



11.30.25...Making Room, When Pressure Is Closing In | Joshua 2:1-21

Will we make room in our hearts this Advent?

From our text in Joshua, we just learned how Rahab made room in her home for the spies of God. And now in Matthew chapter 1, the part no one reads, we see how God honored Rahab in return.

**This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:**

**<sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac,**

**Isaac the father of Jacob,**

**Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,**

**<sup>3</sup> Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,**

**Perez the father of Hezron,**

**Hezron the father of Ram,**

**<sup>4</sup> Ram the father of Amminadab,**

**Amminadab the father of Nahshon,**

**Nahshon the father of Salmon,**

**<sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,**

Rahab— the mother of Boaz, grandmother of Jesse, great-grandmother of David, King David. She is one of only five women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy.

We see how God made room for her, honoring her for eternity, folding her life, her story, adding her DNA into the family line of Jesus.

A woman under pressure from every direction makes a tiny moment of space for strangers—and in return God makes room for her in the huge story of salvation.

It reminds me of the summer I graduated from high school. That summer my dad unexpectedly opened our home to two Japanese exchange students from Toyo University.

It surprised me. But it also taught me something about hospitality, about the beauty of making room for someone else's life and story and culture to touch yours.

It was a growing experience in being hospitable, making time for them. But it was pretty simple...a boat ride, sharing the joys of cantaloupe – a rare delicacy for them, showing off Bemidji's natural beauty.

A couple of years later in college, I found myself helping international students—practicing English, reading with them, sharing my faith. Nothing complicated.

I became “the Bible lady” to them, and they shared meals and friendship with me. And they far surpassed making room for me.

And then, there was a time in my life, when I felt pressure coming at me from all sides. My world felt like it was caving in. My current two jobs were not secure and I didn't know what to do.

I took a risk, because I had too.

And you know, I knocked on the door of the United Methodist denomination, and surprise - they stepped back and welcomed me in. They took a huge risk on a stranger, foreign to their ways.

A formational time for me, experiencing personally how God often works to make room for new possibilities in surprising ways.

We all know something about pressure, times we may feel threatened, at risk, afraid, and uncertain of how to proceed.

Ten days ago, on a Wednesday evening ,we listened as guest speakers shared at our “Homeless for the Holidays” event. It was wonderful, so very good!

They shared the very real struggles of the poor and marginalized: food scarcity, tough job market, living in their vehicles because of the high cost of renting or owning a home.

Wright County is trying to figure out how to make room for all.

Also, last week someone shared with me their struggle to find a job, watching their hard-earned savings slowly leak away as they struggled with unemployment.

During the Pie Social, I heard the job market is just tight. We are living in a pressure cooker.

You may feel it too. Work, finances, family stress, grief, uncertainty. Pressure can shrink our hearts. Pressure can make us want to shut the doors, crawl under the covers, and protect ourselves.

We struggle to make room for God.

That's pretty obvious, but why? Why might that be?

We struggle with faith-based risks, in our humanness and frailty. We struggle to make space for faith as we try to assess the risk level.

Here are just a few reasons why we struggle to be open and make room for God in our lives:

1. Because our lives are already full of good things, and we fear God might change them.
2. Because pain takes up space in our hearts. Grief, disappointment, trauma, unanswered prayers. These can fill our hearts so completely that there seems to be no room left for hope. Hurt can become a kind of inner "Do Not Disturb" sign.
3. Because we are running on empty. Ironically, emptiness can also feel like "no room."

When we're exhausted, burned out, or numb, it feels like we have nothing left to offer. We assume God requires energy we don't have, when in reality God often begins His work *where our strength ends*.

4. Because familiarity with God can fool us into thinking we're being faithful to God. Ouch.

5. And because, like Bethlehem's innkeepers, we often do not recognize **who** is knocking.

Mary and Joseph were turned away because no one recognized who was asking for shelter. God who put on flesh, the Messiah was coming to be born.

In the same way, God often arrives disguised: in the inconvenient interruption, in the stranger who needs help, in the family member who's hard to love, in the haunting ache or tug on our heart we can't quite explain.

We forget who our God is. We forget our God sees and cares and acts, God is faithful. Rahab reminds us that God often works to make room for new possibilities in ways truly unanticipated and unexpected.

Challenging us, asking us...this Advent season will we make room in our hearts for deeper faith and trust in God, to take a risk for God, like Rahab did?

In both Josuah and Matthew, in both of our texts, God's purposes are worked out through people's complex lives. Rahab acting under pressure.

She finds some inner courage, discovers some agency and acts upon it. And then God responds in ways that will have wider implications than she could have ever imagined.

Rahab faced tremendous and unjust difficulties – from both the king and his soldiers and the Israelite spies. Pushed on by both sides, but she makes room, not only for the spies, but for a way forward for her family.

Not that she was trying to, but through her courage she makes a name for herself.

Rahab's name means "broad" or "spacious". Our Rahab stands as a surprising theological teacher for Advent, opening up and broadening our understanding of Advent, of God's heart towards making room for the stranger.

And Rahab...this is fascinating...she practices what theologians call "**faithful risk**." She doesn't have perfect knowledge, perfect faith, or perfect motives. But she has courage enough to risk being hospitable and hide those spies.

What are the (perhaps unlikely) ways we are called to make space in our own lives when we face the pressure of the business of the holidays? What and who do we make space for?

In her negotiations with the spies, the men devise a plan, a signal for her. She is to tie a red cord in the window she had just led them down through to escape.

The red cord is a signal that her house is the single place of refuge from violence, they make a binding covenant between her and the spies and their God, and her family and the invading army.

In Matthew's genealogy, the presence of Rahab alongside Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary highlights God's pattern of making room in the story of salvation for those who are often pushed to the margins.

Their experiences of vulnerability, coercion, and risk expose the need for spaces of refuge, while their courage and ingenuity show how sanctuary can be created even in threatening circumstances.

To follow Christ's lineage is to participate in God's work of making space—room for safety, dignity, and belonging where the world would often deny it.

As we enter Advent, the theme of "Sanctuary: Room for All", this idea of making room becomes especially powerful.

The Christmas story is crowded with pressure—Mary and Joseph pushed by an imperial census, pushed to travel, pushed to Bethlehem.

And then the words that still ache across centuries:

"There was **no room** for them in the inn."

No room for a young couple.

No room for a laboring mother.

No room for the Savior of the world.

This is our Advent question: Will we make room in our hearts for those in need?

And there are many ways we might stretch ourselves and take a “**faithful risk**” in this Advent invitation, take the next step of faith.

For some of us, maybe we make room at our tables in the Fellowship Hall. Maybe we sit with new people or invite new people to sit with us.

Or we lean into our Passing of the Peace, to seek out people we don’t know and do a fist bump.

For others, we are ready for a bigger challenge, we know we are ready to help with the homeless in our town. The Adult Discipleship Team is discussing what are next steps can be.

How will we make room for the homeless, the hungry in our town?

Advent begins with a world too crowded, too stressed, too pressured to notice God knocking. But the miracle of Christmas is that **God comes anyway**—seeking room in human hearts.

And now the invitation comes to us. In a modern-day world full of modern pressure, in a season where we our hearts might feel tired, full, or guarded...

God still comes, knocking.

God still asks, gently but persistently:

**“Will you make room for Me?”**

As we move into a **time of reflection**, consider...

1. Where is God gently knocking in your life this Advent, inviting you to make room—and what small step of openness could you offer in response?
2. Who around you—neighbor, stranger, or overlooked person—is God inviting you to make room for in this season?