

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN

(Traditional & Online Service)

July 27, 2025 • 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bible Profile: Joshua

Joshua 2:1-21; Ecclesiastes 4:12

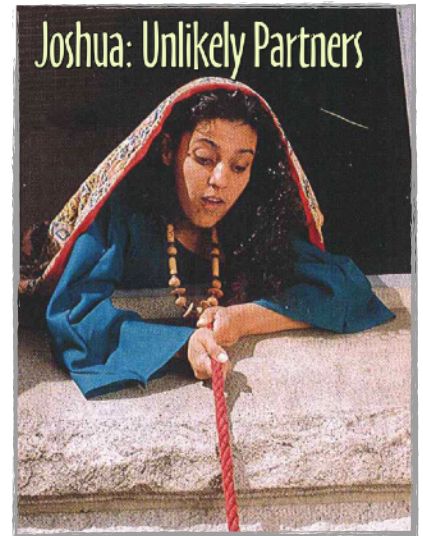
"Unlikely Partners"

Joshua's story shows us God's willing to partner with anyone...even us.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship:

- a piece of **green** cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a red cord, rope or string
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop

In preparing for Worship, consider the following:

- How do you evaluate with whom you are willing to work?
- How do you think God evaluates us for partnering?
- What qualifies your belief in someone/something?
- What should God consider when hiring you?

(10am only) Prelude:

"Crown Him King Medley" arr. by R E Schram

Opening Sentence

Ecclesiastes 4:12 (CEB)

Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. A three-ply cord doesn't easily snap.

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than the Sanctuary.

Work with What You've Got

One of the real shifts in culture we've experienced are changes in attitudes about jobs. Whether it's requirements, expectations, pay, experience, even hopes. And this is true on the part of both employees and employers. But there's a small but persistent truth that's always been true of this core, societal, economic relationship: you have to work with what you've got. Employers can only hire who applies. Employees can only work where they apply. And God is constantly applying to hire us. As we move through the week, consider the life moments for which (and with which) God has prepared you and apply for God's call on you as a person of faith.

Bible Heroes

Over the next several weeks we are featuring as a theme in the Morning and Online worship services a Bible hero. We are using the lives of these folks to watch how God operates and contrast their choice-making with our own. From Noah, Abraham, Joshua (Rahab), Moses, Jesus, to the Gospel itself, we will explore people and their stories, examples God gives us to live, learn and, frankly, laugh at ourselves. We perhaps might find the hero of faith God intends for us to be.

The Work of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee works at the behest of the congregation. They are seeking to empower and inform the right of the congregation in our system to elect its leadership. Elders Tammy Karnes, Sandy Muller and Carol Phillips are serving to provide us with a recommended slate of nominees. To aid them in their work, most principally, pray for them. Also, feel free to suggest names to them under these three conditions. First, ensure you have your suggested person's permission to submit their name. Second, make sure that they are, in fact, a member of the congregation. Third, and most important, prayerfully consider God's call on them to serve in this way.

The Story of Our Church Is Written in Our Connections

Whether we're talking about history or our ever-emerging present, God's goal has always been to connect us with God's Spirit and each other. A big way this happens is through our stories. *Linking Lives* is an opportunity for folks to share their stories and in so doing help link us together with each other. Over the next 12 months, there will be opportunities for us to learn more about and, most importantly, *pray* for every family in our congregation. We will feature profiles and have times for personal prayer and chatting as well as bi-monthly opportunities for a podcast featuring faith stories (1st week of the month) and/or burning faith questions or theology (3rd week of the month). Look for your invitation letters to come beginning in August.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "What a Mighty God We Serve" CEL #627

What a mighty God we serve.

What a mighty God we serve.

Angels bow before Him;

Heav'n and earth adore Him.

What a mighty God we serve. (2X)

Joshua's story shows us God's willing to partner with anyone...even us.

In this moment, let us remain standing, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship. Let us be called to worship together...

(10am only) Call to Worship

When God said, "conquer Jericho"

Joshua made his plans

The army got ready

Everything was prepared and assigned

They were missing only one thing

A woman named Rahab

Sing:

"Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" GTG#354

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

We judge people a lot: on appearances, actions, especially through the lens of our own history. We have a hard time going with God's prescription for how to handle that. That's got to change. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Holy God, you chose a murderer for the Exodus in Moses. You chose a child to be a prophet in Jeremiah. You chose a coward to be judge of all Israel in Gideon. You chose a corrupt politician to be king in David. You chose a liar in Peter, a traitor in Zaccheus, a thief who was crucified alongside Christ, even a donkey to serve your will and to make your grace known. For all our brokenness, you choose us, Lord. Forgive us, please, for forgetting this, not just when it comes to other people, but also when thinking about ourselves. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)**Glory be to the Father****And to the Son****And to the Holy Ghost****As it was in the beginning****It is now and ever shall be****World without end: Amen, amen.****Reading of Scripture**

Say: The Word of God doesn't just inform: it reveals. The Word of God doesn't just tell us the truth, it empowers us to live our true path. The Word of God, by God's own Spirit, teaches us to live. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "O, How I Love Jesus" CEL #92
(GTG #232)

O, how I love Jesus!**O, how I love Jesus!****O, how I love Jesus!****Because He first loved me!**

Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

Read: Joshua 2:1-21 (CEB)

God and Joshua, Israel, and Rahab.

¹ Joshua, Nun's son, secretly sent two men as spies from Shittim. He said, "Go. Look over the land, especially Jericho." They set out and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab. They bedded down there.

² Someone told the king of Jericho, "Men from the Israelites have come here tonight to spy on the land."

³ So the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab: "Send out the men who came to you, the ones who came to your house, because they have come to spy on the entire land."

⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. Then she said, "Of course the men came to me. But I didn't know where they were from. ⁵ The men left when it was time to close the gate at dark, but I don't know where the men went. Hurry! Chase after them! You might catch up with

them." ⁶ But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the flax stalks that she had laid out on the roof. ⁷ The men from Jericho chased after them in the direction of the Jordan up to the fords. As soon as those chasing them went out, the gate was shut behind them.

⁸ Before the spies bedded down, Rahab went up to them on the roof. ⁹ She said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land. Terror over you has overwhelmed us. The entire population of the land has melted down in fear because of you. ¹⁰ We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Reed Sea in front of you when you left Egypt. We have also heard what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites on the other side of the Jordan. You utterly wiped them out. ¹¹ We heard this and our hearts turned to water. Because of you, people can no longer work up their courage. This is because the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. ¹² Now, I have been loyal to you. So pledge to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal loyally with my family. Give me a sign of good faith. ¹³ Spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, along with everything they own. Rescue us from death."

¹⁴ The men said to her, "We swear by our own lives to secure yours. If you don't reveal our mission, we will deal loyally and faithfully with you when the LORD gives us the land."

¹⁵ So she lowered the spies on a rope through the window. Her house was on the outer side of the city wall, and she lived inside the wall. ¹⁶ Then she said to them, "Go toward the highlands so that those chasing you don't run into you. Hide there for three days until those chasing you return. Then you may go on your way."

¹⁷ The men said to her, "We won't be responsible for this pledge you made us swear ¹⁸ unless, when we come into the land, you tie this red woven cord in the window through which you lowered us. Gather your father, your mother, your brothers, and your whole family into the house with you. ¹⁹ Those who go outside the doors of your house into the street will have only themselves to blame for their own deaths. We won't be responsible. If anyone

lays a hand on those who are with you in the house, we will take the blame for their death.²⁰ But if you reveal our mission, we won't be responsible for this pledge you made us swear."

²¹ She said, "These things will happen just like you said." She sent them away and they went off. Then she tied the red cord in the window.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- a bowl or basket of a variety of fruit
 - Don't forget to wait for answers
- "For the Picking"*
- Okay! What is this? Sure, a bowl of fruit. Are you able to tell me what kinds there are?...
 - Great! So how do you pick which kind of fruit to eat?...if you're like a lot of people, you pick the fruit you like. That means you've probably tasted it before. But how would you know if you like any of the others? Well...you have to try them!
 - But it's different for God. God picks all of us. No, not to eat. But God does pick us to be friends, to be family. God already knows what we're like. God knows our mistakes. God knows our dreams. God knows us.
 - God knows how tall we are. God know how loud we are. God knows if we're missing a finger or our hair is out of place. God knows everything about and God picks us.
 - So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them why they think God has picked them.
 - Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" arr. Patrick M. Lieberman; Soloist: David Ealy

Sermon: "Unlikely Partners"

Pick me!

It can be a plea. It can be attention-grabbing. The phrase can be an expression of hope or of utter desperation. And, wow, does context matter!

Who's being picked? For what are they being picked? What are the stakes?

Are we talking about kickball or the NFL Draft? Are we talking country club membership or church membership? Are we talking about shirts and skins, adults and children, human beings of every description?

One of the toughest parts of being an employer is hiring people. When we sought to hire Jennifer, we didn't KNOW we were looking for her. In fact, we started with an idea, a dream really. Then we had to take applications. Some people applied who had no experience being a church secretary. Some people applied who had no accounting experience. Some people sent us an email indicating their interest in the position but didn't leave the contact information or actual name (I kid you not). And just because you hire someone doesn't mean you've got it right. Some questions take time to answer. We can talk a good game, but it isn't until years later that we can know some things.

I really wonder about this when it comes to God. God is putting together the most important project ever. Stitching the universe together and using humanity as partners. Us. I mean, are we qualified?

Given what you know about the world, would you pick us? Would you trust us not to become corrupt? Would you trust us not to get our priorities mixed up? Would you trust us to love and pray and forgive? The thing is...God does. God, even knowing everything there is possible to know about us and our resumé, still looks to hire us. And Joshua's story can give us clues as to why.

What do we know about him? Joshua was Moses' right hand man. He was there for some of the most consequential events in Moses' late life and in the founding of the nation. Joshua implemented Moses' policies and was entrusted with the mantle of leadership when Moses died (not Aaron, Moses' brother, or Miriam, Moses' sister) but Joshua.

And Joshua is the anglicized version of a name that should be familiar to us: "Yeshua" or "Jesus" or, translated, "God saves." God. Saves. What a name!

There is, beyond what we get in Deuteronomy and other places, an entire book devoted to his exploits and travels and achievements. Joshua is where we get the famous quote toward the end of the book:

"But if it seems wrong in your opinion to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Choose the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But my family and I will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

I grew up learning that as, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." I've seen that on placards, t-shirts, stickers, posters, even inscribed over the entrance to a church. And why not? It's a heady, aspirational declaration. THIS is my line in the sand. This is where I stand. I am God's.

Nice.

But the whole of the book, the whole of Joshua's life, seems to point to one singular reality. It's not about where our allegiances lie. It's about God's. It's in the name: God saves.

And so after the first chapter that takes pains to establish Joshua as Moses 2.0 (down to parting the Jordan river, you know, like the Red Sea), we immediately get into the intrigue of the campaign on Promised Land including Jericho.

Now, let's just establish some historical context. You might notice that Joshua and his forces aren't entering a blank slate. You might have noticed there were people already living there. The city even has a name. There's established history. Now in our day, we talk about nations invading the sovereignty of other nations. This same thing took place back in the day. But it was not looked at the same. The structure of society, the economics, the politics, were all different than we know now. What wasn't different, however, was the fact that people were living there. Human beings.

Their sensibilities weren't SO different from ours that the idea of prostitutes would have been a strange concept. While we might have moral objections to that now, a prostitute was just a part

of the economic backdrop back then. That's not really the surprising part. The surprising part is that she is not only named, but her exploits are recorded in detail. Let me explain.

Up to this point in the Bible, the Israelites have traveled the 40 years in the desert. The reason they had to do that is because God was purging those without the faith to enter the Promised Land. That's how the Bible puts it. So the people coming in were ready, primed to make this promise to Joshua and to God:

"We will obey everything you have commanded us and go anywhere you send us. We will obey you in the same way that we obeyed Moses. Just let the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses! Anybody who stubbornly opposes what you declare and doesn't obey any of your commands will be put to death. Be brave and strong!" (Joshua 1:16-18)

Whew! Ok. So they are ready and willing to do anything. Ready to be brave and strong. And so Joshua sends off some spies to do some reconnaissance. Their job is to scope out the place and make notes. They don't want to start the campaign blind.

And so the spies are off on their mission. There's an entire book of story that we DON'T get in verse 1. All it says is that Joshua gave them their mission, they set out and entered Rahab's house.

So why there? And was that the plan going into town or did they improvise going there? How did they even know about her if they did? The truth is, as is God's habit, the Spirit is a crass opportunist.

But before we answer the question of why, let's bear in mind that this opening campaign of Joshua's administration has at its heart, Rahab. A woman who demonstrated profound faith. Whether or not she had even *heard* of the 10 Commandments, she took God's name and God's people seriously. And in doing so made herself one of God's people. The action happens fast. I mean, just picture what the text tells us. By the time the king of Jericho sends people to her house looking for the spies, she has already had her

conversation with them and devised the plan. Verse 8 says she talked with them BEFORE they bedded down. Was SHE looking for them? At any rate, Rahab served as ally, gave them intelligence, and risked her neck (and her family's) and served God. So the spies were able to get away. Can't you just imagine the conversation with Joshua?

JOSHUA & THE SPIES SKIT

(Having finished their surveillance of Jericho, the spies are on their way back to Joshua. They stop by the road to call him along the way...)

SPY ONE: (Sighing) Come on...come on...you know, he'd better not send me to voicemail again.

JOSHUA: Hello?

SPY ONE: Hey! Joshua! It's Jacob. You're on speakerphone with me and Reuben. We're clear of Jericho and we thought we'd stop and give you an update.

SPY TWO: Hello! (waving even though they aren't on a video call)

JOSHUA: Hey You Two! So...you got out ok? Did you run into any problems?

SPY ONE: Yeah, it got a little hairy there for a while, but we made it okay. It's just like we thought: the whole town's scared out of their minds.

SPY TWO: Right! We hid on a rooftop and then faked out the guards when they pursued us.

JOSHUA: How'd you do all that?

SPY ONE: Well...we had some help.

JOSHUA: Help? What kind of help?

SPY TWO: We found an ally.

JOSHUA: What? Like who? Wait...like a palace official or someone in their army?

SPY ONE: Well, not exactly—

JOSHUA: Was it someone on their war council or maybe a city administrator?

SPY TWO: Soo...we really didn't have time to—

JOSHUA: Oh! I Know! You found an architect or brick mason for their walls. That's really great work, guys...

SPY ONE: We had to improvise.

SPY TWO: Honestly, I think God had a hand in it—

JOSHUA: Well, who was it already?

SPY ONE: So...it was a woman named Rahab...

JOSHUA: Oh, like a concubine or maybe even a princess?

SPY TWO: Not really, no.

JOSHUA: Wait. Rahab...Rahab...why does that name sound familiar?

SPY TWO: So, you've got to understand she was perfect for the job.

SPY ONE: Exactly! People going in and out of her place wouldn't have raised suspicion.

SPY TWO: And she rubbed shoulders with a lot of officials.

SPY ONE: Plus she knew the ins and outs of the city...

JOSHUA: Hang on! Are you talking about Rahab, the PROSTITUTE!?!?

SPY TWO: Well...yeah. But, Joshua, we're telling you: she was the perfect partner. and we owe her big.

SPY ONE: Frankly, she showed more faith in Yahweh than some of our own people.

She really did. Think about what she said. "The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below." She's not only spouting affirmations of faith, but she's putting her faith to work, hiding the spies and then trusting them when she put the red cord out of her window. Why did she believe them? Why did she *trust* them? How did she know they wouldn't renege on the promise to protect her and hers when the time came? The thing is, she trusted Yahweh before she even met them. She didn't have the benefit of the community, the traditions, the entirety of the scrolls of Moses, the Torah. She didn't have people to back and forth with about her burgeoning faith. God's Spirit was enough. God chose Rahab just as surely as God chose Joshua and the gang. And despite never getting to hear Joshua's speech, she acted brave and strong.

Now you might be asking: "I thought we were supposed to be talking about Joshua?" Yes. And for a man whose name means "God saves" we should be paying extra attention to his example. But I can count on my hands the number of times the Bible actually NAMES a woman and details her life and interactions. Rahab is given outsized prominence in a story written by men in a culture dominated by men. Even the woman who pour perfume on Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair wasn't given this honor. We know Rahab's name. We know what she did. We know of her faith. The Bible is paying attention to her and so shall we.

But importantly, Rahab is just another example of what we find in Joshua's story. At the end of the day, Joshua and the gang not only had to trust the spies and Rahab and their plan. They had to trust that God had this in hand this way. Because while Rahab had to trust that the spies would keep their promise, the entire nation had to trust that Rahab wouldn't betray them and out them to Jericho's king. They had to trust that God would be willing to partner with such a person.

And let's be honest: WE aren't picking the prostitute. When thinking about picking people for anything, what's our guiding light, what's our sorting principle? Is it success? Guarantees? Moral or practical certainty? Maybe it's as simple as whether or not we think we know enough. The thing is neither Rahab nor Joshua and the gang had any of that certainty with each other. The most they could hope for was to trust the God that has chosen them both.

The other thing was that trust necessarily had to translate into believing that true salvation, true resolution, was going to come, not at their hands, but at God's hands. You see, Joshua's name wasn't "I save" or "Moses saves" or "Lots of resources and a really good plan saves." Joshua's name is Yeshua...Jesus...GOD saves.

There are days, y'all, that I get overwhelmed. I get overwhelmed trying to answer questions I have no hope of answering, solving problems I am not equipped to solve and trying to take on the burden of a world that I am but a part of. There is a savior. And if Joshua's (or Rahab's) life is any indication, that savior's name is not David Ealy, Hawfields Presbyterian Church, or any name other than Jesus.

So be strong and brave and serve the Lord. The waters will part. The walls will come down. And promises and hopes will be realized.

My family in Christ, may it be so.

Song of Reflection

"Called As Partners in Christ's Service" GTG #761

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

(10am only) Offertory

"Holy, Holy, Holy" arr. by K L Phillips

(10am only) Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise God all creatures here below.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;

Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Blessing

(text online only)

Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us. And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt, Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayers of the People

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...

- *"Down to the River to Pray" Traditional*

O Christians, let's go down,

let's go down, come one down.

O Christians, let's go down,

down to the river to pray.

O Children, let's go down,

let's go down, come one down.

O Children, let's go down,

down to the river to pray.)

- Holy God, we spend a lot of time and energy trying to improve, trying to be the best. Thank you for the gift of the desire to strive. But help us not to let that gift overshadow the incomparable gift of your grace. That we get to have the benefit of your Spirit and power for anything you dream for us, even reconciliation. And so, Lord, please, help us be strong and brave, especially when it comes to your command to love and to mercy. Help us be mindful of the ways in which

you are conquering our hearts and minds and trust you enough to leave a red cord in our windows. Help us leave open the possibility that your Spirit might invade where it must, change what needs changing, and leave us occupied with who you are.

- We ask this not for ourselves but also for each other. For our world. We're a mess, Lord. You know it. We know it. But you see ahead. You see what we might be. Help us get there. Help us trust our transformation to you and go with it.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) *"There's A Wideness in God's Mercy"*
GTG #435

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Joshua's story shows us God's willing to partner with anyone...even us.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: *"Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us"* GTG #187

**Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
You have bought us: we are yours.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
You have bought us: we are yours.**

(10am only) Postlude

"Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" GTG #354
