Joshua 2 The Lord Rescues Rahab

Beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we consider God’s word this evening, we need to remember that the book of Joshua is teaching history. It is history designed to teach us a lesson about what the Lord is doing, what He is accomplishing. In this we see that the kingdom of God is established in accord with His word.

As we have considered from Joshua chapter 1; the theme of this book is that God’s word is the abiding truth that sustains and guides and leads His people but causes them, as well, to inherit the promises that God has given them. Which God had proclaimed to them, and by faith, would give them the strength and the courage to stand. That is the appeal to Joshua as God commissioned him “be strong and courageous.” So, we also are to be strong and courageous.

As we come to chapter 2 we see that the kingdom of God is established in the promised land by God’s sovereign purpose and His sovereign will. God is the one who will establish His kingdom requiring Israel to go up into the land, to go forward into the promised land. We are given a glimpse, even before we get to the unfolding of those events, the reality of how God is working and how God will work in that land. This land is God’s land which He has given to His people. And it is a summons to believe, it is a summons to faith. This is a summons to us as well to believe and understand that God will establish His kingdom. That’s the theme this evening. The Lord rescues Rahab to establish His kingdom.

To understand this, I believe that it is helpful to know a little bit of the structure of this story. In this story there are 5 scenes. As we have read through this chapter those 5 scenes can easily be remembered. You can tell the differences in the scenes by the different characters and by the different locations. It is a wonderfully inspired drama. God has inspired the author to record for us this wonderful history, this true story, and He does so in a way that helps us understand what God’s word is teaching. The focus is found in the unfolding of these scenes. Think through these scenes in your minds eye as I trace out some of these events in this narrative.

The first scene is found in verse 1. It is Joshua calling the spies and telling them to go and investigate the land.

The second scene is found in verse 2-7. There is Rahab and the king’s men. The king’s men have come and they have heard that the spies from Israel have come into Jericho. The king sends men to go and find them and they go into Rahab’s house. That is the second scene. Envision Rahab talking at the door with these men who have come knocking. “Where are these men?” She says “I don’t know. They were here but they left again.” She sends the king’s men away.

The third scene is found in verses 8 -14. There is another location. And verse 8 marks it out. Now the king’s men had left and Rahab goes up onto the rooftop. She wants to talk with these spies form Israel. She wants to talk with these men and relate to them what is going on. And we hear her confession.

The fourth scene is verses 15-21. Again, it is Rahab talking with the spies but it is at a little different time. She had let the rope down through the window. Her house is on the city wall and now the spies are right by the window. They are ready to go out and there is some discourse that occurs at that time. They’re still talking with Rahab but now they are ready to be on their way. And notice again the way Rahab sends the spies away.

The fifth scene is when they return to Joshua. That is verses 22-24. In the fifth scene the spies return to Joshua and they report to him everything that they have experienced.

That is the five scene’s and now we see that these scenes are related. The first scene and the fifth scene go together. It’s the interaction of the spies with Joshua. The second scene and the fourth scene go together. It is Rahab sending someone away. First, she send the king’s men on their way and then she sends the spies on their way. But right in the center, is the focal point, the spotlight of the story. This was common in Hebrew literature; in the history stories that are found in the Old Testament. There is this repetition of ideas that brings things to a focal point. These stories are easily remembered because they are brought right to a crescendo. In this story it is found in verses 8-14. So that is our text for this evenings message. It is the spotlight. This is where God wants you to have your attention drawn in this story. The point of the story is not what is going on with the spies, not what is going on with the king’s men, but the inspired author wants the reader to hear Rahab’s declaration of truth, her confession. We see in this how the Lord rescues Rahab to establish His kingdom. Wonderful is the work of God which prompts her to make this faithful confession.

As we consider this confession there is 3 points that we can see unfolded, not only in this confession but also in the whole story. First of all the Lord’s sovereignty, secondly the Lord’s faithfulness and thirdly the Lord’s grace.

The story is about the rescue of Rahab. This is one whom the Lord had rescued. And now we hear her confession. She stands before the spies. She stands before those of God’s children whom He has sent into enemy territory and they hear this magnificent confession. Your God is sovereign! That, first of all, the Lord rescues Rahab in His sovereignty. Now there are three points about God’s sovereignty that I believe Rahab’s confession touches on: First, His might, Secondly, His majesty and thirdly his mercy. So, in this first point there are three subpoints: His might, majesty and mercy.

First of all His might. In verse 8 and 9 she relates what she knows about the God of Israel. And what does she know? Verse 9 alerts us to this fact as we hear from her lips. “I know!” There is no question in her mind. She is clearly convinced of this priority. “I know that the Lord has given you the land. And that the terror of you has fallen on us. That all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.” You see brothers and sisters, she is really the only one in all of Jericho that gets it, who understands what is going on. Her neighbours didn’t know this. All her neighbours were oblivious to this reality. They hadn’t been prepared by the Spirit to understand the sovereign might of the Lord. They were afraid. They were scared. But in their fear rather than being prompted to confession they were hoping they could survive the attack of the Israelites. Because, after all, this is what the king of Jericho was engaged in. He sent his men to go and find those spies. They knew there was a war coming, they knew that there would be an attack. And yet they hoped against hope that they could survive.

See brothers and sisters, there is two kinds of fear. There is a Godly fear which we hear from the lips of Rahab that the Lord has rescued. “ I know I’m destroyed”. I know I don’t stand a chance if God sends His armies against me. I know that if I were to stand in the presence of God I would be consumed. That is a Godly fear. I have no hope of survival. I am justly condemned before the Lord. This is what Rahab says. A fear which has driven her to confession. “ I know that the Lord is giving you this land”. No questions, no presumptions, but acknowledgement of the Lord’s sovereign might.

There is also an ungodly fear. That is just being afraid. This is what the citizens of Jericho were experiencing. They were melting in fear. A fear which refuses to acknowledge the Lord’s sovereign might. It is the kind of fear which seeks to flee God’s judgement rather to submit to it. It seeks to hope in all manner of activity to get away and around God’s judgement. To offer up all manner of excuses as to how we think we can escape. It is a fear that drives us further away from the Lord. It is a fear which will fight against the Lord rather than surrender to Him.

Rahab also lived in fear. But she was willing to say: I know that the Lord has given you this land and He is God. He is the One who is in control. He is the sovereign God almighty who can do as He pleases and as He does what He pleases, everything He does is right. That is a Godly fear. And we face the same thing today. Do you fear God? Do you stand in terror of His judgement? To say God would be right, perfectly just, perfectly good in bringing me under His condemnation. Will you acknowledge that? Or do you offer excuses. Or do you fight against the Lord? Do you offer every reason as to why the Lord should deal well with you. We need to be reminded again of the wonder of God’s work of grace. He rescues Rahab so that God’s people can hear this confession. The Lord is in control, I know He will accomplish his purpose.

Not only is there a confession of God’s sovereign might, there is also a confession of His majesty. This is found in verses 10-11. What prompted Rahab’s confession of knowing the Lord’s might? His display of majesty. The word had gotten out about the wonder of what God had done. “We have heard that the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt. We’ve heard what you did to the two kings of the Ammorites”. There is enough testimony here to remind them that they don’t stand a chance in this fight against the Lord and yet the city doesn’t break away in fear. They respond to fight. But Rahab confesses the majesty. What does she say - verse 11 – “the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath”. What an occasion for worship. As we come into worship this is our vow as we enter into the presence of God. ‘Our help is in the Maker of heaven and earth’. He is God, He is God alone. That is to be a confession of His majesty, His splendour, His grandeur. No longer the idol’s of Jericho, no longer the idol’s of Canaan. Rehab turns her back on them. The word of the Lord’s majesty had spread like wild fire through out the regions all around. They had heard what God was doing for his people. How God was delivering His people. How powerful He was and how majestic and splendorous He was. There was no God like Him. And that is what she confesses. All His enemies are subdued.

Brothers and sisters, the history of God’s people is the majestic display of God’s sovereignty. This is why the existence of the church, the existence of you, as those who have been touched by God’s grace. As those who are a display of the work of Jesus Christ is an offence to the world. Because you show how He is able to subdue His enemies, of whom we were one. Our lives are to be a display of God’s sovereign majesty. As we serve the Lord rather than serving the idols of this world. As we serve the Lord and make our confession that He is God on heaven and on earth. He has all things in His hands and we won’t be distracted by all this world has to offer. Rahab has this confession of God’s sovereign might and His magnificent majesty. Notice what this prompts Rahab to do – to plead for mercy.

Notice her humility as she speaks of the majesty of Israel’s God; she calls Him the Lord your God. There is no presumption on her part. She is not entitled to God. She doesn’t have anything by which she can get God on her side. She says He is the Lord your God, I have no entitlement to Him. And yet she pleads with the Lord’s people, with these spies, for the Lord’s mercy. We see this in verse 12, “now therefore please swear to me by the Lord by your God since I have dealt kindly with you so that you also may deal kindly with my Father’s household and give me a pledge of truth.” “Deal kindly with me” – this is her only hope. She seeks kindness rather than destruction. Covenant faithfulness and covenant favour rather that what she deserves. She throws herself into the merciful hands of the Lord. This understanding of dealing kindly is a beautiful Old Testament word. It is that Hebrew word hesed. It means covenant faithfulness, covenant goodness, covenant mercy. There are so many ideas that we could associate with it. We can’t capture it adequately in English. It is God’s covenant character. Show that to me. That is her plea. I see the Lord’s might, I understand His majesty. Deal kindly with me. Show me just the scraps from your table of covenant favour for me.

Then she asks for a sign. The sign that these spies give is, “our life for yours”. They take this oath and they swear by the supreme God that they will deal kindly and truly with her. Rahab’s harbouring and delivering the spies is a demonstration, brothers and sisters, of all that she confesses concerning the Lord. She turns her back on the Canaanites who had been her help, her hope and her refuge for all of her life. As she seeks refuge with the Lord and with His people, imagine what this would do to her in the land of Canaan. In the city of Jericho where they had the gates locked shut that there might not be any infiltration of these Israelite type people. So that they can keep the Lord’s people far and away. And yet He in His magnificent majesty and might has rescued His child of grace, right there in the stronghold of the city of Jericho. When she responds to these spies coming we hear her confession of all that the Lord is. She is willing to follow Him no matter what. This is how the Lord rescues her, He sends these spies to her door so that she might make this confession; “Your God is the true God”. Your God has all might. Your God has all majesty and your God has all mercy. Help me. Amazing! The hope and identity that is found in the kingdom of God isn’t dependent upon location. But it is dependent on the confession of who our God is. And by sending these spies to her door we are given the privilege of seeing how the Lord works according to His sovereign operation in rescuing Rahab to establish His kingdom. This is how the Lord rescues Rahab. By working with her, by working with His Spirit, so that she might see His might, His majesty and His mercy. This is where the spotlight shines most brilliantly and most clearly.

Secondly we consider the Lord’s faithfulness. And now we can begin to look at some of the shadows. If the spotlight shines upon Rahab and her confession, now we begin to look at the shadows. We see in those shadows the wonder of what God is doing as the Lord rescues Rahab according to the Lord’s faithfulness. In His faithfulness we see her family. Isn’t it enough that she has confessed? Oh, yes it is! It is enough for her preservation. But we also see the covenant faithfulness of the Lord. In the shadows we see that the Lord preserves not only her but also her family. This is something the world will never understand about the family. That it is God’s design, it is God’s intention, it is God’s place of blessing. What a magnificent reality that the family isn’t a social structure. Certainly, it is that, it has social implications and ramification and it has many kinds of blessings with it. But before all that it is God’s place of operation. God’s place where He can nurture a confession and also unfold the wonder of that goodness for all to see. That, because of her testimony and her claim to Him, the Lord is willing to offer protection to her family, her father, mother. brothers and sisters. How faithful the Lord is in all His works. That the family is afforded His special protection.

In the shadows we also see the spies. Now we can begin to understand the place of the spies. God uses Rahab not only to show the wonder of His work. He uses this one who has committed her ways to Him to deliver the spies from death. The testimonies of the spies shows how the Lord is faithful to His promise. As they come back to Joshua they can report to him, “Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands”. Rahab, if she had been in allegiance with the enemy would have turned them over, but she doesn’t. In this we see the magnificent hand of the Lord. The Lord’s faithfulness in their preservation. But most importantly, as we see the spotlight focus on the confession of God’s sovereignty, in the shadows we see Rahab’s family. In the shadows we see the spies deliverance. Most importantly; in the shadows we see the fullness, and we who have the fullness of the revelation must see the coming of Christ. For Matthew 1 reminds us that Rahab was one of 4 women privileged to be included in the genealogy of the coming of Christ. God establishes His kingdom His way and He establishes the coming of the King His way. God rescues Rahab for the sake of the coming of Christ. That is the Lord’s faithfulness. His way, not our ways.

And thirdly, we must see this as the wonder of the Lord’s grace. For let us not lose sight of who this woman is. This woman is a Canaanite. Someone who Moses said deserves complete destruction. This woman is an enemy who has been snatched by God’s grace out of the fires of destruction and brought to this place of confession. An enemy is able to become an inhabitant of God’s kingdom.

Even more significant is the focus of our text as it reminds us in the shadows. We see this is a prostitute. Not an appealing woman to have around. And that is the character of the Lord’s grace. A lady of the night becomes a lady of the light. And this should cause our hearts to sing for the magnificence of God’s grace. The inspired author doesn’t skirt over this subject. God’s word doesn’t try and minimise this reality and make all manner of excuses. But it reminds us that God’s kingdom, which He has established, is a kingdom of sinners saved by His grace. That the church is not a club of those people that have their morality reaching a certain level. It is a refuge, a sanctuary, a place of safety for those who are sinners and for those who will make this confession. I know that the Lord should destroy us. I know that the Lord is in complete control and I know that the Lord is majestic. I know that I am but a worm in His sight because of the reality of my sins. I know that I have no hope of deliverance. Oh Lord be merciful because I have nothing to offer. I come to you empty handed. In this we see the Lord’s faithfulness. He includes you, who make this confession, and your children and your children’s children. He uses you to work in His kingdom so that you might affirm and declare, and in that declaration and in your allegiance to Him, might be used by Him to deliver others. Not that you do the delivering but that in your testimony and in your allegiance to Him, He might use you in His service as He did Rahab with the spies. That through you and through the church we can anticipate the coming of Christ. The wonder of the Lord’s faithfulness and the wonder of His grace so we see that the Lord summons us to see His work. These spies go to Jericho, who’s days are numbered. So too the worlds days are numbered. The Lord sends us as representatives of His kingdom. He sends you out into the world. He sends these spies out into enemy territory to rescue the Rahab’s, to rescue those who for some reason the Lord is working in. And He is accomplishing His purpose. So that we would hear their confession. So that we would understand the full reality of His grace. So that we can understand how He works in His kingdom and how He establishes that kingdom, not according to our perception or how we think it should unfold. But according to His sovereign design. Because He is in control. We see this has been revealed here to strengthen our understanding of why we can be strong and courageous. Because God is with you. The sovereign Lord, who holds all people in His hand, who has His children scattered through-out all the nations of the world. He sends you forth to proclaim His sovereignty, His faithfulness and His grace by which He establishes the kingdom in rescuing Rahab and so many others just like her and just like you. Amen.

Hias