

‘Are **YOU** on the List?’ *Hebrews 11:29-12:22* Rev. Jane Courtright!

What are **YOU** doing on a list like *this*?

So, Rahab, **what’s a bad girl like YOU** doing on a list like this?

Our list from the letter to the Hebrews is FULL of Biblical heroines & heroes.

As my eyes scanned this passage last week,

I wondered just what I could preach about....

I mean, yet another list of *hard to pronounce* names from the Bible!

Then, I noticed this woman, Rahab on the list.

I become curious!

I wasn’t real familiar with this Rehab –

I even had to ‘google’ how to pronounce her name.

SHE is a real surprise on this list:

Rehab was not even an Israelite!

She was a prostitute who ran a brothel in the city of Jericho

even before it became a part of Israel.

Just who is this woman anyhow?

And what **IS** she doing on a list like this?

Still curious, I also looked Rahab up in the concordance of my Bible. I discovered that she is mentioned in at least 4 passages in the Bible! The first passage is from the book of Joshua.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Joshu,  
I read an **intriguing and disturbing** story!

The book takes place after the Israelites escape from Egypt under Moses' leadership,  
after the 'parting of the Red Se,'  
and after the death of Moses.

The main action in the book of Joshua  
is the occupation of the land of Canaan by the Israelites.  
After they crossed the Jordan River, the Israelites,  
under the leadership of Joshua,  
set about seizing the land from the Canaanites.  
The city of Jericho was first on Joshua's list.

**Here's the intrigue:**

***You've already heard the Reader's Digest Condensed version of the next part of this story***

***during the Time for children, youth & young at heart!***

**HERE IS A BIT MORE DETAIL:**

Joshua sent 2 spies into Jericho to 'case' or 'size-up' the city.

Just how hard would it be to conquer Jericho?

And those spies, after sneaking into the city,

Were made welcome in Rahab's house of ill-dispute.

**THAT'S HOW RAHAB ENTERS THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL!!!**

Of course, the king of Jericho had spies of his own.

They informed him that Rahab

was providing sanctuary for spies of the people of Israel.

So, the king sent a message to Rahab to give up the spies.

But the king's message came too late.

Rahab had already hidden those spies

under some stalks of flax on her roof.

What she told the king's messenger was that

Yes, 2 strangers had come to her place,

But she had sent them packing the night before.

You can probably catch them if you hurry," she told them.

Then, Rahab went to the spies on her roof.

Her words to them are even more astounding!

She tells them that she believes in their God.

She's heard about how they crossed the Red Sea,

escaping Pharaoh's army.

Then she says, "I know your God is with you and you take our land.

The dread of you has fallen on us,

and all who live in this land melt in fear before you."

Finally, Rahab made her statement of belief when she told the spies,

"Your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below."

And then, Rahab makes a request of the spies!

"Give me a sign of good faith:

That you will spare the lives of my mother and father,

my brothers and sisters, and all their loved ones from death."

The spies agreed and answered,

"You have hidden us from the king's soldiers and saved our lives.

You have been good to us. So, our lives for yours.

When we conquer this city, we will see to it

That you and your loved ones are made safe.”

Rehab then let them escape by lowering rope from her window

(her house was in the wall of Jericho.)

She gave them exact escape instructions.

But before they escaped, the spies told Rahab,

“Before we return, tie a piece of red cord in the window  
through which you helped us escape.

Get all of your loved ones together in this house right away  
and DO NOT go outside this house. We will protect you.”

Rahab answered, “According to your words, so be it.”

Three days later, it happened!

The Israelites attacked and conquered Jericho.

Rahab’s sign of faith, the red cord, hung from her window.

Rahab and her family were taken outside of the city walls before they  
fell.

Then the city was burned down along with everything in it.

Only Rahab and her family were spared.

Rahab and her family were saved by words of 'faith?'

However you would describe these words,  
they did lead the way into the future.

THAT'S WHAT Rahab is doing on a list

In the Christian Scriptures in this letter to the Hebrews!

She is also included on a list in the Book of James (2:5 – to be exact!)

James writes to make the point that faith is good,

But without works, faith is a dead thing.

James believed that one can't just talk the talk, but must walk the walk.

James lists Rahab as an example of someone who did both.

Rahab WAS a remarkable woman.

She was a foreign woman to the Israelites & one of some independence.

She owned her own place and was able to make a decision,  
a binding contract – on her own. She WAS very resourceful.

She was a woman willing to go the extra mile to take care of her family.

She knew without a doubt that her city of Jericho

**WOULD** be conquered, destroyed in days.

So, Rahab used her courage and brains

to do what **she believed** she had to do to save her family.

Because of this, Rahab is one of the women in yet **ANOTHER** list –  
this time in the genealogy of Jesus in the first chapter of  
Matthew!

Do you remember this story from the small book of Ruth?

Ruth followed Naomi, her mother in law,  
to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem.

Ruth then married the wealthy farmer Boaz.....

they gave birth to Obed,

who gave birth to Jesse,

who fathered King David,

And so on for 14 more generations – until Jesus is born of Mary.

Why do I mention this now? Because....SURPRISE!?!.....

A man named Salmon, with Rahab, gave birth to BOAZ!

You see, Rahab is also included in the great list

of Jesus' genealogy or lineage!

**What a story!**

But I have to confess that I have trouble  
dealing with the story of Rahab!

Because there are parts of her story which are VERY disturbing:

The state of Israel is **STILL** militarily occupying vital areas

where other people of God (often referred to as Palestinians)

have lived for generations.....

**STILL** seizing land and water in various ways....war and plunder,  
bulldozing homes

& centuries old olive tree orchards, building settlements on  
occupied,

but not owned land, siphoning good water from occupied lands  
and much more.

Our mostly European ancestors reclaimed the story of Israel occupying  
Canaan, the Promised Land,

to justify breaking treaties, seizing the land, burning and  
murdering Native Americans.

They called America the Promised Land. After all, history is written by  
the victors!

As we approach Columbus Day, or Indigenous People's Day,

we have just recently begun hearing our story as told by the Native  
Americans.

This is not a rewriting of history, but a listening to different experiences  
and perspectives.

It makes me wonder how this story of Rahab and the invasion of Canaan would sound

    If recounted by the residents of Jericho at the time.....stories of murder, rape, etc..

So, while the Israelites saw her as a woman of faith, a heroine;  
    the Canaanites may have considered her a traitor.

So, in light of the intrigue and the disturbing aspects of this story,  
    what MEANING can we gain from it?....

**WE ARE EACH OF US A PART OF THIS LONG LINEAGE,  
This human history of sometimes flawed, sometimes saintly People of  
God!**

Rahab is a part of that great cloud of witnesses to which

    WE – you & you & you & you & I, .....belong.

A cloud to which others we know belong:

    like Deacon Joshua Tibbets of Antigo, who started a Sunday  
School

    in Eagle River in 1884....which was the beginning of this church,  
our church;

or Perhaps your great grandmother, your favorite Sunday School  
teacher,

someone sitting near you in worship today,  
the children of our church family and their children.

We are in the company of the faithful!  
And not a **one of them**, including ourselves, is perfect.

But each one of them is unique,  
& made in the image of God!

You and I are in great, if imperfect, company.

We are not alone....

which is the title of a poem by Myra Nagel.

I will close by sharing this short poem:

Here I stand, O God,

**ALONE.**

Alone with my problems & my sorrows,

alone with my decisions,

alone with my responsibilities,

alone with my hopes.

**ALONE.**

**EXCEPT -**

except for a friend who promised to pray for me,  
except for family and dear ones, past and present,  
    who lend me their strength,  
except for Jesus who shows me God in his life & death.  
except for the community that Jesus calls his body.

Here I stand, O God,

**NOT ALONE.**

Here I stand

Surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses.

**Here WE stand.**

Thank you, God.

**THANK YOU!**      Amen.