

Read

Hebrews 11:29–38^a

Consider

Have you ever received an unexpected invitation to a party? You are likely delighted to anticipate going to this event. But then when you get there, someone looks at you with a quizzical expression, asking you, but with a voice loud enough for others to hear, “How did you get an invitation to this party? When you read the text of this Sunday’s sermon, particularly verse 31 about Rahab, that’s the question that comes to mind in many of us. “How did she get an invitation to the Faith Hall of Fame?”

The Bible doesn’t shy away from telling us Rahab’s occupation. When her story is told in Joshua 2, it is clear the spies have made their way to a brothel in Jericho. This is verse 31 of our text. *By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.* Check out also Matthew 1:1–18. I am embarrassed to say as a younger Christian I used to skip that section and failed to see that in the list of mostly male ancestors of Jesus, there are five women mentioned. Again the question, how did these five get an invitation to this party? Tamar is involved in an incestuous relationship with her father-in-law; next is Rahab, we know about her; just after her, Ruth, the Moabite, historically regarded as the perpetual enemy of the Israelites; then comes the woman named only as *the wife of Uriah*, reminding everyone of King David’s adultery; finally Mary is named, whom we are told a few verses later is only saved from a shameful end to her engagement because God intervened with Joseph through a dream.

Then to complete the biblical picture of Rahab, she is again mentioned favourably in the letter of James when he talks about faith showing itself through works. What is the message then? Surely the one thing the Bible wants to say is that God is able to work through the sort of person we might consider the most unlikely of candidates to be a faith hero.

But there is something more with Rahab. The title of this Sunday’s sermon is The Insight of Faith. I mention a theological concept that was prominent in the thinking of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church—it’s called *prevenient grace*. The idea is that long before you and I became aware of God working in our lives or reaching out to us, God was at work and it was happening. I believe part of the development of faith within most people is having the insight to recognize God is giving us hints of his work, hints of his grace, hints of his providence all the time. Some people see those hints in creation; some see those hints in art and music. No matter how many times I hear it, when in Handel’s *Messiah* the choir sings, “and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,” there is what I can only call a shudder of recognition that pulses through me. Rahab had the insight to recognize that God was calling to her to serve his will and purposes. And she is in the Faith Hall of Fame. I hope you will be watching the YouTube presentation at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, February 20.

Pray

God our Father, as we look upon the world and see the suffering and evil in it, we can begin to doubt your goodness and your purpose. Help us beyond our doubts to embrace faith. There is much of which we cannot be certain, yet in Jesus Christ we see more than enough to know that you love us.

By faith help us to see your purpose for each of us and for our church. Make us sensitive to the promptings of your Spirit. Help us in faith to accept and do your will.

Help us to throw off every encumbrance, every sin to which we cling, and run with resolution the race for which we are entered, our eyes fixed on him on whom faith depends from start to finish, Jesus Christ our Lord. In his name we pray. Amen.

Adapted from Caryl Micklem, [More Contemporary Prayers](#)

Diving Deeper

Bill mentions “prevenient faith” in his sermon, the idea that God is reaching out to us before we are aware of it. Do you agree with that idea? If yes, thinking back can you identify an example from your own life?

Read the story of Rahab from Joshua 2. Why did Rahab demonstrate faith in a god she did not yet know? What were the hints God gave her?

Read Hebrews 11:31. The author, or perhaps preacher, of Hebrews says that Rahab showed faith *because she had received the spies in peace*. What evidence do you see of that in the story told in Joshua 2? Can we demonstrate our faith in the way we show hospitality to others?

There are times when our faith in God asks of us a level of courage that would normally be extraordinary for us. Has that ever happened to you? Do you think it might be happening now? How did you respond? How are you responding? Can Christian friends in the church help you be faithful?

How can we live closer **WITH GOD** in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **DO** this week?