

## **Matriarchs of Christ: Rahab**

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – August 10 2025

9th Sunday after Pentecost

**Readings:** Joshua 2:1-14, 6:22-25; James 2:20-26; Matthew 5:14-16 NRSVUE

**Reflection:** Psalm 31

**Call to Worship:** The Lord is upright and good. He instructs sinners in the way and teaches the humble what is right. The paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness for those that follow in his ways. O Lord, for your name's sake, pardon my guilt for it is great. Who are the people who honor God? He will teach them the path they should choose. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 25)

**Prayer:** O God, our Guide and Guardian, you have led us apart from the busy world into the quiet of your house. Grant us grace to worship you in Spirit and in truth, to the comfort of our souls and the upbuilding of every good purpose and holy desire. Enable us to do the work that you have called us to do, and that we may love one another in your name. Help us to live by the examples that you have given us, especially those from Scripture that teach us how to have faith, hope, justice, and peace. Let the examples of your faithful servants help us to learn and to grow in understanding and wisdom. Let us worship you this hour, not just by the words of our lips and the songs with our voice, but in word and deed all the days of our lives. May you shelter us in the storm, strengthen us by your steadfast love and faithfulness, and guide us in the paths of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 31

*<sup>1</sup> I take refuge in you, Lord. Please never let me be put to shame. Rescue me by your righteousness! <sup>2</sup> Listen closely to me! Deliver me quickly; be a rock that protects me; be a strong fortress that saves me! <sup>3</sup> You are definitely my rock and my fortress. Guide me and lead me for the sake of your good name! <sup>21</sup> Bless the Lord, because he has wondrously revealed his faithful love to me when I was like a city under siege! <sup>22</sup> When I was panicked, I said, "I'm cut off from your eyes!" But you heard my request for mercy when I cried out to you for help. <sup>23</sup> All you who are faithful, love the Lord! The Lord protects those who are loyal, but he pays the proud back to the fullest degree. <sup>24</sup> All you who wait for the Lord, be strong and let your heart take courage. (Psalm 31:1-3, 21-24 CEB+)*

We read the words of Psalm 31, and we hear of faithfulness. That God rewards those who are loyal, that hold fast to the truth. That those who trust in the Lord have nothing to fear. God is our rock and our fortress when we are in need. Do you turn to God in prayer when you are in need? Do you lift others up in prayer to strengthen them? How can you reach out and help a neighbor in need this week? How can we all share the kindness and grace of Christ with others? How can we do more to love our neighbor this week?

**Prayer:** O God, we turn to you in prayer, knowing that you are always listening. We come before you with our joys and our concerns, bringing all things to place before you. We ask that you listen to the troubles that we name out loud and that you hear the difficulties that we hold

silently within. We ask that you hear our thanks for the causes we have to celebrate, both the personal triumphs we are thankful for and also the celebrations we share together as a community. We come to you because of the good, the bad, and the unknown, lifting up all that we have and all that we are to you. May you guide us and lead us in this life. May you grant us wisdom, courage, and understanding. Bless us in our laughter and in our tears. Show us grace in our mourning and our celebrations. May we walk by faith, following you in the path of love. May you be with us all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible Updated Edition. Our first reading is from Joshua chapter 2, verses 1 through 14 and chapter 6 verses 22 through 25.

*<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> The king of Jericho was told, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land." <sup>3</sup> Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out the whole land." <sup>4</sup> But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. <sup>5</sup> And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them." <sup>6</sup> She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. <sup>7</sup> So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. <sup>8</sup> Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof <sup>9</sup> and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land and that dread of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. <sup>10</sup> For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. <sup>11</sup> As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. <sup>12</sup> Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith <sup>13</sup> that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death." <sup>14</sup> The men said to her, "Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the Lord gives us the land."*

*<sup>22</sup> But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." <sup>23</sup> So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her—they brought all her kindred out—*

*and set them outside the camp of Israel. <sup>24</sup> They burned down the city and everything in it; only the silver and gold and the vessels of bronze and iron they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. <sup>25</sup> But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. (Joshua 2:1-14, 6:22-25 NRSVUE\*)*

Our next reading is from James chapter 2, verses 20 through 26.

*<sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is worthless? <sup>21</sup> Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was active along with his works, and by works faith was brought to completion. <sup>23</sup> Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? <sup>26</sup> For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead. (James 2:20-26 NRSVUE\*)*

Our final reading is from Matthew chapter 5, verses 14 through 16.

*<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup> People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16 NRSVUE\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week brings us to the second woman in our "Matriarchs of Christ" series. This week we see Rahab from the genealogy of Jesus found in Matthew's Gospel. Rahab has a rather interesting story that shows us about faith and works, as well as the way that we treat people the way we want to be treated. And we see just how much of a difference one action can make. Because this could just be the story of Rahab saving her family, but the way that Rahab ties into the genealogy is also a reminder of just how unexpected a change can be. I wanted to look at her specifically for the fact that she is very much an outsider. She lives in Jericho. She is not one of the Israelites. She is living in the land that the Israelites are coming to occupy. But she sees what's going on and she makes a place for herself and her family. Because of that, she becomes a part of Israel. And not just a minor part, but she becomes part of the most important genealogy for all of Christianity. This one woman that could very easily be overlooked and dismissed.

We step into her story from Joshua and in it we see that Israel is scouting out the land of Jericho. They are looking to make sure that they know what's coming so that they can figure out how to come and take the land. While the spies are scouting around, the king catches wind of their activities. He begins a search to hunt down the Israelites. The men have spent the night at Rahab's house. The king's men come around and say that she needs to send them out. She weaves a story for them about how the men came and then they left again by a different road, but if they hurry, they should be able to overtake them. All the while, she has hidden them on the roof. The king's men go hunting for these Israelite spies and they go off on a wild goose

chase. And Rahab comes with a proposition to these spies. She's heard about what's going on. She knows what's coming. She knows that God is going to give the Israelites victory. Her proposition is simple. She has dealt kindly with the spies. She hid them when she could have handed them over. Their lives were in her hands, and she saved them. Now she asks to be treated the same in return. That just as she saved the lives of these Israelite spies, when the time comes, they are going to be required to save her and her family. And they strike a deal. The Israelite spies go back and they report to Joshua all of what's happened. When the Israelites do come into the land, Joshua sends the men back to Rahab. They bring her, her father, her mother, her brothers and sisters, everyone that is a part of her household comes out with her. And they come and they live as part of Israel. Now, this outsider becomes an insider. So much so to the point that she ends up as part of the most influential genealogy that we could have.

What it shows is that she dealt faithfully with the men that had come to spy out the land and expected simply the same in return. She trusts that they will take care of her. That if God will give them victory, God can give her salvation. It's the type of thing we hear about when James is talking about faith and works. James has a very famous dialogue here about faith without works being dead. He mentions the way that we are justified by the works that we do. Not that we earn salvation, but that we show that we are trusting and faithful by how we behave. That faith is active in how we live. And James uses Rahab as an example. Reaching all the way back to Rahab, there in Joshua, just after the Exodus, to say, "was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?" What James is highlighting is that her actions reflect her character. Her actions are how she shows what she believes. Her actions are how she shows that she is trustworthy, how she shows that she is faithful. When we talk about faith and works, that is the type of thing we are talking about. That our actions have to show what it is we believe. If we want to be trusted, show that we are trustworthy. If we want to be seen as faithful, let it be reflected in our actions.

That's what Rahab does. She saves these men from being caught and asks then to be treated in the same way, with the same respect and the same helping manner. When I think about that, I think about what Jesus taught us about treating others how we want to be treated, but also the way that we make that visible. That we don't hide our good works. I bring this up because Rahab does not hide her intentions. She does not hide the good that she is doing for these Israelite men. Her actions put fully on display her faith and her trustworthiness. That her light is not hidden under a basket. It is put on a lampstand. The light that she has is not hidden away. She acts on her beliefs. She acts on her faith and makes it something very visible. It is fully on display for others to see and for others to experience.

Now, one of the interesting things is when we talk about her being an outsider, being an Israelite is an identity. It is more than a nationality. It is a family, a religion, and a nation. It is an important marker, so it does matter when we think of Rahab as an outsider. What we see here is that Rahab is very quickly brought into the nation and treated as no longer an outsider, but a part of the nation. If we go back to how she ties into the genealogy, last week we looked at Tamar as the mother of Perez. And when we go back to Matthew's genealogy to see how Rahab fits in, we see that Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Aram. Aram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. And Nahshon was the

father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Now, if your ears perked up right then, it's because you may have finally heard names that you recognize because of Boaz. Because we'll be talking about Boaz next week. Because we have back-to-back women in the genealogy of Matthew. Because next week we'll be talking about Ruth. They tie in because Ruth and Boaz have Obed. And Obed is the father of Jesse, and Jesse is the father of King David. Rahab is King David's great-great-grandmother. The man after God's own heart. The king of Israel that unites all the land. And so quickly we find this outsider directly related to the line of the King. To the line of Christ.

I think that her inclusion helps to solidify the fact that in the New Testament there is this big idea about the children of Israel being the focus. The Israelites being the ones that Christ came to save. But there's almost this feeling that he came to them first because they needed the most help. Because we see again and again outsiders that outshine the Israelites. And Rahab is a sign of that. That she was an outsider. That this prostitute from Jericho, an outsider even in her own community because of that. She's tied into the line of King David. To the line of Christ. Because she is not defined by her role as an outsider. She is not defined by the fact that she was a prostitute. She is defined by her actions. And her actions show her as being faithful and trustworthy. Saving the Israelite spies and setting them on a different road so that they can come and take the land. That she recognizes what God is going to do, and she goes with God. Her faithfulness and her trustworthiness define her more than anything else. I think that's why she is mentioned by name in Matthew's genealogy. Because it's a reminder that we are defined by the actions that show our faith. It's not the status that we have from our birth. It is not the titles that we may claim. But it is how we live that shows the world what we believe and who we follow. In this series we will continue to see people whose character is built on that kind of work. Outsiders that trust in the Lord and show faithfulness in all that they do. And each story gives us another example of how it is we should be living and how sometimes those examples come from places that we may not expect. But they're the stories that we need to hear. Because they strengthen us by faith and they strengthen us to do the right thing. To be faithful and just. We study their stories so that we may walk ever closer with Jesus Christ our Lord in all that we have and in all that we are. That we may follow him by word and by deed all the days of our lives. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Our Current Series – Matriarchs of Christ**

This series is a 5-week series for the month of August and in it we will be looking at the five women in the genealogy found in the Gospel of Matthew. Each week we will cover another woman from the line of Jesus. We will hear about Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. Each of them is a shining example of faith and strength and teaches us about how we can live our lives today.

8/3: Tamar

8/10: Rahab

8/17: Ruth

8/24: Bathsheba

8/31: Mary

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Worship 10:30am

#### **Toledo UMC**

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Worship 8:15am

#### **Etna UMC**

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