



# God's Grace – week 5

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## God's grace for others – 1

(w/c 7 March 2021)

*"The grace of God is dangerous. It's lavish, excessive, outrageous, and scandalous. God's grace is ridiculously inclusive. Apparently, God doesn't care who he loves. He is not very careful about the people he calls his friends or the people he calls His Church." (Mike Yaconelli)*

### Read Joshua 2:1-13

At first sight, Rahab may appear a fairly tangential character in the Old Testament narrative, mentioned here and then forgotten. Note that references to 'Rahab' in books such as Job or the Psalms are poetical allusions to Egypt or simply 'the proud' and nothing to do with this Rahab. But, and it's a big but, she features strongly in the New Testament writings. She is the only woman named in the list of those whose faith we should emulate – Hebrews 11:31 – and is also cited by James (alongside Abraham no less) as a model for us to follow. What can we learn from her approach to faith and action?

Rahab is also one of four women included by Matthew in the genealogy he provides for Jesus (Matthew 1). They are all in some way outsiders. How is that important for us?

Verses 9 to 11 make it clear that all the city knew of the Israelites' exploits and were in fear of them. Why do you think they then acted as they did?

### Read 1 Peter 4:1-11

In one of his parables, Jesus likens the spreading of the kingdom of God to the action of yeast in a batch of flour (Matthew 13:33). Our response to grace is similar – just as a lump of yeast achieves nothing sat on the shelf, so we need to act within the community around us. Like yeast, grace grows the more it is shared.

In the section of his letter addressing faith which (as mentioned above cites Rahab as an example to follow), James concludes his thinking with the well-known words, *"Faith without works is dead"*. What do think James envisaged by 'faith without works'? I feel that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was alluding to something similar when he described the concept of cheap grace:

*"Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."*

A more recent writer (Robbie F. Castleman) gives us a slightly more picturesque view: *"Cheap grace sells us a comfortable Jesus to whom we sing affectionate valentines."* How do we avoid the siren call of that comfortable approach in our Christian life?

Over recent years, our studies have looked in detail at the concept of our individual *Front Lines* – those points in our day to day lives where we interact with others and our own mission can be worked out and lived out: nothing directly to do with church or anything with a religious label. How do we ensure that these 'graceful interactions' are our priority rather than focussing on the safe world of being church?

*"For grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them." (Augustine of Hippo)*