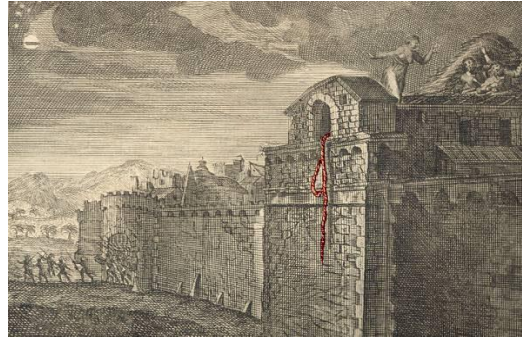


Worship at home
<https://pccweb.ca/moorepc/>

September 19, 2021



God calls us to worship:

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.¹

We bring our praise and confessions:

God of all creation,
you have opened the world around us and filled it with purpose.
Each creature declares your praise—
the mountain states your majesty;
the ripened field, your generosity.
Birds flying aloft sing of your freedom;
the tiny ant works with your persistence.
But what do we declare about you in our lives, O God?
We pray that our work will honour your justice and mercy.
May our relationships speak of your love and compassion.
So may we praise you, O God,
not just in this hour of worship but in all the hours you grant us,
as we follow Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Friend.

God of all creation,
you have opened the world around us and filled it with wonder,
but we confess our eyes are not always open to its harsher realities.
Our ears are sometimes deaf to cries of need.
Our minds are often shut to opinions which differ from our own.
Forgive us when we seek greatness instead of goodness.

¹ Psalm 89:1, 2

Forgive us when we miss the wisdom you intend us to embrace.

God assures us of his forgiveness:

The prophet Micah reminds us that God requires of us three things: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

To all who truly repent and seek reconciliation with God and neighbour in kindness and humility, God offers forgiveness and peace.

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**In response to the gospel,
we confess our faith and offer our lives and resources:**

Please remember to prayerfully make your offerings to the congregation of which you are most associated. If you're a member/adherent of Knox-Moore or St. Andrew's, Mooretown, please send your offering to Howard McKellar or Judy Armstrong.

Hymn: #681 "We have heard a joyful sound"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDss8kHeiGs>

God speaks to us through his Word:

God of wisdom, you have taught us that we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from you. Send us your Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to receive your Word, speaking through the scriptures. Strengthen us to live that Word as our daily bread. Amen.

READ JOSHUA 2:1-24; 6:25.

The Crimson Cord

1.

Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men, secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there.²

We don't know their intentions. What we do know is that God was going to use this encounter to further his great plan of redemption. And, in particular, the Canaanite prostitute, Rahab, was going to feature prominently in this plan.

Jericho was a city in the region commonly referred to as Canaan. As we saw last week, Canaan is not descriptive of one location nor one people group. There were many city-states throughout the region and many people group with various languages, cultures, gods, and religious practices.

We learn from Joshua, that Rahab has heard the stories of how the Israelite God – Yahweh, the Lord God – had rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, how He had cared for them in the wilderness, and how He had enabled them to go up against opposing nations and emerge victorious. She had heard stories of Yahweh's imminence and power. His ability to accomplish that which He sets out to accomplish.

She has come to believe these stories and, more to the point, to believe that the object of the stories: Yahweh, is the true and living God.

She has come to believe that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel – whom we know in Jesus of Nazareth, is the living God who creates all that exists and in fellowship with whom is abundant, joyous life that transcends our momentary circumstances.

I know that the LORD has given you the land, ... The LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below.³

² Joshua 2:1

³ Joshua 2:9, 11

Because of her new-found faith in Yahweh, the God of Israel, when these two Israelite spies came to her door, she was inspired to shelter them and hide them from the king's soldiers.

When they returned to Joshua and the rest of the Israelites, they were able to report not only that the people of Jericho were already nervous about the Israelites' presence, but that Yahweh would indeed finish what He had begun and would give the land into their hands.

Through the belief, testimony, and action of a non-Israelite prostitute, the holy warriors of the holy nation gained the confidence to trust the LORD their God.

Joshua 2 is a story of salvation. And it is a multi-sided story.

Represented by the two spies, Israel was saved and received assurance that their God was trustworthy, through the faith, testimony, and action of Rahab.

2. Not only was Israel saved, Rahab was saved. Her family was saved. And, as I hope you'll come to realize in a few minutes, the entirety of the human race is offered salvation.

All because a non-Israelite prostitute believed that Yahweh is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below, testified to that belief, and allowed her actions to be directed by such belief.

I wonder if any of you have begun to recognize a theme in this narrative which has already appeared in earlier parts of scripture?

You'll recall that, through Moses, the LORD God instructed the Israelites' ancestors to paint the lintels and door posts of their Egyptian houses with the blood of lambs. When God's destroyer passed through Egypt, he saw the red blood on the doors and passed over the houses of Israel. Thus, the descendants of Abraham were able to escape from Egypt and become a nation holy to the Lord, formed in the wilderness through covenantal obedience and now about to gain the Promised Land.

And, that 'passing over' episode was restaged here in Jericho. Through Joshua's spies, the LORD God instructed Rahab to tie a cord outside her window. When Israel passed through Jericho on their mission of destruction, they would see the crimson cord and pass over her apartment.

Thus, everyone within the apartment would be saved.

And saved in the fullest sense of the word. They were saved from death in the moment. And they were saved from whatever awaited them at the hands of their neighbours and the local army because of their belief in Israel's God and their related sympathies. And, they were adopted into God's holy family to become His beloved children:

Her family has lived in Israel ever since.⁴

Because of her faith, testimony, and action, Rahab and her family were passed over by the fate of those who choose not to accept the grace of God, and were set free to become part of the holy nation formed by God's covenant.

3. Far from being an interesting piece of historical trivia, Rahab's salvation and new-found life in fellowship with Yahweh, becomes ever more significant when we recognize that she would become the mother of Obed, the grandmother of Jesse, the great-grandmother of King David, and the many-greats-grandmother of Joseph, who would one day marry Mary the mother of Jesus and would adopt the Messiah into his own family – the ancestral family of King David!⁵

Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute, confessed Yahweh to be the God of all that exists, testified to that faith, allowed her thoughts, speech, and action to be directed by that faith, was saved (passed over), and became integrated into the divine strategy of redemption.

4. Rahab acted on her faith.

⁴ Joshua 6:25

⁵ cf. Matthew 1

She believed something to be true about the God we cannot see, and regardless of the opinions of her neighbours and friends, she held firm to what she believed, she expressed that belief – gave testimony, and she allowed her actions to be directed not by the authority of the human government nor by the opinions of her neighbours, but by the one whom she believed to be God of heaven above and the earth below.

Because of her faith-inspired action, she experienced some immediate blessings: she was saved – she didn't die and she was adopted into the family of Israel. But she also experienced more trials: she saw her city destroyed.

We cannot read very far into Joshua without wrestling with the claim that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel whom we know in Jesus of Nazareth is unique and is supreme. This God who spoke creation into existence is set on reclaiming his people and his land from all forces that take us away from the divine fellowship.

So, what we see playing out in the Conquest of Canaan – as it was in Egypt during the Exodus, and as it is once-and-for-all at Calvary by Jesus' own sacrifice – is the God of creation, covenant, and restoration reclaiming his people and his land from that which leads to chaos and meaninglessness.

We learn in this story that Yahweh is the God who gets things done. The God who is powerful. The God who will ensure his plan of redemption is completed and will reconcile to himself his people and his land.

We also learn that God's timeline is not the same as ours.

We often don't see the consequences of our faith and so our faith begins to seem intangible. Something to think about once in a while, but of no lasting or imminent significance to our daily lives.

We see in the example of Rahab however, that God operates imminently and also on a scale of generations and millennia.

Rahab couldn't have seen the long-term consequences of her faith-directed testimony and action. She couldn't have seen that salvation would be offered to the entire human race; that adoption into the holy family and fellowship with the heavenly Father would be made possible for everyone, that forgiveness of sin and freedom from death's controlling grip would be offered to everyone in Jesus the Christ all because Rahab believed that Yahweh was God, gave testimony to this, and allowed her actions to be led by that belief!

As much as we'd like to see immediate results of our actions of faith, maybe that ought not to be our primary goal. Maybe our primary goal ought to be holding fast to our conviction that the God who is Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whom we see revealed in the story of Scripture is the living God in fellowship with whom is life eternal. And allow that belief to be the belief that directs our actions. Whether it be deciding how to vote, how to manage our schedules, how to relate to our children, parents, friends, neighbours.

For we've a message to give to the nations,
that the Lord who reigneth above
hath sent us his Son to save us,
and show us that God is love.
For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
and the dawning to noonday bright,
and Christ's great kingdom
shall come on earth,
the kingdom of love and light.

For the good of our souls, the health of the nations, and the glory of God.

Amen.

Hymn #765 "We've a story to tell to the nations"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwFzG9diuI>

We respond with prayer, faith, and service:

God of all people and places,
we come to you in prayer,
giving thanks that you are with us in all situations.
You bring us strength and courage when we are anxious or afraid.
You provide wisdom and direction when we face choices and challenges.
Thank you for your faithfulness to us.
In this time of prayer, enlarge our love and sharpen our vision
so that we may serve the well-being of the world you love more faithfully.

We pray for those who dwell on the margins of the economy,
facing the challenges of unemployment or financial insecurity
in these days of transition.
Give leaders in government, business and labour a mutual vision
that reflects the values of your kingdom,
so that everyone has enough resources and respect to live well and wisely.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those facing famine and drought this year,
and for those who have lost everything through fire, storm, or pandemic.
Bring support to those people and agencies who work to alleviate suffering
and help them rebuild lives and communities.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for those who work for peace and mercy
in a world divided by bitter conflicts,
and for those who keep peace and lead negotiations in international disputes.
Give them courage and perseverance.
We remember those who face violence, persecution, or discrimination daily,
and pray for all whose lives are marked by danger or upheaval.
Send your Spirit to protect the vulnerable and shame the vicious
so that justice and well-being will prevail.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for teachers, students, educational administrators and support staff
as another school year begins.
Thank you for the gifts of education,
for insight into this ever-changing world
and the ability to distinguish truth from error.
Grant those in education this year mutual respect
and commitment to the shared venture of learning.
Help each of us bring the benefits of our education to our life of faith
and give us all a teachable spirit.
Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those anywhere who struggle with pain or illness,
disability or daunting diagnosis.

Stay by their side.

Be with those who face death this day,
and those who weep for loved ones who have died.

Unite us in love, whatever we are facing,
and grant us the peace and hope you have promised us in Christ Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Hear us now as we say the prayer that Jesus taught all his followers:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with His blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.