**Shock And Awe**

**Joshua 2:1-24**

June 14, 2020

Pastor Josh Beakley

Current events are pushing the boundaries of our faith in countless ways; many ways in our families, in our church, in our city and nation. We’re on the edge of uncertainty. We want to press onward, but we’re wondering exactly how do we do that together? That brings us to our current sermon series in the book of Joshua. We left God’s people on the edge of uncertainty at the border of enemy territory with a divine calling to press on, their only guarantee being God’s word of promise and His ongoing presence. Just north of the Dead Sea, on the eastern banks of the Jordan River stands a modest hill covered by a grove of thorny desert Acacia trees. You can almost hear the gravel crunch beneath Joshua’s sandals as he climbs the rocky mountain to peer across the Jordan.

Four decades earlier, he had experienced this moment. There was the same sense of uncertainty, the same nervous energy, the same simmering adrenaline. He had been ready to go to war then, but the people hadn’t been willing to follow. On that day, they succumbed to fear, scorned his lead, and as a result, the entire generation had passed away. Only Joshua and a handful of others remained to lead a nation of young families wearied by decades in the wilderness. Joshua was no longer a young man. The best of his years were spent scraping an existence in the desert. His mentor, the legendary leader Moses, is gone. And now after a two score probation, here at the border, the supernatural mission to press onward beckons him again. The same lingering question threatens to surface once more. Is trusting God really safe?

Across the Jordan lie several strategic strongholds, the first and most important being a Canaanite city just beyond the river valley. It was bustling with economy and renowned for its sweet fragrances. It has clusters of palm trees all safely encircled by a massive stone fortress and a heavily-guarded gate. Jericho! No obvious way exists to get his many people and all their belongings across the flooded river without separating and leaving them exposed and vulnerable. There is no way to carry siege weapons across. The element of surprise is completely lost. How is he to have any chance at conquering this entrenched stronghold? Again, there is that nagging doubt. Is trusting God really safe?

As he awaits the launch of this campaign, he decides to gather some intelligence about the area. He sends two spies on a secret mission that ends up being exactly what is needed to resolve any doubt that Yahweh is about to do something special. The thing about safety is that our sense of security is shaped by our view of reality. And this moment serves as the second chance to learn the lesson Israel failed to grasp decades earlier. When it comes to following Yahweh, reality is never quite what it seems. Joshua chapter 2.

***1*** *And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.* ***2*** *And it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.”* ***3*** *Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land.”* ***4*** *But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.* ***5*** *And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.”* ***6*** *But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.*

***8*** *Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof* ***9*** *and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.* ***10*** *For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.* ***11*** *And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.* ***12*** *Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father’s house, and give me a sure sign* ***13*** *that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”* ***14*** *And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”*

***15*** *Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall.* ***16*** *And she said to them, “Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way.”* ***17*** *The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear.* ***18*** *Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household.* ***19*** *Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.* ***20*** *But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.”* ***21*** *And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*

***22*** *They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing.* ***23*** *Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them.* ***24*** *And they said to Joshua, “Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.”*

Shock and awe! Those three words describe a controversial military strategy described in a 1996 paper that was entitled “Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance.” According to one writer, the idea of the strategy was simple. Launch an attack so massive and sudden that the enemy would be stunned, confused, overwhelmed and paralyzed. Go big! Go hard and fast so that you break their will to fight. It’s a kind of provocative strategy that seems natural to us as humans, but what unfolds before us in chapter 2 is Yahweh’s version of shock and awe. It turns out to be provocative in an entirely different kind of way.

There is no question that Joshua has a military problem. He is leading a relatively untested group of liberated slaves now turned refugees. Their past is stained by cowardice and insubordination. Their experience is decades of desert meandering. And their morale, while hopeful, is somewhat questionable after the recent loss of their legendary leader on the brink of this campaign. They stand at the edge of a river with no clear way to cross except some small fords down the way. Before them is a land entrenched with enemies, most immediately of which is the heavily fortified border city Jericho, which is fully aware of their presence. It’s a massive military problem. But strategy is not the first place he is told to turn for help.

Chapter 1 emphasizes not logistical domination, but spiritual dedication. And the reason why is that when it comes to following Yahweh, reality is not always what it seems. That’s actually the same argument Joshua had made forty years earlier. They had been at this point. He had spied out the land. He’d seen the warriors, but he and his friend Caleb were convinced that God is worth trusting. They had seen what God could do. They had seen the Nile turn to blood, nature come unhinged, the sky go black, the sea open up. They had seen the smoke of Yahweh descend upon the mountains. He had seen miracles although not without Moses. But God had confirmed He would be with Joshua all the same. And He calls him to dependence. But the questions remain. His faith is being tested. The boundaries again are being pushed. They have enemies ahead and behind, and a desert graveyard in between. That question: Is trusting God really safe?

Our world is consumed with success and security. All of these ideas are built on some form of self-reliance and usually say little to nothing about God and His Word. Whether it is techniques of efficiency or professional seminars and books or banks and securities and portfolios and home improvements and apps and fitness regimes, custom diets, modern gadgets, whatever it may be. These are fine things, but what about when the boundaries of our faith are being pushed? What about when we feel threats ahead and behind and everywhere in between? What about when plans are canceled, when markets crash, when our spouse leaves, when our job disappears, when our home leaks, when our health fails? What about when Jesus goes out of style and the gospel becomes old-fashioned, awkward, unwanted, offensive, oppressive, illegal, deadly? What about when God leads us into trials in which His Word charges us to press onward at great risk? Is trusting God really safe?

God’s unique way of answering that message involves a divine approach to shock and awe unlike anything that we or Joshua might expect. He’s challenging us to trust Him afresh. If we’re going to do that, we’re going to need some compelling examples to cling to. And it just so happens that in Joshua chapter 2, this is exactly what we’re given. We’re given some compelling reasons to trust God. It’s going to change the way that we think about safety; where safety is found and where it’s not found, by whom it’s secured, how it happens, and even where safety ultimately leads. It’s all inspired by looking at God and some reasons to trust Him. We’ll look at four. The first deals with His wisdom. We can trust God to keep us safe because of

**#1 His Surprising Providence (2:1A, 2, 23, 24)**

Providence is God’s invisible hand at work in the world. It’s the way He works all things according to the wisdom of His plan. It’s how He arranges events in such a way that He accomplishes His will through ordinary means. One pastor describes it like this. He says there is an idiom in English: “see to that.” It means take steps to make sure it happens. It’s one of the more helpful paraphrases of God’s acts of providence. It’s God seeing to everything; everything that needs to be done to bring about His purpose. God sees to it that it happens. This is what God is doing right here in Joshua chapter 2. He’s seeing to His will being accomplished and the safety of His people His way.

There are a lot of ways we try to seek out safety. Two ways we often do so is through our efforts and according to our expectations. But to our surprise, safety is not found through the strategies we may devise nor according to the assumptions we may possess. Effort and expectations are comforting to us, but ultimately, they are illusions. We see that God’s providence transcends their limitations in a beautiful way. Look at God’s providence and the trustworthy nature of God beyond our efforts. You can see what takes place. The mission is launched.

***1*** *And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.*

Joshua sends these two men out for information. He needs to learn the enemy territory, especially Jericho. From a military standpoint, conquering this fortress is non-negotiable. It’s a stronghold by the river in the heart of enemy territory. He has to take it! But the attack is not going to be easy. He needs some intel on food, supplies, defenses. So he sends these two scouts.

It’s an interesting choice of number. I can’t help but speculate. Think back to Numbers 13 where Joshua himself was a spy with eleven others. There were twelve. They came back and two had courage, but ten lacked faith. Perhaps this time, Joshua is taking no chances. He didn’t want to risk another tenure in the desert, so you can bet he would make sure no cowards are chosen for this mission. He would have chosen the most courageous and skilled. He may have said, “If two spies were good enough then, they’re good enough now.” He sends them on a secret mission. He knows this is a risk, and he doesn’t want the information to get out of hand. So he sends them to look at the land, but especially Jericho, this key position. I’m guessing before they head out, that they had a moment of prayer asking for God’s blessing, and maybe even a sober commissioning speech. “This is where it all went wrong last time, guys. God, please grant these men courage and bless our efforts.” And so, here they are.

They form an interesting plan. Somehow, whether by the fords or a raft or swimming, they cross the river. They likely change clothes and try to blend in, and they stay in the house of a prostitute. Now there are two reasons why this might be ideal for them. The first reason being discretion, and the second, discussion. You see, this home meets the needs of both concealment and conversation. It’s likely that in this kind of a home, there could be local gossip in light of the impending war. And it would be normal to see foreign men slinking in after nightfall. Acting sneaky fit in here. There’s no better place for secrets and stories than this kind of home, and they could probe for intel quietly. We discover actually in verse 15 that the home was built into the city wall. And we discover that there was a window. There is an exit and entry point. They’ve taken every human precaution. Talk about serious effort and strategy. It’s the perfect plan in verse 1. But by verse 2, it fails miserably.

***2*** *And it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.”*

In verse 3, “Knock, Knock! Open up by order of the king!”

***3*** *Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land.”*

We see the king’s order and his awareness. He orders her to give up the men, and his awareness is pretty extensive. He knows exactly who they are, when they arrived and where they’re staying. He knows what is going on, here. Someone informs him of the men and their mission the very first night. It’s not looking good for God’s plan. Now, from our perspective, the whole thing hangs in the balance and we think how is God going to save them? Might He use some reinforcements or maybe even an angel? Well we learn better. He uses a prostitute.

***4*** *But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.* ***5*** *And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.”*

She says she doesn’t know their origin and then diverts them, sending them on a wild goose chase outside the city gates. Now here’s where God’s providence transcends human effort. I’m sure the spies were doing their best. I’m sure they didn’t want to be found. And if they had control, they wouldn’t have sought help and placing the safety of their hands into a pagan prostitute. But this is Yahweh at work. He is different than other so-called gods. He is not limited to human efforts, and He chooses to work in this way, according to His providence.

Why does God sometimes let our efforts and plans fall through? Maybe it’s because His plan is more intricate. Maybe He wants to accomplish something more than a mere scouting trip. We can see that God’s providence transcends not only the limitation of their efforts, but it also transcends their expectations. God works in ways that are not according to the assumptions we may possess. If you skip to the end of the chapter, verses 23 and 24, you can see the spies report.

***23*** *Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them.*

It’s a comprehensive report. They told all. It’s also somewhat passive. It’s what happened to them and less about what they had done. And the conclusion is one of certain victory and widespread fear.

***24*** *And they said to Joshua, “Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.”*

You think what kind of report was Joshua expecting? What kind of assumptions would he have that would be helpful? Maybe he thought the spies would be coming back and saying, “We didn’t do all the mistakes that happened last time. We did everything right this time. You hired the right guys. They worked perfectly. The enemy is not ready. We found every weakness. We know the point of entry, here and the schematics.” Maybe he was hoping for that, but instead, these guys come back and they say, “Our plan completely failed. They’re on high alert. They discovered us the first night. But somehow, God saved us by a prostitute who believes in Yahweh. There’s not a weakness. They have a bunkered down fortress. We don’t know how to defeat them, but we can tell you what we do know. God is there and He is working out His word, and without a doubt, He has given us this land.”

The first report might have been what Joshua was expecting and maybe even wanting, but the second report was what he was needing. How would God prepare Joshua for the kinds of faith He would require to walk across the river, so called, and then march around the city in circles? Joshua needs to know that something special is happening and this is God’s plan for him. There are no battle plans, no secret weapons. There is just an outrageous story of undeniable providence to encourage him. There’s no wisdom like Yahweh’s wisdom. His providence may be surprising, but it is always worth trusting. He knows what is best and He is able to do it.

Do you ever look at the world around you and think, is trusting God really safe? All of my efforts and my expectations are not coming to fruition. Things feel uncertain. Things feel risky. Things feel dangerous. And here, we’re reminded that God is working everything according to His plan. We can trust Him to keep us safe because of His surprising providence. God loves to prove that His foolishness is far wiser than men. And I wonder where this kind of faith will lead us. You can trust God to keep you safe not only because of His providence but because of

**#2 His Superior Power (2:9-14)**

This is His ability and authority over all things. We know leaders of political power or nations with military power, companies with financial power. But only God has divine power without equal. He is superior! And here we see that power at work.

Can you imagine what these spies were feeling when that gate shut? I mean, this is the last place a respectable Jew should be found. It’s after dark. Their mission is compromised. They’re on the roof of a harlot, hiding behind flax stalks and basically at her mercy. And right before they lay down to sleep, here comes this prostitute. It’s a moment of great suspense. It’s a cliffhanger. You’re left in the air. How are they going to escape? Is she going to turn them in? Is there going to be blackmail? And for six verses that tension is not relieved. God almost seems less concerned with all those details because He wants to focus the story and emphasize what she says.

Here is a reminder of God being the author of this story, of the Bible. These human men might have described another way and emphasized other things, but God wants to show the beauty and amazing work that happens in the heart and through the words of this woman. Here she comes and here they are. It’s unlike anything that would be more ironic or surprising. These undercover spies, after dark, in the capital city of evil, in the sketchiest part of town, on the rooftop of an Amorite prostitute, and they hear her come and whisper a secret confession, and it’s about Yahweh. She goes, “Pssst! Hey, spies.” They say, “Yeah, but we’re holy spies. We believe in God. We’re following Him.” And she says, “I know. I believe in God, too. I want to follow Him, too.” This is an amazing story! She confesses God’s power. There are three aspects of His power that she emphasizes. First, she has faith in His might. She knows about His great works. She knows what God has done. All the city is melting in fear. And she says

***10*** *For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.*

She is saying, “We know what God has done!” And actually, God’s might has two different effects. On most of the city, it causes everyone to be fearful, but defiant. They close in and get protective and resist God. While in Rahab, this knowledge causes her to be fearful as well, but she longs to surrender and to appeal to this God. It’s interesting because a lot of people talk about Rahab and her lies. She does seem to deceive these men. She lies to the investigators and sends them away to protect the spies. But the emphasis of the chapter is not about what she lies about or what she doesn’t know, but about what she does know. It’s about her truth. In verse 5 she said,

***5****…I do not know where the men went.*

She didn’t know where they were from, but she says

***9*** *and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land,*

This is what she does know because of faith. Her knowledge of God’s might rests on a conviction of who God is. It’s such a tangible faith. I mean, she lives in a bunker. She couldn’t be more secure. But her faith is in a God who accomplishes His promise. She believes in a power so strong that she risks her entire family. She could have been put to death for harboring these spies, but she believes God’s Word and fears Him more. No matter how strong the fortress feels, she knows any human refuge can crumble in a moment when it comes to Yahweh, and she trusts Him instead. The whole situation is filled with moral ambiguity, but what is emphasized is who she trusts. She trusts in God’s might, but also in His majesty.

***11*** *And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.*

She believes who this God is; the only God of heaven and earth. She doesn’t suppress the truth or deny it or hide from it like maybe others in the city. She humbly confesses and submits. It’s an amazing thing that is happening here!

Now, there are a lot of questions that we have and that will start to come out as we move through the book of Joshua. One of them is why is it right for God’s people to come and conquer a land that doesn’t belong to them? There’s a lot that we can’t touch on right now, but we do need to note that God has mentioned time and again that for hundreds of years these people have committed themselves to evil, to great evil of demonic worship and of egregious oppression and even the sacrifice of children to these demonic gods. So God is going to cleanse the land, but He makes it clear in Deuteronomy 9:5 that it’s

**Deuteronomy 9:5** Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

God is using that to bring about a blessing for the nations and to curb the evil of this culture that had perfected the art of evil. It’s a unique situation, and we need to be careful not to make a simplistic example for us to follow like was wrongly done in the Crusades or a simplistic allegory for the Christian life. This was a historical moment, a unique situation where God is working through His people for a particular purpose, to serve His promise to bring hope. And at the end of the day, what is emphasized right in the beginning is God’s mercy. That’s what she appeals to; faith in God’s mercy. She knows God is going to destroy this city and she says

***12*** *Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father’s house, and give me a sure sign* ***13*** *that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”* ***14*** *And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”*

This word “kindly” is that word “loving-kindness” that is used so often throughout the Psalms and especially by David. It’s a special kind of love. I wonder why David was so enamored with God’s loving-kindness. Perhaps this story held special meaning to him. Maybe there’s a reason why.

Well, these men promised loving-kindness and a sign to her. What began as a form of espionage now seems almost to have turned into evangelism and becomes an evacuation. She lets them down from the window with a rope and she promises to secure a scarlet cord in her window as a sign of protection. And this scarlet cord, if you were to look back, there was another woman, an immoral woman, who had used a cord as a sign of protection and safety and a promise, named Tamar. It’s an interesting story to relate as an act of commitment by these individuals that “we will protect you and we’ll hold true to our word.”

Here is the ultimate proof of God’s matchless power in this moment. It’s His ability to ignite faith in a sinner. We think, “Wow! This is a surprise.” This would have been a surprise to them; that they come to the rooftop and here is a prostitute and she believes in Yahweh? “We thought all these were enemies. It’s a surprise.” But we need to take a step back and think for a moment. What person comes to faith that isn’t surprising? Is there any one of us that it isn’t an utter shock that we would respond to God? A sinner coming to faith and trust in God is always a surprise. And in fact, sometimes the last place you expect to find God is the only place that He is to be found.

Here is a woman who displays God’s power to save. He is mighty, majestic and merciful. And the safest place, no matter who you are, is to trust God’s Word. No matter what you’ve done, the shock is that we would have an awe for God and believe that He would extend mercy to us. No one is beneath God’s mercy and He loves to show His power to save especially people whom we would deem hopeless. The best picture of God’s power is in a surprising way, the unexpected death of His Son. It was a death for sinners. It was He in our place. That is what is shocking and brings awe. It’s that anyone would trust in a God like that.

Do we believe God is strong enough to save, starting with ourselves? A sinner like me? Do we recognize our desperate need? Do we see all of the righteous acts that we’ve done and all of the comforts that we have and the securities that we cling to and recognize that before Yahweh, they merely crumble, and that our only hope is salvation in Him? And do we trust that He has the power to bring about that faith in others in places that we would least expect? You can trust God through His provision, through His power and

**#3 His Specified Protection (2:15-21)**

***17*** *The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear.* ***18*** *Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household.* ***19*** *Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.* ***20*** *But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.”* ***21*** *And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*

Here, these spies remind Rahab that she has to find protection by placing her faith in God and specifically, faith in His refuge. It’s that she would come into her house, step inside that wall and invite all of her family into that refuge. She has to find faith in the refuge and also to forsake any alternative refuge. “You can’t run to your city and tell them the plans and you can’t try to flee and escape. You need to stay inside this house.” It is faith in God’s refuge. This is a specified protection. She has to trust that God is going to work. And it’s amazing because she lives within the wall. We’re going to find in a few weeks that, that is actually the most dangerous place to be unless you are in the specified protection that God has given. Then there is nowhere safer. She must have faith in the refuge God provides and forsake any other refuge. This is where she is sent. Here we see her faith practiced in an ongoing way. She lives it out. She chooses to trust God and to turn from anything else.

Rahab is actually emphasized in the New Testament as an example, a model for the kind of faith that we’re to have especially when things are intimidating and threatening. Her faith is a living faith. It actually exercises trust in what God provides and turns from anything else. In James, James would say if you have faith by itself, if it doesn’t have works, if it doesn’t show itself, it’s dead. You have to place yourself in God’s specified protection, His refuge, and turn from any other hope. He says

**James 2:19** You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

All of the people of Jericho were terrified! They knew that God had done powerful things. It’s not an amazing thing that someone believes in God. The demons believe in God. But he says you need to have faith in God and trust and turn from any other protection and flee to His refuge. Ultimately she trusts God’s Word and the refuge that she found was her home. But that was a temporary refuge.

She knew that she had to trust in God. The eternal refuge in which she was hoping was His promise of some way that she could be forgiven and some way that she could be saved. That refuge, we know on this side of history to be Jesus. God specifies protection for any person, not in the things that we see around us, but in the refuge of Jesus Christ, in His death and substitute for our sins and His conquering resurrection. We place our faith in Jesus and that involves something that is living and active. It shows itself by turning from any substitute refuge and trusting alone in Jesus. The safest place to be is always trusting God. And you can trust God because of

**#4 His Scandalous Provision (6:22, 23, 25; Matthew 1:5)**

Scandalous means outrageous. It’s surprising! It’s shocking the provision that God offers! Here we see one of the most precious assurances of true safety in God is in His goodness.

In this season of quarantine, I suspect many of us have done a decent amount of reading. I had an opportunity to read to my daughter that book *The Lion, the Witch and the* *Wardrobe*. There is that classic illustration that has been used many times before and I’m sure will be used many times again. I can’t help myself, though. It’s this moment where they’re talking about this king named Aslan and they don’t know who the king is. They’re coming and they’re whispering and they need a rescue. And these children are asking about Aslan. And one of them says, “Isn’t Aslan safe?” And they are told, “Safe?” Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell

you.” We think about God and we might wonder, is He safe? Well, in one sense we say of course, He’s not safe. But He’s good! And in that we do find safety. Look at the provision that God offers when you think about this woman, Rahab.

It’s not found right here in chapter 2. She’s trusting. She’s on the edge. She’s waiting. But as the story unfolds, we see that it was the safest choice she could make. We’re going to spoil the story, so plug your ears if you haven’t read this before. But, she’s going to be saved. She’s going to be rescued in chapter 6, actually her and her whole family. They take refuge inside the wall. And God could have said, “I didn’t make this deal. This is all part of my plan. I’m going to conquer. I’m going to destroy.” But God actually offers mercy. She is inside the wall, and the walls crumble everywhere except for her house. God was specifically involved in the mercy extended to this woman and her family. She was preserved. She was saved from judgment. God in His goodness and mercy preserves her. There is a protection.

But you see second, not only is salvation from deserved judgment, but you see inclusion within a chosen family. Look at the safety that involves a welcome into God’s people. If you look at chapter 6 and peek ahead, once she is saved,

**Joshua 6:23** So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel.

In verse 25,

**Joshua 6:25** But Rahab the prostitute and her father’s household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

She was allowed to dwell within Israel permanently, enjoying the protection and the blessings of being a part of God’s family. She is welcomed into the family. It’s an amazing thing! There is not only salvation from deserved judgment, but there is inclusion in the family. She belongs. But there is even participation in the ultimate story. Look at how she is used in God’s story.

In Matthew 1:5 we learn something very special about Rahab. She is a part of a genealogy that has begun with a promise that there would be a seed of a woman, a Savior who is going to come, a special Chosen One. This genealogy has been moving since the beginning of Genesis. And we find that Rahab is not sort of an embarrassed cover-up. This is a woman of faith that is emphasized, highlighted and celebrated in the middle of the genealogy that leads to this Chosen One. She is actually emphasized as the mother of Boaz, the great-great grandmother of David, and the ancestor of God’s own Son, Jesus. She’s in that line. And God goes out of His way to show us that she, like all of the women mentioned in that line, may be stained by stigma that people would thrust upon them, but they are highlights of trophies of His grace and His mercy and the way that He works in ways that transcend all of our human efforts and expectations. The safest place to be is not in all the things we see around us, but it’s in trusting God’s Word.

I still remember going rock climbing for the first time with a friend. We were climbing without ropes. It was just a small boulder. About 5 feet up, it seemed okay. But about 10 feet up towards the top, I started to get concerned. He had been more experienced. He was telling me, “You need to reach up. There’s a flake to the right. Don’t grab that! It looks great, but it’s going to break off.” Well, that’s a concerning thought. Break off? He said, “Yeah, don’t grab that one. It’s not safe. But up above, out of reach, you can’t see it, but there is one you have to jump to.” That was very discomforting. (Laughter!) The holds I was clinging to were pretty comfortable, but they weren’t going to last. It was inevitable that I would eventually fall unless I trusted his word and jumped. Eventually, I had no choice. I had to leap. And when I hit that pocket, it was a sweet spot, a secure hold, and the climb was over. You just make your way up and over.

Is obeying God’s Word really safe? It never feels like it. In fact, it feels dangerous. And in those moments you think where I am is much more comfortable. You see things that seem safe, but the question is when God asks you to jump to a Savior, to a refuge that you can’t see, will you do it? Most of the time, He sets the sweet spots of deliverance just beyond sight, at the scariest leaps of life. He is awaiting the courageous, obedient faith that is demanded of us. And it’s this beautiful ledge so perfectly molded, it almost holds on to you. Do you know what climbers call those holds? Jesus holds. It’s a beautiful thing.

Now, you might be tempted to say, “Well this is all good and fine, but what about the obstacles? What about the river they can’t cross and the walls that they can’t pass? These are impossible to overcome before the fight can even begin. What about this and all the things that are keeping us from getting where God is calling us to go?” I guess we’re going to have to just keep reading, won’t we? But if you want to take a sneak peak, I’m happy to tell you that you’re going to find when Yahweh approaches, even nature is going to know to make room.