

Amazing Grace
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Joshua 2:1-21

Opening: "Nobody's perfect!" When do we tend to say that?

When we say "nobody's perfect," it's kind of a throwaway line to excuse us when we've messed up. The truth is it's biblical. **Romans 3:23 (NLT) — 23** For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Everyone in this room, regardless of how hard we try to "live right," has made mistakes and has regrets.

The Point: God uses unlikely, imperfect people to carry out His plans. Everyone is a sinner in need of a Savior. Today's text about an unlikely, imperfect person reminds us that God's amazing grace can transform the life of anyone who trusts Him by faith.

Lately, because our group has grown, we are using nametags to get to know each other. In life, everyone wears two invisible name tags. One is based on what others see:

- Hello, my name is **Doctor, Teacher, Parent, Executive, Retiree, Student.**

The second invisible name tag reflects how we see ourselves:

- Hello, my name is **Successful, Helpful, Kind, Reliable.**

Or sometimes:

- Hello, my name is **Failure, Unlovable, Not Good Enough, Broken, Guilty.**

God used imperfect people in Scripture to demonstrate the truth about His grace:

- Hello, my name is **Abraham — Liar; Moses — Anger Issues; David — Adulterer/Murderer; Peter — Disloyal Follower.**

God used every one of them. He didn't ignore their sin; He changed their name.

In this morning's text, we meet one of those unlikely, imperfect people God used and saved. Down through history her "name tag" has read: Hello, my name is **Rahab — The Prostitute**. Thanks to her bold faith and God's amazing grace, He changed her name for good to Hello, my name is Rahab — **Child of the King and Ancestor of Jesus Christ**. (Matt. 1:5)

- The time had arrived for the Israelites to enter the promised land.
- Standing in their way was the fortified pagan city of Jericho.
- Joshua sent two spies to check things out. Their enemies spotted them, so they took refuge in what was likely the local "motel," the house of Rahab.
- The king of Jericho sent officers to Rahab's house in search of the Israelite spies.
- Knowing this might happen, Rahab had the Israelite spies hide on the roof under stalks of flax she was drying in the sun.
- Rather than give up the spies, Rahab bravely and boldly misdirected the officers.

Joshua 2:4–21 (NLT) — **4** Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, “Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn’t know where they were from. **5** They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don’t know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them.” **6** (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) **7** So the king’s men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king’s men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut.

- Rahab responded to the arrival of the two Israelite spies in unexpected ways.
- Risking her life and her family, she hid the spies and lied to the king’s men.
- Sidebar: *“Hey, she lied!”* Some theologians believe Rahab’s lie was justified because she was protecting innocent lives from a wicked regime. What everyone agrees on is that Rahab is praised in Scripture for her faith. That is our next point.
- Another unexpected response was Rahab’s understanding of Israel’s God.

8 Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. **9** “I know the Lord has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. **10** For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. **11** No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

- Rahab recognized the One true God and confessed Him as LORD (v.11).
- Rahab proved her faith by her works. **James 2:25 (NLT)** — **25** Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road.
- She also desired God’s deliverance for her family as every saved person should.

12 “Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that **13** when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.” **14** “We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,” the men agreed. “If you don’t betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land.” **15** Then, since Rahab’s house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. **16** “Escape to the hill country,” she told them. “Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way.” **17** Before they left, the men told her, “We will be bound by the oath we have taken only if you follow these instructions. **18** When we come into the land, you must leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window through which you let us down. And all your family members—your father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives—must be here inside the house. **19** If they go out into the street and are killed, it will not be our fault. But if anyone lays a hand on people inside this house, we will accept the responsibility for their death. **20** If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath

in any way.” **21** “I accept your terms,” she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

- The sign of deliverance was a “scarlet rope.”
- I don’t want to overemphasize the symbolism but a rope the color of blood sure reminds me of the blood over the doorposts that protected Israel’s firstborn sons in Egypt and the blood stains on the cross.
- In each case, God provided a way of rescue for those who trusted Him.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Rahab the prostitute, an unlikely and imperfect person, was used by God to help Joshua as he led Israel to move into the promised land.
- In the process, she proclaimed her faith in the One true God and she and her family were delivered from judgment.
- Back to those invisible nametags we all wear.
- Two mindsets stand in the way of people understanding God's grace.
- There are those who believe they are good enough and surely God will let them into heaven for their good deeds.
- Others feel they are so bad they could never deserve eternal life in heaven.
- Here is the truth of the gospel: No one is good enough to earn God's grace, and no one is so bad that they are beyond God's grace.
- When we acknowledge our imperfection (sin), recognize God for Who He is, and trust His Son Jesus for salvation we can be saved and live with Him eternally.
- That is the story of Rahab. Because of her bold faith, God changed her life.

Hebrews 11:31 (NLT) — 31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

- Because of Rahab’s faith in action, God also changed her name tag.
- Matthew 1:5 tells us Rahab was the mother of Boaz who married Ruth. Boaz was King David’s great grandfather. Bottom line: God change Rahab’s name tag from “the prostitute” to Child of the King and Ancestor to His Son Jesus Christ.
- There was another unlikely, imperfect person whose life was changed by God.
- His name tag read: **John Newton – Slave Trader**. God changed His name to “**Hymn writer**” and inspired him to write: “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”ⁱ
- God uses unlikely, imperfect people to carry out His plans, and if we will trust Him, His amazing grace can change our name tag and our eternal destiny.

ⁱ https://hymnary.org/text/amazing_grace_how_sweet_the_sound