

studies or raised funds for her local charity. Rahab believed. She believed that God existed. She believed He was powerful and was the only true God. She believed He was working in the descendants of Abraham and had unlimited power. And, at some level, she believed that same God had the power to change her life, as much as others might have thought it impossible. Rahab was not only named in a list of faithful heroes, she was chosen to be in the bloodline of the Savior.

Don't let the shame of your past and the failure you're known for in life keep you from allowing God to change you. Don't let the sin you're in enslave you any longer. We can have more than safety and redemption in our lives. Like Rahab, we can know God fully and follow Him. The result was that this woman was dramatically transformed. She married Salmon, and became the great-great-grandmother of King David.

Allow this God of amazing, unbelievable extraordinary grace to tear down the walls of your heart. Allow the blood-red thread of the love of God through Jesus Christ to wash you and cleanse you and make you a new creation. Believe the truth about His grace. If we are "in Christ," there is a different outcome possible for our lives. I would like to conclude with Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:17: *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you do for those who face fear and misunderstanding? How do you tell them about God's grace?
2. As Christians, we tend to brand, segment, or categorize ourselves and others. We also tend to exclude and judge them. How can you overcome your stereotypes or prejudices of others?
3. God's amazing, unbelievable extraordinary grace tears down the wall of our hearts. How do you allow and invite this grace in your life? What does mean to be "in Christ" to you? (2 Cor. 5:17)

January 20, 2019
EXTRAORDINARY GRACE (3)
The Way of Disgrace
Joshua 2:8-11
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

Today's text is Rahab's story. She was a prime candidate for God's judgment. She was not one of the "chosen" or the "blessed." She was an Amorite and she was a prostitute. She was not one of the desirable people to save.

Rahab knew about God, but she didn't understand He is a God of grace. She bargained with the spies and told them their God was the supreme God. *"Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death."* (Joshua 2:12-13) The two spies made a deal with Rahab for her safety and her family's safety. But she had no idea that she was about to receive much more than safety, much more than just her life.

God's grace had a plan. God's grace had a future and a hope for her. Today people face fear and misunderstanding. Some of them have been hurt by church people. They suffer self-inflicted wounds. They don't understand God's love. They also believe things are always going to be the way they are now.

Rahab welcomed men into her home and provided a service for payment. She knew the desire of men but did not know the desire of God. We don't know all the backstory of Rahab's life, but we do know this is the type of thing God loves to do. He loves to slip into town and talk with those on the edges. He loves to make Himself known to those who know they do not deserve His favor. Proverbs 25:2 says, *"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter."* He hangs around with sinners and people we would not hang out with. He showcases His love to the most unlikely people in the most unlikely circumstances, people like Rahab.

Today, people brand us as Christians. And we also brand, segment and categorize others. And in doing so, we exclude, we judge, and we keep

those people who need the grace of God away from us. If our neighbor has a bumper sticker for a candidate we don't support, we don't want to hang out with them. If a child in the neighborhood shows offensive behavior, we try to avoid that child. We don't like someone who uses bad language at work or someone who has a tattoo. The list goes on. We would seek those like us, those who agree with our way of thinking, and play our kind of music. But this is not the way of God or the way of grace.

Centuries after Rahab died, Jesus sat at a well in the midday sun, alone. He was tired and thirsty. He simply wanted refreshment and rest while His followers hurried for food. A woman of ill standing in the town came to the well. She was a person who had so many problems. Because Jesus was a holy man, He had every right to walk away or at least turned His back so He didn't have to see her.

This is what we do. This is how we engage those around us. We call it holy living or pity. This is not the way of grace. The way of disgrace defines a person by what they have done. The way of grace defines a person by who loves them. The way of disgrace looks at the outside only. The way of grace sees beyond the exterior to the heart.

Jesus engaged her at a well. He asked for something – a drink of water. Jesus saw in this woman a reflection of someone from His own family tree. He could tell her that she reminded Him of His great-great-great-great-, etc., grandmother. Her name was Rahab. But He didn't say this. He didn't make their meeting about Him. This was about her and her need and about the love she had been searching for.

Rahab had every reason to run from God. She had every reason to fear the spies and to fear the leaders of Jericho. But something drew her to these men, these people walking across the desert. Something drew her to the God who would lead a people miraculously through the wilderness. She put her full faith and confidence in a people she didn't know and a God she didn't understand until grace reached into her life. And this grace had profound effects not only in her own life, but those whose lives came after. The author of Hebrews puts it this way, *“By faith Rahab the prostitute received the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed.”* (Hebrew 11:31)

Rahab was a prostitute. There was no reason God should favor someone of such low standing, or someone of such ill repute. But this is the way of grace. This is the way God wants to work in our lives, if we will let Him. God does not want us to simply know about Him. His goal for our lives is not to get us to cower in fear of Him or of His people. His desire is to, by grace, draw us to Himself from whatever situation we're in and showcase His love and mercy through our lives.

Rahab was on the edge of society and she lived at the edge of town in a house built into the city wall of Jericho. We don't know much about Rahab. But we do know this. God, in His grace, chose Rahab to be part of the lineage of Jesus, the Messiah. God, in His infinite mercy, decided that this despised and rejected person would be the wife of King David's great-great-grandfather, Salmon.

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth* there is a scene that Lady Macbeth has encouraged her husband to kill King Duncan, thereby allowing her to be queen of Scotland. In a famous sleepwalking scene, she rubs at invisible bloodstains on her hands: “Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O, O, O!” (Macbeth, ed. Philip Weller, Shakespeare Navigators, 5.1.50-52.) No matter how hard she scrubs, those stains haunt her and eventually push her over the brink.

What Rahab needed, what you and I need, is cleansing that goes to the soul level. We need the purifying grace of God to wash over us, to soak and scrub us in those places we can't reach. No matter how hard we try, we can't be made clean because of shame, because of past hurts, because of choices we've made, and choices others have made against us. And this is the glorious news. This is the incredible, unimaginable offer of God. But we must allow God to work the way He will work, for this is the only way to true healing and wholeness. If we avoid the process with our own effort, we'll miss the truth and we'll miss His grace.

Rahab did not become righteous and was not listed in the Hebrews Hall of Faith because she started a ministry for prostitutes. She wasn't affirmed and used by God because she cleaned up her act and led Torah