**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**December 4th, 2022**

**Joshua 2:1-21**

**Gathering**

In the second week of Advent

The darkness shifts towards us

But the strands of shadow

Swirl round a woman

A foreign woman

Who is found among the names

Of the Saviour’s ancestors

A women

A harlot

A sinner

Yet so, so much more

As incarnation quickens

And flesh takes on a divine guest

Why is it so hard to recognise

God’s beauty in folk

That we would rather limit

through prejudice and power

Rahab

Is our storyteller today

The first outsider

To become a Jew

This woman

This harlot

This sinner

Yet so, so, much more

**Introduction**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton… the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… Suddenly we are in week two of Advent… and we’re picking up the stories of those who have shaped the moment of incarnation… ancient and first ones… Tamar last week… the first woman in the genealogy of Jesus… This week… the second woman there… Rahab… a woman we know more about it seems… but do we really… Do we not bring our own prejudice and easy stereotyping to her… The loudest story we offer of Rahab… is not the important or significant one… It isn’t the human one… The sacred story is a little different… these are the folk in the family tree of the one who becomes flesh among us…

**Prayer**

God of all our pasts

And God of our future too

God of the deep echoes behind us

And God of the whispered promise before us

God of the stories that have shaped us

And God of the tales yet to tell

We gather in this between moment

The advent of tomorrow and the departure of yesterday

And meet you

On this cusp

In this waiting space

At this turning point

Full of possibility and renewal

Between the prophets and the promise

And dare believe what is happening in the heavens

is coming real in flesh

And turning word into life

So may our ears be unstopped

And our hearts race

In this impossible moment

May our words praise you

And our faith revive

In the quickening of advent

May our belief broaden

And our hope deepen

In this hour

God of all our pasts

And God of our future too

May we leave here those things that reduce our humanity

And shrink our faith

And pause long enough

To recognise the time

Of renewal

Of getting ready

Of preparation

Of the enfleshing of God

Hear us as we pray together

**Scripture Introduction**

We have an attitude in our faith that every story we tell has to teach us something… We have to be able to pull some moral out of it… This reminds us of… or… this teaches us this… or such and such was a model for whatever…

Bible stories aren’t really like that… There is no one version or conclusion… These are deeply flawed and human characters… that live in a messed-up world… responding to crises they don’t understand…

If there is anything real we can say about them… it is that we can find something of ourselves in them all… That was true of Tamar last week… and equally true of Rahab this week… So today what we offer is simply a retelling of their stories … exploring some of the levels we can read her story… get to know Rahab a bit better… and leave it there for us all to take away and reflect on ourselves…

Maybe we will redeem her… maybe we will enlighten… maybe we will simply be introduced to her for the first time… but her story is hugely significant in the annals of our faith… yet she is someone we do not preach about… or talk of often… because our tradition has slurried her somewhat… Let us instead… introduce her again… the second woman to appear in Jesus’ genealogy… Rahab…

**Reading**

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. **2**The king of Jericho was told, ‘Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.’ **3**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.’ **4**But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, ‘True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. **5**And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.’ **6**She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. **7**So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

**8**Before they went to sleep, 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 dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. **10**For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. **11**As soon as we heard it, our hearts failed, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. **12**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. Give me a sign of good faith **13**that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.’ **14**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.’

**15**Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. **16**She said to them, ‘Go towards the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there for three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterwards you may go on your way.’ **17**The men said to her, ‘We will be released from this oath that you have made us swear to you **18**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. **19**If any of you go out of the doors of your house into the street, they shall be responsible for their own death, and we shall be innocent; but if a hand is laid upon any who are with you in the house, we shall bear the responsibility for their death. **20**But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be released from this oath that you made us swear to you.’ **21**She said, ‘According to your words, so be it.’ She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied the crimson cord in the window.

**Reflection** *(the reflection is a dialogue between Roddy and Carole Hough. This script offers only the questions the conversation dances round. The audio will offer the whole conversation)*

Today we introduce to you Carole who is training to be a worship leader in the church… We were uncertain which Sunday she would be able to lead the service and had originally focused on this passage… That date was shifted to January but not wanting to lose any of the insights gains which preparing for this Sunday we thought… a chance to have a conversation around Rahab, explore some of the stories of her… the different traditions and get to know her a bit better…

So, Carole… Rahab is one of the lesser known characters… though not entirely unknown… You have a background in researching names, so the obvious question is to ask about Rahab’s name because names in the Biblical tradition are not just identifiers but often speak of a promise of God… or the name given, personifies something we believe about God… that this person speaks of or personifies… Does Rahab fall into that area for you?…

Rahab, ‘liberation’… ‘breadth'… It is such a big name in terms of hope… and indeed it is fulfilled in her own actions… But… as so often happens in the Bible… she isn’t someone you’d expect to be one of God’s own… given she is a Canaanite, a woman and a prostitute… or do I have that wrong?… given the Bible is a book that is constantly trying to give people a bigger idea of God than the parochial, denominational version even today we still keep coming back to… She grew God because she was the first to convert to Judaism… would you like to tell that story…

Going back to names, we have tended to define her: prostitute, foreigner, woman etc. and in doing so we have limited her in our minds eye. Controlled her, even, and how we see her and speak of her. We’ve made her into a story rather than letting her tell her own story. Yet you’d like to push that a big bit because actually, she is more than that. What names would you like to give her…?

Bible stories are not closed stories. They don’t come with one outcome or one moral or one purpose. They are multilayered. And today we decided that we weren’t going to offer a conclusion but simply get to know Rahab a little more. What is it about her that has intrigued you, or opened up a different way of seeing her, or understanding the story?

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

God

Of the red cord

The sign of hope

Of protection

Of grace

Of welcome

May we live that prayer

Be those people

Who hold these promises

May we be the protection for those who are refugees

Who have travelled across borders

For their own safety

Creating a safe space

A generous space

Of incarnational welcome

May we be the hope for those who worry about the future

Where the cost of living is too high

And trust in leadership is low

And a narrowness towards neighbour is growing

Creating a breadth of love

In a space shaped by incarnation welcome

May we be the grace for those who are on the wrong side of prejudice

Because of colour, tradition, language, sexuality

Creating a diverse space

That includes all

Shaped in the image of God as we are

A deep space

Of incarnation welcome

May we be generosity for those who are hungry

In too many places in the world

Where conflict ruins futures

Land

Environment

A creative space

Of incarnation welcome

May we be love for those we share life with

Family and friends

The physically and mentally ill

Those worried about jobs and education and futures

May we create open space

That offers life and life to the full

In incarnation welcome

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**