HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

Grace at the Margins

June 28, 2026 · Series: Small Stories, Big Faith · Luke Hughes-Bunger

> **Main Passage:** Joshua 2:1-24 (ESV)
>
> **Big Idea:** God's grace reaches unlikely people at the margins and brings them into the safety of His covenant promise.

Introduction

In Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, Jean Valjean is a marked man. He has a criminal past, a yellow passport, and a reputation that closes doors wherever he goes.

Then Bishop Myriel welcomes him. Even after Valjean steals from him, the bishop responds with mercy instead of condemnation. That act of grace opens the door to a new life.

Joshua 2 is not fiction, but it presses on a similar question in a deeper way: can mercy really reach someone with a complicated past?

The first extended story in Israel's entrance into the promised land is not about a warrior, priest, or person with a clean religious resume. It is about Rahab: a Canaanite, a woman in Jericho, a prostitute, and an outsider in a condemned city.

And yet God, in His mercy, brings her in.

Point 1: Grace Often Appears in an Unlikely Place

Joshua sends two spies to view the land, especially Jericho. They come to the house of Rahab, and the text plainly tells us who she is.

Rahab is not introduced as a respectable religious seeker. She is morally complicated. She is also a Canaanite, outside the covenant people of God and living in a city under judgment.

And that is exactly where the story of grace begins.

The king of Jericho hears that Israelite spies have entered the city and sends men to Rahab's house. But Rahab hides the spies. There are ethical questions about Rahab's lie, but the main point of the passage is not to turn this into a case study on lying. The main point is that Rahab has already changed sides.

Before the armies arrive, before the walls fall, before anyone else in Jericho responds rightly, Rahab recognizes that the Lord is God.

Grace appears in an unlikely place.

This matters because we often assume grace should appear in likely places: among people who look prepared, polished, close, and easy to explain. But Joshua 2 will not let us think that way.

The first Canaanite convert we meet in the promised land is Rahab. Not because sin does not matter. Not because her life is uncomplicated. But because the mercy of God is wider than our instincts.

Your past is not stronger than God's grace.

Point 2: True Faith Hears, Fears, and Acts

Rahab explains why she has hidden the spies. She has heard what the Lord did at the Red Sea and what He did to the kings beyond the Jordan.

Everyone in Jericho has heard. Everyone is afraid. But Rahab's fear becomes faith.

That difference matters. Fear by itself is not saving faith. The people of Jericho are afraid, but they do not turn to the Lord. They resist. They hide behind their walls. They know judgment is coming, but they do not seek mercy.

Rahab does.

She confesses, "The LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11).

That is not vague spirituality. Rahab is saying that Israel's God is not one god among many. He is the true God over heaven and earth.

Rahab's faith is not perfect knowledge, polished religion, or a lifetime of discipleship. But it is real.

Faith hears God's word. Faith takes God seriously. Faith seeks refuge where God has provided refuge.

So the question is not only, "Have you heard?" It is, "What are you doing with what you have heard?"

The people of Jericho trusted their walls. Rahab trusted the Lord's mercy.

Only one of those refuges held.

Point 3: The Sign of Safety Points to Promised Rescue

The spies promise Rahab that when the Lord gives Jericho into Israel's hand, she and her family will be spared. But there is a sign: she must tie a scarlet cord in the window, and her family must gather inside her house.

The scarlet cord is not magic. The cord itself does not save her. Rahab believes the promise and places herself under the sign of that promise.

Her house becomes a place of refuge.

The house that once marked her shame becomes the house where her family can be saved.

Later Scripture makes sure we do not forget Rahab. Hebrews 11 names her as an example of faith. James 2 points to her active, living faith. Matthew 1 includes her in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Rahab the Canaanite. Rahab the prostitute. Rahab the outsider from Jericho. By the mercy of God, she is brought into Israel. From her family line comes David. From David's line comes Jesus.

That does not mean Rahab earned her way in. It means God's grace was always moving toward a bigger rescue.

Path to Christ

Rahab is an outsider under judgment who hears the word of God, seeks mercy, and is brought into the people of God through a promise of rescue. That pattern points us to the gospel.

In Christ, outsiders are brought near.

In Christ, the guilty are covered.

In Christ, people with complicated histories are not merely tolerated at the edge of God's people. They are welcomed, cleansed, adopted, and made new.

The scarlet cord points to rescue by promise. Jesus gives us something better than a cord in a window. He gives us His own blood: a finished sacrifice that speaks mercy for everyone who takes refuge in Him.

Application and Conclusion

Rahab shows us what faith does. Faith hears what God has done. Faith takes God seriously. Faith stops trusting false refuge. Faith takes refuge in the mercy God provides.

For us, that means placing our trust in Jesus Christ.

Not merely admiring Him. Not merely knowing some things about Him. Not merely being familiar with church language. Trusting Him.

No matter who you are, what your past looks like, or how unlikely you feel, come to Christ.

And as a church, we should welcome the Rahabs God brings among us. We should be the kind of people who believe the gospel enough to expect grace in unlikely places.

Discussion Guide Questions

1. Why is Rahab an unexpected person to introduce at the beginning of Israel's entrance into the promised land?
2. What assumptions do we sometimes make about where grace is likely to appear?
3. Why is it important not to sanitize Rahab's story?
4. What had Rahab heard about the Lord?

5. What is the difference between the fear of Jericho and the faith of Rahab?
6. What does Rahab's confession in Joshua 2:11 teach us about her faith?
7. Why is faith more than simply knowing true things about God?
8. What "walls" do people trust today instead of seeking refuge in God's mercy?
9. How does the scarlet cord function as a sign of promised rescue?
10. How does Rahab's story point us to Jesus?
11. What would it look like for you to place your trust in Christ more honestly this week?
12. How can Hudson's Hope Chapel become more ready to welcome people with complicated stories?