



READ: Joshua 2:1-21, (ESV)

...Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim (shee-TEEM) 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. And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 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." 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. 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." 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.

Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof 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. 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. 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.

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 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." 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."

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. 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."

The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. 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. 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. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." 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.

ENTER THE STORY:

Rahab lived in the city of Jericho, which was located just across the Jordan River in the promised land. It was the first city the Israelites would have to conquer on their journey to recapture the land of Israel God had promised to Abraham. But conquering Jericho would not be an easy feat. It was a highly fortified city, with not just one outer wall, but two; both very thick and very high. As any good military commander does, Joshua sent two spies in to gain intel and figure out how to conquer the city.

Once inside, they entered the house of Rahab, who was a prostitute. She lived on the outer wall of the city, so we're going to give the spies the benefit of the doubt and hope that they entered her house as part of their plan to gain intel. Regardless, because the King of Jericho found out they were there, she hid the spies on her roof and lied to the guards in order to save their lives. She did all of this for *ONE REASON ONLY*: she had heard of Yahweh, the God of the Israelites. She knew what he had done to the Egyptians, and she knew the walls of Jericho were no match for a God like that.

Because she saved their lives, the spies ended up making a deal with Rahab. They agreed to save her and her family, but there was one condition: in order for them to keep their end of the bargain, she had to hang a scarlet cord outside her window. It was, quite literally, her only hope. If your mind just strayed to Princess Leia's line, "Help me, Obi Wan Kenobi; you're my only hope," you're not too far off; because *HOPE* is a concept we want to focus on today.

In Hebrew, there isn't ONE exact word for hope...there are actually 15 different words used to convey a similar message, but there are two words used most often. We are only going to focus on one of them. This word for Hope, is "tiqvah" (tick-vah), and it literally means "a cord (or attachment)." This is where we get "Scarlet Cord." But figuratively it means, "an expectation." Tiqvah comes from the root word "qavah" (Kah-vah) which means "to wait or look for," but is connected to the idea of a measuring cord used for binding. *Do you see where this is going?*

When the Israelite spies told Rahab to hang a "scarlet cord," out of her window, we could say it was her, "scarlet hope," because it's the same Hebrew word: tiqvah.

That scarlet cord was binding or tethering her to the Israelites...it was her lifeline! She chose to bind herself to Yahweh, the God of the Israelites instead of clinging to what seemed like the safe bet in the fortified walls of Jericho.

When Rahab put her CORD out the window and watched the scarlet rope fly, she trusted that her hope was secure.

Was it worth it? Well, because of her oath with the spies, her whole family survived the fall of Jericho and Rahab shifted her allegiance to Yahweh and her new family, the Israelites. As a reward for her faith, God sent her a prince to marry by the name of Salmon, and just like that, Rahab became part of the royal family. From prostitute to princess...she cruised straight into the pages of Hebrews chapter 11, the, "Hall of Faith," and into our hearts as a beloved hero...not because she was a good person or did good things, but because of her *FAITH*. Eventually Salmon and Rahab had a son named Boaz, who would be the father of Obed, who would be the father of Jesse, who would be the father of David – the greatest king in Israel's history. And just like that we're right back to the family of Jesse, and we find ourselves longing for the arrival of the Shoot that comes out of the stump who will be our forever king!

This Christmas...we are putting our hope in the arrival of a tiny little baby. That baby is *OUR* Scarlet Cord, God in the flesh, and all who bind themselves to him will not be disappointed. Our expectation is that we who have waited a long time for him will one day be rewarded!

This hope is an anchor to our soul (*Hebrews 6:19*)...that we have a God who loves us, who will never leave us or forsake us, who will watch over us and give us strength to endure, who will have mercy on us, who can empathize with us, and who, one day, will bring us safely home into His presence.

PRAY: *Jesus, you are our Scarlet Cord, and our only hope—we choose to bind ourselves to you. And while we anticipate and celebrate the arrival of the very first time you came, we wait with great expectation that you will return again to rescue us and bring us home to be with you forever. Amen.*