

An unlikely person



■ READ: A selection from Joshua 2:1-21

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. The king of Jericho was told, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land." 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 only to search out the whole land." But the woman took the two men and hid them. ...

Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men: "I know that the Lord has given you the land. ... The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. 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." ... 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. ... We will be released from this oath that you have made us swear to you if we invade the land and you do not tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down, and you do not gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your family." ... She said, "According to your words, so be it."

■ REFLECT:

The family line of Jesus is full of unlikely people. They regularly forget, disobey, or betray God. They're sinners, not honorable, composed saints.

Rahab is one of these unlikely people. And she's more unlikely than most to be named in Jesus's genealogy (Matthew 1:5) because she is an outsider on three counts: she's (a) a woman, (b) a Canaanite, and (c) a prostitute.

In a genealogy that stretches from Abraham to Jesus, she's one of just five women named. In a patrilineal genealogy—a record of fathers and sons—she makes the cut. Just as shocking, she makes the cut despite being a gentile, a non-Israelite, someone decidedly outside the family tree. And, of course, she's a prostitute.

And yet God finds her worthy of a place in his family. He invites her to play a role in the story of Israel claiming the land God has promised. And he grafts her into the family early enough that she gets to be one of Jesus's great- great- great-grandmothers.

What an encouragement to us! Not only does God want us in his family, he wants to use us. When we join the family, he'll put us to work, helping move this story along to its beautiful conclusion. Rahab got to play a part in Jesus's coming as a baby, but we get to join in as Jesus comes in glory.

■ PRAY:

God, your grace is astonishing! You could care less about my pedigree, and you're even willing to overlook my sin as you graft me into your family and your story. Would you help me to be faithful like Rahab as I do the work you've called me to do? Amen.