

Examples of Faith
Who shows us their faith & do we show our faith to them
HEBREWS 11:29 – 12:2

A sermon given by Emma Hodge at St. Michael & All Angels Church Sandhurst
on Sunday 14th August 2016

Prayer

“May the words of my lips and the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in your sight O Lord our strength and our redeemer” Amen.

Sermon Intro

If you were able to be in church last week, you would have heard John talk on the “Meaning of Faith” and today’s theme is related as it is “Examples of Faith” and I want to start by asking you a question, **Who has shown you their faith in their lives?**

While faith can be classed as a personal characteristic it affects everything which we do and is therefore shown to others in the way we live our lives everyday. Last week, John described faith as “Faith is an attitude of trust which leads to action” it is these actions which lead us to show our faith to others.

Sermon – Hebrews Reading

Our reading from the letter to the Hebrews lists examples from the Old Testament of people who showed their faith in their lives. These people and their stories would have been well known to the original readers of the letter.

As well as a list of people who are mentioned in passing the writer mentions two people and gives more details of them, they are very two different people, Moses and Rahab.

Firstly Moses, most of us are probably familiar with parts of Moses story, the great leader of the nation of Israel who had many different aspects to his story and our reading today starts part way through the list of demonstrations of Moses faith that the writer of the letter included, the one in our reading was the story of how he led his people out of Egypt and

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through the Red Sea, but I want to leave this story to one side for several reasons and focus on Rahab.

Sermon – Rahab

Rahab in very many ways is the complete opposite of Moses.

Rahab may not be as well known as Moses, but her story is fascinating. Let's look at **the story of Rahab** in more detail.

Rahab's story is part of a larger story of how Joshua, who was the leader of the Israelites at the time took Jericho and its surrounding land.

Rahab was an ordinary woman, whose family consisted of parents and siblings, she was not Jewish and did not live a good life, she lived in the city of Jericho which was not part of Israel at the time. Rahab realised that the city in which she lived was not godly.

Joshua sent two spies into Jericho, the spies went into Jericho and went to Rahab's house. When Rahab met the spies she recognised that their God was the true God and that the land and the city of Jericho belonged to the Lord and therefore to the Israelites whom Joshua was leading and from whom the spies came.

Rahab knew that the city guard would have been aware of the spies, she knew her city and how it operated. Rahab helped the spies understand Jericho.

Rahab hid the spies from the Jericho city guard when they were searching for the spies and later she let them out of her house (which was in the city walls) by a rope and giving them the advice they needed to return safely to Joshua.

Rahab obtained a promise from the spies that when they came to take Jericho they would keep her and her family safe.

Later Joshua and the Israelites took Jericho and the surrounding land and kept Rahab and her family safe. Rahab's actions had consequences, without her actions Joshua and the Israelites may not have taken Jericho

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and it's surrounding land, and without this land, the Israelites journey into the promised land would have been very different.

There were several actions which are connected with faith that Rahab took,

- She trusted the guards not to search her house thoroughly, they did not move the flax under which the spies were hiding,
- Secondly she trusted the spies to follow her advice and not get caught by the guards, although this would have also been in the spies own interests to be safe.
- She also showed faith that the spies would keep their word and that her and her family would be safe when they took Jericho.
- Rahab put her faith in the long term power of God. Jericho was in a bad place at that time, but instead of worrying about the short term issues and risks, Rahab put her faith in God that He had a long term plan to ensure safety for everyone.

Sermon – New Testament relevance

Rahab and her story was well known to Jews in Jesus' time as Rahab is mentioned three times in the New Testament, once in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus, once in the letter of James (where her actions are noted) and once in our reading from Hebrews which comments on her faith.

Sermon – Whose faith do we follow

Our reading from Hebrews moves on from listing people from the Old Testament to say whose faith we need to follow. Chapter 12 states

"12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God."

The letter is clear, we need to follow Jesus' example and his teaching by applying these examples to our lives, and throughout history, people have done just that,

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Sermon – Why Rahab and application to us

There are three reasons why I focused in Rahab for today's sermon

Firstly, Rahab was not a good woman, however despite her immoral background God used her, this applies to us, no matter who we are, we are all good enough to be used by God to carry out His work.

Secondly, Rahab was a very ordinary woman, a woman who is mainly known for just one event in her life and through this event she demonstrated her faith and became so well known for that one thing, **Rahab's legacy was to be known for her faith** not through a lifetime of events, nor for something which seems impossible to many, but rather for something far more simple; and just one instance (although over a couple of weeks) that she is known for.

Thirdly, it was just one event that her faith showed to people so they knew her faith in the Jewish God, which to me is really encouraging as it emphasises that it doesn't matter when you became a Christian, it is our actions and how we live our lives since we became a Christian that matters. Our lives are full of one instances, we need to make the most of each instance to show our faith to others as we don't know which one will be the one that makes the impression on others, and could ultimately lead them to faith, it may seem like a simple message, to live our lives so that other people will see our faith, however like a lot of things it is easier to say than do, we all fall short and fail at points in the lives, we should not give up in these instances, they are points where we need to renew our faith so that we can again show our faith to others.

Sermon - Reflection

I started by asking a question **Who has shown you their faith in their lives** as I close I would like to turn that question around, ask if you are an example of faith to others, will other people **say that they see your faith in your life**, in things that you say and do?