

Title: A Living Faith: Joshua and Rahab  
Text: Hebrews 11:30-31; Luke 19:28-44

We are continuing in our series on Living Faith in 3D,  
-and we are using Hebrews 11 as an outline of what “living  
faith” looks like in the lives of a whole variety of people in  
the Bible.

The past few weeks we have been spending some time with  
Moses, looking at his life and faith during the time of the  
Exodus of God’s people from Egypt.

This week the writer to the Hebrews has us jump ahead to the  
end of the Exodus, and the wilderness wanderings.  
Moses has just died, and it is now his trusted aid Joshua, who  
leads the people of God into the land of Promise.  
-And the first battle they face upon entering the promised  
land is at the walled-City of Jericho.

This is the famous battle in which the walls of that city “came a  
tumbling down.”  
-It’s also the city in which Rahab the prostitute lived.  
-She is the one who welcomed the people of God, and hid  
Joshua’s spies who went to scout out the city.  
-She is the one who put her trust in God, and joined the  
people of God, and had her life transformed.

The writer to the Hebrews adds her to this great list of faithful  
saints. He writes of this period in Israel’s life:

*“By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people marched  
around them for seven days. By faith the prostitute Rahab,  
because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those  
who were disobedient.”*

Let’s pray.

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My friends, it’s kind of amazing that in this whole series of  
sermons we should be talking about Joshua and Rahab  
and Jericho on Palm Sunday.

Because whether you know it or not, the City of Jericho was the last city that Jesus went through before arriving at Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell us that as Jesus was steadfastly making his way to Jerusalem,  
-knowing full well what was to happen to him there, he passed through Jericho.  
-They all mention this fact, and they tell us that it was in Jericho that he stopped to heal a blind man named Bartimaeus,  
-and Luke tells us that he also stopped to have lunch with a Tax Collector named Zacchaeus.

I would like us to think about Joshua and Rahab and Jericho this morning through the lens of what Jesus might have been thinking as he walked through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem for the Triumphal Entry of Palm Sunday.

You see, the newer city of Jericho that Jesus walked through had been built just a little ways away from where the old city of Jericho had been destroyed.  
-But in Jesus' day as you walked towards the new City, you could still see some of the piles of rubble of the old city walls that had come tumbling down.  
-They were left there as a kind of monument to the power of God.

And so Jesus couldn't help but be reminded of the story of Jericho's fall as he walked along that day and saw the rubble.  
-And Jericho's story was personal to Jesus in a couple of ways.

1. First, Joshua, who led the battle of Jericho was Jesus' own namesake.  
-In Hebrew, the name Jesus is Yeshua, or Joshua.  
-It's a name that in Hebrew means "The Lord Saves."

It's the name that the Angel Gabriel told Mary and Joseph to name their baby,  
-but little baby Jesus was being named after Joshua, the

great leader who led God's people into the Promised Land.

So it's not hard to imagine that as Jesus walked through Jericho,  
-he might have been thinking about his namesake, Joshua, who fought the battle of Jericho all those years before,  
-when those very walls came a tumbling down.

Because Jesus, as he was making his way to Jerusalem, knew that he was going to Jerusalem ultimately to die there.  
-The Father's "battle plan" for him, was to take on the walls of hell and death itself, by entering into hell and death.  
-He was to defeat sin, by taking it onto himself, and dying an atoning death as a sacrifice for sin.

This was God's "battle plan" for Jesus at Jerusalem.  
-And from a human perspective it was a crazy battle plan.  
-To overcome death by dying.  
-To defeat Satan by allowing Satan to defeat you.  
-To show forth God's ultimate power by allowing yourself to become totally weak.

This is not the way we humans form battle plans.  
-There is no one at West Point using Jesus' death and resurrection as a model for military success.  
-And guess what? They are not using Joshua's battle at Jericho as a model of military success either.

That's why I think Jesus was probably taking great comfort in walking through Jericho and remembering God's battle plan for Joshua at Jericho.

It was a crazy battle plan, too.  
-Remember, Joshua was told not to actually attack the city or lay siege to its walls.  
-Instead, God told Joshua to have his troops march around the city walls once a day for seven days.  
-They were not to yell, or taunt the enemy, or do anything, but quietly walk around the city, once a day, for seven days.

And then on the seventh day, they were to have the priests go before the army with rams horns,

- and they were all to march around the city 7 times.
- And after the 7<sup>th</sup> time around, the priests were to blow their rams horns, and the people were all to shout,
- and God said that would bring the walls of the city down.

That was the battle plan.

- And as a trained general, who had already fought many battles for God and God's people during the Exodus,
- Joshua probably felt foolish approaching this battle in that way.
- I mean, you've got your whole army outside the city, and all you're going to do is quietly march around the city?
- And not just once, but once a day for 7 days, and they 7 more times on the last day?
- Would you have obeyed those battle plans if you were Joshua? Or if you were in Joshua's army?

But the writer to the Hebrews says that it was by faith that they actually did obey those orders.

- Not because they made human sense.
- But because they had learned to trust in God, and He had come through for them again and again.

So by faith they did it, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, those walls crumbled, and the army of God walked right into Jericho and took it over.

The rubble of those walls was still there that day as Jesus walked into Jericho himself.

- Don't you think he would have been encouraged to remember God's faithfulness?
- And to remember that crazy battle plans in God's hands are not crazy at all?

Joshua had obeyed, and the people had obeyed, and look what God had done for them.

- Maybe that's what Jesus was thinking about as he walked through Jericho that day on his way to Jerusalem.

2. Or maybe he was thinking about Rahab.

- Amazingly enough, Rahab the Prostitute of Jericho, was Jesus' own great, great, great, great, grandmother.

-And this was her hometown.

The writer to the Hebrews says, "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."

Well, not only was she not killed, but she became a convert to Israel's God,

- and gave up her prostitution,
- and married a nice Jewish man named Salmon, and became the great grandmother of King David,
- and the great, great, great grandmother of Jesus.

But at the time of Joshua, Rahab was a rather infamous resident of Jericho.

- She owned a house of ill-repute located within the famously thick walls of Jericho.
- The walls were so thick that many homes were built right into the wall.

And Rahab's home was near the City gate where all the traffic in and out of the city went.

- A perfect spot to house a brothel, and a perfect spot for spies from Joshua's army to slip into the city and find shelter.
- Lots of foreigners probably were seen coming and going in that house.

But Joshua's spies, while they were doing their reconnaissance work in Jericho, also discovered that Rahab was a great source of information.

- And she not only shared that information with them, but told them that she had come to believe that their God was the true God because of all she had heard He had done for them.
- She was ready to shift her allegiance from the gods of Canaan, to the God of Israel,
- and from the King of Jericho, to the leader of God's people, Joshua.

So she hid the spies, and helped them to get all they needed and get away safely,

-and she had them promise to spare her when they came back to take the city by conquest.

And that is what happened.

-Rahab lost her home and her business when the walls came tumbling down,  
-but more importantly, by faith she had her sins forgiven, her life was saved, and a whole new life was given her.

Rahab became a model of conversion, and what a new life with God looks like.

-Perhaps Jesus was thinking of Rahab that day as he walked through Jericho on the way to Jerusalem.  
-Perhaps he was marveling at the strange and wonderful ways of God, His Father,  
-to include a woman like Rahab in his family tree.  
-Perhaps He was marveling at the kind of people the Father chooses to do His will...a prostitute after all.

I wonder this, because Jesus took time in Jericho to reach out to some unlikely candidates for the kingdom of God himself.

-Blind Bartimaeus, who was a beggar by the side of the road.  
-Jesus stopped the whole procession to give him sight.  
-And then Zacchaeus, the little Tax collector who had to climb a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus.

Of all the people in Jericho, Zacchaeus would have been the least likely person for anyone to imagine Jesus stopping to have lunch with.

But maybe Jesus had Rahab on his mind, and maybe he didn't think that it was all that unlikely for God to reach out to the blind and the sinful and the outcasts at all.

We know Bartimaeus by name, and we know Zacchaeus by name because like Rahab,  
-they actually joined the people of God, and became fellow citizens in the Kingdom.

-The people Matthew, Mark, and Luke were originally writing their gospels for, knew these people by name.

- They knew their testimonies.
- They knew that Jericho was a place for unlikely battle plans and unlikely people to be used by God for amazing things.

The writer to the Hebrews says it is by faith in God that these unlikely things happen,  
-and these unlikely people are transformed.

Again and again we are seeing that this “living faith,” in every generation, looks like this:

- all kinds of unlikely people being called by God to do all kinds of unlikely things.
- And the unlikely people don't say “Yes,” to the unlikely things they are called to do because they trust in the
  - logic of the plan
  - or because they trust in their own ability to pull it off,
  - or because they are full of virtue or unshakeable faith.

They do what they do because God shows up and calls them of all people to follow Him.

- And He tells them to trust Him, and then He shows them how trustworthy He is.

And the whole thing is usually to the surprise of everyone.

- The plan God wants to accomplish is a surprise,
  - and the people He chooses to use to accomplish the plan are a surprise,
  - and the way God chooses to go about accomplishing the plan is a surprise.

It was true of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, and even Jesus.

It's possible then, that the same might be true of us.

- God might actually call people like us to follow Him!
- He might actually call people like us to come alongside Him and be part of the working out of His plans.
- And He might ask people like us to do things that are outside of our comfort zone, and outside our human logic,
  - and outside what the world around us thinks is right and smart and good.

Living faith is always like that, but is always worth pursuing.  
-When God calls us to follow it is always worth stepping out to follow.  
-When God opens a door, it is always worth walking through.

We may not think we are worthy to be called.  
We may not think we are able to do what He calls us to do.  
-But we are all asked to trust in Him with all our hearts,  
and lean not on our own understanding,  
-but in all our ways acknowledge him,  
and allow Him to direct our paths.

That is living faith in every generation.

Let's pray.