

The Scandalous Women of Matthew 1
Advent 2, 2012 Midweek Worship

Rahab

A Woman with Two Strikes against Her Plays an Important Role

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - Joshua 2:1-21

EPISTLE LESSON - Hebrews 11:30-31

GOSPEL LESSON - Matthew 1:5,6

Text: Matthew 1:5,6 (NIV)

⁵Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

Theme: A Woman with Two Strikes against Her Plays an Important Role



Have you ever wished that you could switch teams? You went into the game knowing that you were going to lose, and you wished that you could be on the other team, the winning team.

The good news of this text is that we can switch teams. In fact, God encourages it. God calls us to leave the devil's team, which is destined for an eternal defeat, and to become a part of His team, which has already won the eternal victory. Rahab is a good example of someone who switched teams, which led to her salvation, and played an important role for the victory of God's people.

I. She entered the game with two strikes against her.

She was a sinner. Throughout the Bible she is known as "Rahab the prostitute." While many of the religions around Israel would even employ prostitutes as part of their worship, this was an occupation which God always condemned. (Lev 19:29) It's interesting in this text was that the 2 spies that Joshua sent to Jericho could have gone anywhere in the city, but they stayed at the home of Rahab the prostitute.

Then the king sent a message to Rahab, that she should bring out the men. It was at that point that she changed sides. She hid the men under stalks of flax on her roof and sent the men who were looking for them on a wild goose chase. That night she came to the spies and said, "*I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you...because the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now then please swear to me by the LORD that you will show*

kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you.” Rahab confessed that the LORD is God. While all of the other Canaanites were living in fear of Israel’s God, she asked for the love of God, and not just any love.

The word that is translated “kindness” is the Hebrew word “*chesed*.” Earlier this year, I preached a sermon on that word, and I wrote a newsletter article on it. It is often translated as mercy as in the verse, “*Oh, give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His mercy endures forever.*” God’s *Chesed* is the kind of love that will never let us go. It is always faithful. Sometimes it is translated as “unfailing love.” This woman who led a sinful life, wanted God’s grace and mercy. She was like the sinners of whom Jesus spoke in the New Testament, “*John [the Baptist] came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did.*” Through repentance and faith in Christ these sinners changed teams and trusted in God’s forgiving love for them.

The same is true for us. Paul writes in Romans 5, “*God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us... For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!*” Each one of us has sinned and fallen short of God’s glory, but in His mercy God has redeemed us through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Through faith in Christ, our sins are forgiven, and we are given a gift that is even better than being on God’s team. He makes us His own dear children. We can always count on His love for us until the day that we receive our inheritance, eternal life with Him in heaven. God takes sinners like you and me, and through faith in Christ makes us His beloved children.

Rahab was also a foreigner. She was a Canaanite, the people on whom God was pouring His wrath. She was even a citizen of the first city that God’s people would conquer. However, the spies whom she rescued remembered her. The men whom she saved brought out her entire family to the Israelite camp. It says in Joshua 6:25, “*She lives among the Israelites to this day.*” She was taken from her home, which was destroyed and made a part of God’s people.

Very few of us have any Jewish blood in us. Yet, through faith in Christ, we are part of the people of God. Paul writes in Ephesians 2, “*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.*” Peter writes in his first letter, “*Once you were not a people; but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*” (1 Pt 1:10) God takes people from every nation and makes them into His chosen people through faith in Christ. It doesn’t matter what language we speak, what the color of our skin is or what our ethnic heritage is, through faith in Christ, we are the people of God. We are the people to whom God gives the same mercy that He gave to Rahab.

God took this woman with 2 strikes against her, and gave her His mercy. She is a striking example for us, that it doesn’t matter what we have done or where we have come from, God wants us to repent of our sins, confess Christ as our Savior, and trust in His grace and mercy for us in Christ. He will give us His love that never fails.

III. He will also use our lives to do great things in His kingdom.

After she came to faith Rahab put her life in great risk. Imagine if the people of Jericho would have found the men who were hiding on her roof or if they would have caught her helping them to sneak out of town. She would have been killed. But for her, knowing the God of Israel as her God, was worth the risk. She helped the spies, and became instrumental in helping Israel to conquer the city. But God had even more planned for her. This Canaanite woman would become the great grandmother of King David and an ancestor of the promised Savior. She would receive great honor throughout the ages for what she did for the spies and as a mother in the royal line of Israel.

If God could use a woman like Rahab, who led a sinful life and was a Canaanite, He can use each one of our lives for His glory.

We have several examples of the same kind of thing throughout the Bible. There is the story in the New Testament of the woman who led a sinful life, who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. The disciples objected, but the Lord said that the story would be told throughout the ages to her honor. The Samaritan woman at the well, who was an outcast among her own people, brought her entire village to faith in Jesus.

It doesn't matter what you have done or where you come from, God not only wants to give you His mercy, He also wants to use your life to do amazing things. Our lives become a testimony to the goodness and grace of God to sinners like us. Through our witness of God's love, we bring other people to know Christ as their Savior too.

It's not always easy to switch teams when you play sports, but no matter who we are or what we have done, God always invites us to be a part of His team, which is always the winning team. May the example of Rahab be an example to each one of us of how God wants to be merciful to sinners and use our lives to His glory.

Amen.

*Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
December 13, 2012*

OPENING HYMN - LSB 333 "Once He Came in Blessing"

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: The Spirit and the Church cry out:

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: All those who await His appearance pray:

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: The whole creation pleads:

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Psalms 31:1 - 16 (NIV)

- ¹ In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.
- ² Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.
- ³ Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.
- ⁴ Free me from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.
- ⁵ Into your hands I commit my spirit;
redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.
- ⁶ I hate those who cling to worthless idols;
I trust in the LORD.
- ⁷ I will be glad and rejoice in your love,
for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul.
- ⁸ You have not handed me over to the enemy
but have set my feet in a spacious place.
- ⁹ Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief...
- ¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
- ¹⁵ My times are in your hands;
deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.
- ¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

COLLECT

P: The Lord be with you,

C: **and also with you.**

P: Let us pray,

C: Lord God, we thank You that You have taught us what You would have us believe and do. Help us by Your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to hold fast Your Word in hearts that You have cleansed that thereby we may be made strong in faith and perfect in holiness and be comforted in life and death; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - Joshua 2:1-21

EPISTLE LESSON - Hebrews 11:30-31

GOSPEL LESSON - Matthew 1:5,6

SERMON HYMN - **LSB 375** "Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising"

SERMON - Matthew 1:5

"A Woman with Two Strikes Against Her Plays an Important Role"

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO THE LORD

THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE BENEDICTION

P: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN - 344 "On Jordan's Banks"

Welcome to Benediction Lutheran Church! For our Advent services this year, we are looking at the women who are mentioned in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1. Today we will look at the story of Rahab the prostitute and Gentile from the city of Jericho, who acted in faith by hiding the Jewish spies and was delivered when Jericho was conquered. This story shows that God can use anyone, even those with two strikes against them for His purposes.