. So-and-so the adulterer. So-and-so the thief.

[36 : 30] And all the other plethora of ways that we fall short of the glory of God, as Romans 3 tells us. sin is a big deal.

And it took a blood-stained cross to make a satisfaction payment. That the receipt given from that transaction that was bore upon a cross, said paid in full.

There's nothing that we can do to attain that. There's no good works that we can do to earn our favor and merit with God.

But maybe you don't struggle necessarily understanding sin, but maybe you think that, like, maybe God doesn't love you. Well, Romans 3 23 continues.

It says, In Jesus Christ, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith, this was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance, he has passed over former sins, just like we see with that scarlet cord in Rahab's life, just like we see with the doorpost at Passover, with the blood upon the doorpost, that he has passed over former sins.

[37 : 47] And I got news for you. If God were able to spare the life of a single, very wretched family, with a past that should have been destroyed, there probably wasn't a closet hypothetically big enough for their sins to be contained in.

If God passed over that from destruction, there is no doubt that God will pass over your sin, your failures, for those who belong in Jesus Christ.

And that is assurance that we have in the cross of Christ. All you have to do is turn your life to him.

If he is, at this point, melting your heart, whether on the live stream or here today, it does incorporate a response, a response in faith.

Because his grace, if you feel that stirring within your heart, man, his grace is already working.

Submit your life to him. Confess your separation and rebellion from him. And he is true to bring you to life hope and assurance that his judgment will also pass over you just as it did for Rahab.

And it's through your faith. Come to Jesus this morning. And come as you are. Expose your sin. Confess it to him.

[39 : 09] Because God is most glorified when we give it all to him. I think many Christians often go and wonder throughout life, man, am I really saved? I just don't feel that same spark that I had when I came to know Christ.

I was on a mountaintop experience. I was like reading the Bible like it was my job. And now all of a sudden I'm just like, hmm, I don't know, that title keeps haunting me.

That sinful past keeps haunting me. Am I even really saved? We must also remember that our sinful past are to remind us not to define us.

When we recall upon the darkest attributes of our being and we are very dark people with very dark natures that God has redeemed, we are reminded that the essence of God's grace is not distributed based on who we are or what we have done.

All we are is because of Jesus Christ and the grace offered through his cross. And church, I got to say, what are we waiting for? Who do we got to tell this to? Might you be used in someone's life just as that scarlet cord was to indicate God passing over of his judgment among the tapestry of God's providence to bring hope in Jesus Christ, that passing over.

[40 : 32] I pray that we all do find the Great Commission very compelling in our own lives. Not to impress a sedentary faith or sedentary lifestyle as, you know, it's just you and the Bible and the whole world can pass away as just you and God.

No, that's not Christianity at all. You're missing it. Let me end with one closing thought.

Understand that the providence of God is the tapestry of the depravity of man colliding with the redemption of God. The tapestry is the providence of God of both the messy depravity of man colliding, coming in full circle with the redemption of God.

Let's remember this as we go forward. If you are not in Christ and you want to turn your life to him today, come forward, talk with me. I won't be singing or playing guitar, but come talk to me because I would like to help you in your next steps of walking in your faith journey.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.