

“Letters to Rahab”  
Advent Two: Lake Shore Baptist Church  
Kyndall Rae Rothaus  
December 9, 2018

April 10, 2018

Dear Rahab,

My name is Cassandra. I am 16 years old, and I’m writing you from the Juvenile Detention Center in San Antonio. I’ve been living on the streets two years, ‘til being arrested for theft end of March.

There’s a chaplain here who talks with me. At first she seemed alright, but that was before I knew she was the chaplain. I tell her I don’t believe in God, so she might as well leave me alone. She asks me why I don’t believe. “What did God ever do for me?” I tell her. She waits quietly for me to say more. “I’m pissed at God,” I yell, thinking I can shock her. “What kind of God just stand by and let a kid get beat up and used? God never protected me from nothin’.”

“You must feel betrayed,” she says gently, like she ain’t shocked at all.

“That’s right.”

“I notice you are feeling pissed at a God you don’t believe exists,” she adds.

I never thought about it like that before. “Well, *if* God is out there, I’m mad at him. Either way, it’s not like I’m gonna pray or talk to him or whatever.”

“Why not?”

“I told you!” I sorta scream that, all aggravated, “I used to pray for help, and I never got no help.” The chaplain doesn’t react to my anger, so then I feel real quiet. “Besides,” I add soft, “God hates people like me.”

“Like you?”

“Yeah, all the things I’ve done. All the things I am. I couldn’t pray if I wanted to, because God wouldn’t listen to me.”

And that’s when she suggests that instead of praying, I write to Rahab. She tells me you’re a prostitute in the Bible that God favored. I ask if God liked you after you cleaned up or before. She says before. Anyway, she seems to think we may be alike, you and me, and I would like writing to you. I tell her that’s stupid—you dead.

Guess I’m real lonely, cuz here I am, writing dead people, looking for a friend.

April 30, 2018

Dear Rahab,

How old were you when started turning tricks? I was 14. I ran away from home to get away from my stepfather. I met Jim pretty quick, and he asked me to be his girlfriend. He was in need of money, and said if only I could help him out for just a little bit. It's not like he forced me or anything. I wanted us to be able to eat, and I didn't want to go home.

One of the workers at Juvie wants Jim to get into trouble. Wants me to talk to some lawyer about what he did to me, but Jim's the only one who ever looked out for me before. I'm not talking to no lawyer.

May 17, 2018

Dear Rahab,

I've been reading about you in the Bible. Sure enough, you're in there! I got to thinking about how God spared your life, and you were a prostitute, like me. At first, this makes me feel real good, like, maybe God doesn't hate me after all. I almost want to cry, or dance maybe. But, of course, I don't do either.

On the one hand, you were sort of a hero, hiding the Israelite spies from danger. Then I think about it some more, and I think, *but God killed your whole city!* Even if you and your family were saved, that seem cruel to me. What kind of God kills a whole city and only saves the prostitute? This doesn't make any sense to me, and it ruins how I was just starting to feel good. It'd be great if you'd write back and explain some things.

Also, what kind of "men of God" Israelites start out their spying mission at a prostitute's house? How come no one ever talks about *that?* Chaplain says God don't send men to take land any more than God sends men to take a woman, so no matter how the Bible talks about it, a devil is always behind raping—be it land or people being ravaged. I am really not sure if a chaplain is allowed to say such things, but it's got me wondering a little about my own life and all the bad things that have happened to me. Maybe God didn't want them to happen neither?

June 21, 2018

Dear Rahab,

The chaplain came to talk to me today. Asked why I ran away from home, so I told her about my stepdad. I don't like talking about him, even acknowledging him, but once I got going, it just come pouring out. I never talked about him so much in all my life. That chaplain's eyes filled up

with tears while she listened, and it made me so uncomfortable. No one's ever cried for me before. No one's ever felt for me. No one ever even notice I'm hurt.

July 3, 2018

Dear Rahab,

She asks me what Jim is like. I say he loves me. She asks, always or some of the time? I feel a little nauseous and I look away. She just wait.

"Not always," I say.

"Sometimes he gets angry. Sometimes he spend more time with the other girls than he spend with me." I stop there and look to see if she's disgusted by me loving a man who ain't always nice.

She doesn't look disgusted. I tell her more.

Stupid chaplain get all teary again. I been avoiding her gaze, but when I look into her eyes something wet rolls down my cheek.

August 1, 2018

Rahab,

I keep thinking about God wiping out Jericho. I really don't like that part of the story, so I'm wondering what made you stand up for God and save his spies? Did you like God? I keep wondering whether you were betraying your city to save your own neck? Whether you were helping to be nice or whether you were hiding them cuz you felt trapped? You seem scared of God, and I guess I am too.

P.S. Do you think I'm betraying Jim, to talk about him to the chaplain?

August 24, 2018

Dear Rahab,

I feel so alone without Jim. When I was real little, right after we lost dad, and before my stepdad came, we used to go to Mass. I thought the priest seemed scary in that funny costume, but I loved all the pictures of Mary holding baby Jesus. I used to talk to Mary all the time, kinda like the way I'm talking to you.

I talked to her today for the first time in a long time. Asked her to help me.

October 14, 2018

Rahab,

I read more of the Bible today and it turns out that even though you and your family weren't killed, the Israelites made you live *outside* their camp! Even after you saved their skin! Makes me mad. Typical though. You and I, we'll always be marked women, won't we? No one will ever accept us as "normal," not after what we've done, who we've been . . . I'm only 16 and I been arrested three times; I've got a record and it will be with me always. If I don't go back to Jim after I get out of Juvie, I got nowhere to go. Just like you, no real place to call home.

November 18, 2018

Dear Rahab,

I told my chaplain I been praying to Mary. She Protestant, so I expected her to correct me, but she didn't. She said that's wonderful and asked me why I started praying.

"Like I already told you, I ain't gonna pray to no God. God wouldn't like someone like me. But when I think about Mary, I don't know, I think maybe she would look at me with kindness. I mean, she may have been a virgin and all, but she knew what it was to be young and pregnant and have people judge you. I think she can understand me, you know?"

What I wanted to tell my chaplain, but didn't say out loud, was that when I pray to Mary, she's got my chaplain's eyes and she's got my chaplain's tears.

December 1, 2018

Dear Rabab,

I was saying more to my chaplain 'bout how God seems so harsh, killing off cities, sending you to the outskirts of the camp, smiting people for their sins and all, but how Mary seem so gentle and approachable when she's holding that little baby, like she'd just gather you right up in her arms and hold you when you sin as if you'd just scraped your knee on the playground.

"Tell me more about that baby she's holding," my chaplain say.

I squirm a little cuz I don't really know what I'm talking about but I do know the baby is Jesus. Everyone knows that. But she's asking me for more. "Well . . ." I start off slow. "Jesus is, I don't know, a lot like his momma I guess. Kind, gentle, loves everybody . . ."

"Do you think it's possible," my chaplain asks me, "that if Jesus looked at you, he would see you with the same love Mary sees you?"

Good Lord. I never thought about this before, but Jesus got Mary's eyes and Mary's tears. Jesus is supposed to be God.

I sway a little in my chair. God's got eyes. I stare into my chaplain's face. She blinks and that quick I know it, that somebody loves me. Outside it thunders, like the heavens is gonna cry on my behalf.

December 7, 2018

Dear Rahab,

Holy moly! I just found out today that you are Jesus' great, great, great, great (etc.) grandmother.

I was telling Chaplain how I'm rethinking my stance on God a little, on account of Mary and her baby, only I'm still pissed at him for killing the Canaanites and keeping you on the outside of camp. Then Chaplain just come right out and shock me by telling me that you, of all people, are the great grandmother of Jesus! Suddenly I was even more curious about you than ever. I said to my chaplain, "Tell me everything you know about Rahab!"

I had her write it down so I could remember it exactly. She said,

"Cassandra, during her lifetime, Rahab was allowed into the community, but only marginally. However, later in the biblical narrative, she is as 'in' as she can get—*her name* is found in the lineage of *Jesus*. This sorta comes as a surprise to readers, because the story in Joshua didn't tell us that she married an Israelite, nor that she had a son. It's like, all the sudden, out of nowhere, she's honored, and we find out God blessed her.

Not that many women even get named in the genealogy," Chaplain continued, "so it is like it was important to the Gospel writer that Rahab be there. He *had* to mention her, almost like he's critiquing the Joshua story, in which she is saved, but marginally, in which she is saved, but others are destroyed . . . because from her lineage will come the one who does not discriminate. From her lineage will come the Prince of Peace. From her lineage will come the one who says, 'Turn the other cheek,' 'Love your enemies,' and 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' From her lineage will come him who is crucified, the one who absorbs violence rather than perpetuates it. From her lineage will come not a warrior, but a savior, a deliverer, and the very embodiment of mercy."

What do you think of that?! Rahab, did you have any idea where all of this was going? Or were you just as shocked to read Matthew as the rest of us?

Dear Rahab,

When I get out of Juvie, I've made up my mind, I'm not living on the outside of camp, which is one way of saying, I'm not going back to Jim. You know how you sorta tipped things in a new direction? Well, I don't know exactly where I'll go, but I'm gonna believe I can be a part of something good. I was wondering, if you see your grandson up there in heaven, can you tell him I'm not quite ready to talk to him just yet, but maybe I'll try him tomorrow? Thanks for listening.

Love,

Cassandra

*Beloved church of God, no matter the violences, violations, and turmoil you have known or enacted, in time, may the Prince of Peace be born in you. May you somehow sense it, deep in your soul, that God sees you, and that you are seen with eyes of love. Amen.*