**Sermon Text**: Joshua 2:1-14

**Occasion**: 1st Sunday of Advent; Jesus Genealogy Series 1; 3 Dec 2023

**Kindness of Rahab**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you in the name of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rahab is one of the earlier names in Jesus’ genealogy, and one of the more unusual names since ancient genealogies almost exclusively name men. She lived around 1400 years before Jesus was born on Christmas and she probably had little understanding of the part she would play in the birth of the Christchild. Regardless, the New Testament mentions Rahab a couple times in high regard (Heb 11:31; James 2:25) and both times she is recognized for the greatness of her faith and for her history as a prostitute. Why is this important? That is, why is this important for us?

For one thing, it is important to know Rahab’s sinful history because we see that she was a sinner like us. We might not have committed the same sins, but we have definitely done something which God forbids. And we see the true gravity of sin in Rahab’s situation. She and her family were the only people to survive the attack on the city of Jericho. This was no accident—that they were saved and that they were the only ones saved. The entire Promised Land was teeming with people who reeked with sinfulness that had been ripening over the past few hundred years. God always had His eye on handing these people over to righteous punishment, but not until the sin was indeed ripe (Gen 15:13-21). That punishment was the Israelites taking the Promised Land from them and killing them according to their sins. And people in this world have their sins nearing ripeness.

Normally, today, we see the punishment of God for sins in the form of death—any death. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), therefore people die in this world on account of their sins, awaiting a future time of judgment where each person will be judged into salvation or damnation for their works. This is Christ’s message to us in our gospel reading this morning (Mark 13:24-37). We know a time is coming when the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, but that should not shake us when we know this judgment will not destroy us. Like Rahab was delivered through faith, so do we find salvation through faith in Christ.

A great tribulation was about to fall upon Rahab’s city. Jericho would have its walls crumble under God’s glory and the Israelites would be God’s sword to execute justice on every sinner inside. Rahab, as a prostitute, had much to fear. Yet she did not cower in fear but lived in faith. She knew of the glory of God drying up the Red Sea and laying low mighty kings. She also knew the Lord reigned over the whole of the heavens and the earth. Therefore, she had faith and acted in faith, that is, she acted out of loving kindness, not fear of dying. She hid the Israelite spies and saw them safely outside her city. She knew that the Lord would be with His people and she wanted her life to be lived among the people of God. And indeed, she did live among the people of God for she even married into the household of faith that she might be an ancestor of Jesus, an Israelite.

So, when we are looking off into the distance to see the day of judgment coming—be it a far time off or close by, do we act in fear? Do we try to fulfill God’s Law to try and avoid the punishment of sin? No, instead we live in faith. And faith is trust in the Lord. Our faith is trusting that our Lord will deliver His people from evil. He will deliver those who trust in him on the Last Day just as God delivered Rahab and her family on their day of judgment. Rahab lived and lived in the household of faith and so will we live and live in the household of faith in the Church. When Christ descends to judge the wicked, he first sends out his angels concerning us. We who are in Christ will rise from the dead and be gathered unto our Lord. We will meet him as he descends and we will never depart from him (1 Thess 4:16-17). We will be with him beyond God’s judgment into the paradise to come.

You will survive judgment because the judge has already pardoned all your sins. Rahab was drenched with the guilt of adultery just as we were drenched with the guilt of our own personal sins, but the blood of Christ has washed us clean. Our guilt is taken away from us through the sacrifice of Jesus. There is no punishment left for us to pay when Christ bore all your guilt upon his shoulders at the cross. You are not guilty of sin. You are pardoned—forgiven. And this is all done out of loving kindness.

Rahab showed loving kindness to the Israelite spies and wanted them to treat her kindly in return, allowing her to survive the judgment of Jericho. But this grace—this loving kindness of God which permitted her to live—was not the first time grace was shown to Rahab. If Rahab acted out of faith by loving the spies, then she had already received the love of God. When did this happen? It happened when Rahab heard the Gospel that God saves His people. She heard God saved His people by parting the Red Sea. She heard God saved His people by defeating wicked kings. And she was part of His people the moment she believed and relied on God to deliver her from Jericho, as well as her past life of sin.

We too have heard the Gospel. God saved His people when they believed and came into the faith like Rahab. God saved His people by providing people like Rahab to bring about the Saviour of the world. And Jesus was born on Christmas Day save us from punishment for our sins by removing our guilt from us. This is the Gospel we hold to and the one that delivers us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This is the loving kindness of God given to us that we may believe and be saved. It is not that we have loved God that He has saved us. He has saved us out of His love that we might show His loving kindness to one another (1 John 4:10-11). Let us love one another that, despite our sins and the sins of each other, we might do what is good and right towards one everyone.

Let us not fear whatever judgment is approaching us—whether it be the hour of our death or the final judgment. Perfect love casts out fear. Fear has to do with punishment but we abide in the love of the Lord through Christ Jesus. His love casts out fear for it casts out the guilt of our sin (1 John 4:16-17). And supplied by Christ’s love, we can pour out a never-ending supply unto our last day. Amen.

The peace that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.