

CSI: Joshua

Faithful

Joshua 2:8-16

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What would it be like to be a spy? Have you ever thought of what it would be like to step into the shoes of James Bond, Jason Borne, or the cast of Mission Impossible or I Spy, Burn Notice or True Lies. The whole idea of being under cover, using all of your training, having every muscle, every fiber of your being on edge as you carry out your mission.

Being under cover is dangerous. There's always the chance of getting caught and of course, your home country forgetting you exist. To be totally behind the enemy lines or infiltrating the hideout of the bad guys is exciting but it's not for the weak of heart. Most of us shy away from these kinds of things and only get excited about being a spy when we see it on tv or the big screen.

Maybe you have a spy in your family tree like Jesus did. If you've studied a bit and discovered that there is a spy in your family history that can be something to be proud of. Pastor Jen is in the family tree of Nathan Hale...a famous revolutionary War spy. Of course, the resent Russian spy story that hit the news and ended in the return of entire families to the Soviet Union has made us all scratch our heads wondering if the Cold War is over or not.

So, what would drive a woman living in the ancient city of Jericho to become partners with two spies who had come into her town to scope out it's strengths and weaknesses. There's one reason: The attractiveness of dangerous men living dangerous lives...no, her faith.

Let's take a look at this woman named Rahab and the two men sent into the town as spies prior to a major invasion by the Israelite people into the city of Jericho.

We first meet Rahab as the people of Israel are about to cross the Jordan river and enter Canaan, or Israel. The book of Joshua records the entrance into the promised land by the Israelites. In a sense it's D-DAY and, like any good commander, before the invasion begins Joshua wanted to gather information about the enemy.

[Read Joshua 2:8-16]

So Joshua secretly sent two spies to look over the land of Jericho. Jericho was the focus of this recon mission because it was a formidable fortress city guarding the pass leading west into the nation. It sits along the western border of what was then Canaan and is now Israel, just north of the Dead Sea and next to the Jordan River, and south of the

Sea of Galilee.

Joshua wanted the spies to bring him information about Jericho's walls and gates, its population, the size of its army, the ins and outs of the people, their daily life and any other pieces of information they could gather.

After the spies snuck into Jericho they encountered an unexpected and unlikely ally in Rahab. They must have felt some kind of pressure and needed to hide out for a while so they went to the house of Rahab. Maybe they decided to enter her home since the presence of strangers in this kind of house wouldn't arouse undue suspicion. Also her profession may mean she was knowledgeable of public affairs. Another reason to choose her house was that it offered a method of escape since it was located on the city wall . . . its windows faced outward, or freedom.

The spies were detected and the king immediately sent soldiers to Rahab's house expecting Rahab to do her patriotic duty and turn the spies in, however, she committed the capital offense of treason! She hid the men and sent the guards on a wild goose chase. Rahab sensed there was something unusual about these two men. . . something different from the other men who frequented her home. Maybe these spies were the first to come through her door without sinful intent.

After the soldiers left, Rahab asked the spies to spare her life and the lives of her family when the city was destroyed. And the spies agreed, then she helped them escape using a rope from a window on the outer wall and gave them instructions so they could avoid capture. This is all pretty risky stuff. Rahab could lose her life and lives of her entire family for helping these spies.

Now what can Rahab's life thousands of years ago teach us about faith in our day and age? I want to focus on a few things. First of all, Rahab's faith shows us that...

FAITH IS BELIEVING WHEN IT'S RISKY

Rahab did not know this God of the Israelites but, she had heard what God had done in the lives of the Hebrews and she believed. She was willing to risk her life, her trade, her family because she believed. It's easy to have faith when life is good but, what about your faith when the difficult challenges hit in such a way that the self-made stilts we often prop our lives up with are torn away and all that's left is our faith? God is there in those times challenging us to stand fast in the struggle, to keep the faith that has seen so many before us through life's terrible times.

When the challenges happen we can either run or turn and face the challenge. Faith says **do something!** James 2:14 says *Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions?* (NLT) To do nothing is

ineffective and not what faith is about...faith means action, it's a verb. Faith is something you do even when it's risky and it seems that the odds are overwhelming.

FAITH IS BELIEVING WHEN THE ODDS ARE AGAINST YOU

How many people do we know who have beaten the odds? How many more people have we know who had the odds beat them. Just because you're a follower of Jesus doesn't mean you'll never be in a position when everything is against you and the situation is overwhelming. The soldier who's surrounded, the patient with terminal cancer, and so many other situations too numerous to mention and to painful to recall.

Our faith is all that's left when all of the things we depend on are gone. When we can no longer see signs of visible support our faith believes in what is unseen. Our faith is a knowledge base not on what we can see but, what we know to be true. Author Dallas Willard says it this way: ***Faith is not opposed to knowledge, it's opposed to sight.*** Rahab had no visible sign of God's promises in her own life or experience. She had been living in a Godless town and was working in what is commonly called the world's oldest profession. She could have easily asked the spies, where has your God been before today while I was suffering. Instead, she believes in what she has heard and says to the spies: ***I know the Lord has given you this land, she said.*** Joshua 2:9 (NLT) The odds are against her and against the spies yet, they believe and their faith sees them through. Their situations must have seemed hopeless. Surrounded by the special guard who are searching for the spies they come right to Rahab's door. They know the spies have been there. Yet, Rahab knows there is more to this story than what can be seen and there is much more that will happen in the coming days.

FAITH IS BELIEVING WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE PAST YOUR SITUATION

The amazing thing about Rahab is that she had a tremendous faith even though she did not know how things would turn out. She trusted and believed that the same God who had done great things would do great things again and she wanted to be a part. God gave her a key part and she is the only woman mentioned in the faith chapter of Hebrews where the stories of people of great faith are retold. Look:

It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute did not die with all the others in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. Hebrews 11:31 (NLT)

Rahab saw **past** her situation and into the future. By doing so Rahab is also given credit as being in the line of the descendants of Jesus. Her faith in an incredible moment sees her into a future where she is known as a woman of faith.

FAITH IS BELIEVING IN THE ONE WHO HOLDS THE FUTURE

Rahab believed and asked the men of God to spare her life and lives of her family. She was placing her entire future into the hands of God.

Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live... Joshua 2:12-13

So, what situation in your life needs you to show your faith and become a person of influence, and character? What is going on in your life today, that if you stepped up today and had the kind of faith that Rahab had the situation would be very different? Will you be a person of faith like Rahab?