

“WOMEN OF ADVENT”
“Rahab, the Prostitute”

We began a new sermon series as we start the Christian year. *“The Women of Advent”* invites us to consider not only the ancestors of Jesus, but how we carry on their faith and love as the bearers of Christ in our day and time. Over the next few weeks, we will focus on the women in the genealogy of Jesus as found in the first chapter of Matthew. This would be interesting in and of itself as in most genealogies’ women are not named and if they are, it is in relationship with their husbands or their fathers. In this listing, not only are these women named, but three of these women are named and the fourth by the name of her murdered husband. Mostly these women are outsiders, of a different ethnic group and are known mostly because of the scandals by which they are associated. The first Sunday of Advent we learned about Tamar. This second Sunday of Advent, we focus on Rahab. Although we read a short portion in worship on Sunday, the daily readings give more of the story. Rahab was an innkeeper and a prostitute. She was not an Israelite but put her faith in the God of Israel and bargained for herself and her whole family, that they might live. She is mentioned by name seven times in scripture and the other three times her name is used to reference the nation of Egypt. She was not exactly a woman of character, not only was her trade named again and again, but she was a liar as well, which is how the people of Israel came into the land of Canaan. She believed, before she knew what she believed, and her name has been remembered as one of the righteousness. May we find the same kind of faith in our lives and spirits as we prepare for the birth of Jesus.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Rahab, the Prostitute”**

Daily prayer: *Peacemaking God, we turn to you in prayer. The world around us is filled with violence and destruction. Nations know war all too well. Your invitation to carry an olive branch seems ludicrous as the call to arms is sounded. Rahab lived in the midst of such a world. She kept the spies of God safe and gave her faith to the God of the Israelites. Help us to seek your reconciliation. Enable us to have in You, that like Rahab and Tamar, we might be counted among the righteous. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, who is God-with-us. Amen*

Study Guide

Monday, December 9, 2019 Joshua 2: 1-7

Joshua sent two spies to Jericho. They stayed at Rahab's house, named as a prostitute. Now, probably she was a temple prostitute, one who participated in fertility rituals in the Canaanite religion. She lived next to the wall, and when word got out, she was asked about the strangers. She flat out lied about where they were. It is scary thing to lie to those in authority, and yet she did it. This woman, of questionable reputation, added to that reputation by lying. And yet, by lying she protected the strangers in her home. How does this story strike you? Does it make you uncomfortable? Do you wonder how this woman with unethical behavior both in lifestyle and in telling the truth is an ancestor of Jesus? *Today, take a moment to examine your life and see where you might be failing at living a life of ethics and truth. Then say a prayer of thanks, that even when we fail, God is faithful and loves us.*

Tuesday, December 10, 2019 Joshua 2: 8-15

Rahab confesses her faith in God. We have no idea how she got there, how she came to believe in the God of Abraham and Sarah, but she professes her faith to the spies. She begs for the lives of her family and kin. She receives the assurances she needs and helps them escape. There are many stories in Judaism about those who take on the side of the Hebrew people and protect them from evil. They are considered righteous even when they lie or cheat because they are doing God's work. Certainly, that is a slippery slope as a witness to God. Yet, Rahab is named as an ancestor of King David and of Jesus because she risked her life, her family and her livelihood by protecting the Israeli spies. She risked it all for her faith in a God she really did not yet know. Like Tamar she does what is wrong in some ways, in order to do what is right. *AS this story progress, how do you feel about it now? How do you make sense of this and Rahab's inclusion in Jesus' genealogy? As you continue in this Advent season, pray for a heart that is open to what God is doing in our world.*

Wednesday December 11, 2019 Joshua 2: 16-21

The spies get away! They set up a signal for Rahab so that when they return, they will remain faithful to what they have promised. As you read, you can see that the line is drawn, everyone is clear about their role in what is to come in the future. The uncomfortable truth is that not only is Rahab a prostitute and a liar, she is also in every sense a traitor. She betrays her fellow citizens and her king in order to side with the Israelites. Rahab is a reminder that sometimes one must stand up against the powers that be in order to be on the side of God. Much of this part of the Hebrew scripture is bloody and terrible. Like many early stories of different cultures, people fight wars and kill each other to prove they and their God is the strongest. Rahab sides with the people of Israel who were slaves in Egypt, who knew oppression, pain and uncertainty and who witnessed to the power of God to bring them to a new land. Rahab places her hope and faith in this same God. *Are there times you feel compelled to stand up against oppression? Throughout scripture, the people of God are encouraged to stand up for the poor, and the outcast and the most vulnerable. How can you do that during this Advent season?*

Thursday December 12, 2019 Joshua 6: 22-25

The fall of Jericho happens in this sixth chapter. We may know this story well, the marching around the city, the blowing the trumpets. In these verses, we see how Joshua and the people of Israel are faithful to the promise made to Rahab. And we are told "her family still lives among Israel today," and in fact, next week, we see how Rahab may influence a certain man as he considers marrying a widow from Moab. Think of some of the people you admire, are they perfect or without sin? *Name some people who God has used in your life, that like Rahab may have not always been ethical, but have become faithful to God. Say a prayer of thanks for these persons who have made a difference.*

Friday December 13, 2019 Hebrews 11: 30-34

The whole of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a recounting of the faithful. It begins, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." This chapter speaks of many of the people we know from the Hebrew scripture, and names some in these verses we may not be as familiar with. The author goes on to say that many of these faithful people did not see the promise of God fulfilled, but yet they remained faithful. While we are in the midst of Advent where we remember the promised coming of God in Christ, in some ways we are no different. We, too, are still waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise of no more war, pain or illness, as we wait for God's reign on earth. *Today, say a prayer for peace, say a pray of thanksgiving for all the faithful and pray that you too may be strong in faith, in hope and in love.*