



“Rachab”

#1 Capacity

September 27, 2017

Courage Church, Detroit, MI

scriptures: Psalm 18:36, 2 Samuel 22:34, Genesis 37-50, Genesis 37:3, 1 Peter 5:10, Ecclesiastes 2:14

August is always a bit of a strange month for the church... we are on the other side of our huge backpack giveaway and the mission trips that we host in July...

a lot of people go on vacation, so what we have done the last couple of years is we usually end whatever big expository series we are on leading around that time, (last year it was the Sermon on the Mount, this year we just wrapped up the study on Ephesians)...

and typically we just do single, one-off messages until after labor day, and then kick off a big fall series... which we will do...

but as I was studying this week, I realized that the concept that we were going to dive in to TODAY was going to take a solid two weeks to do it justice, so we are going to kick off a mini series today, and end it next week... the series is really all about one Hebrew word.

The word is the word “rachab” (rah-have) and we will get into its meaning in a few minutes...

but we will be exploring the concept of being stretched... the idea of how, as we grow up both physically as well as Spiritually, AND our plates get larger and larger...

things that, NOT LONG AGO seemed totally overwhelming, maybe don't feel as overwhelming anymore... because as we expand our capacity, and what we can handle, God seems to expand His trust IN us, and what He

empowers us with. And so there is this sort of simultaneous progression, of our territory being expanded as our capacity is expanded.

You see, We want to be a church that grows, in all the RIGHT ways... we want to grow deep roots, that can handle spreading wide... because we have a vision for something that over time is intended to become very wide.

So here is the plan for today... I am going to read for us a short passage this morning, then talk about a very famous old testament character, then talk about ANOTHER famous old testament character, share a little bit from our lives, and then end by talking a little about the second famous old testament character's also famous father, who happens to have the same name as I do.

So, lets open our bibles to:

Psalms 18:36 -

You gave a wide place for my steps under me,
and my feet did not slip.

Lets Pray.

This verse in the Psalms is a word for word quote of 2 Samuel 22:34 - which is David's song of deliverance from Saul and his army. David had been a fugitive, running from the most powerful people in the nation, and yet God was with him, and delivered him.

Both 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 are basically identical... both chapters start by saying: The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer...

Because the truth is, that when it feels like the whole world falls apart... or in David's case, LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD IS AGAINST YOU... God has this way of delivering us from whatever it is we are going through... and often times, the things that we think are going to destroy us, end up being the very things that propel us into something EVEN GREATER.

and then when we get there, we realize, “wow... I wouldn't know what to do with myself, IF I JUST STARTED HERE... but because I struggled through this, and that, and this and that... and I failed and succeeded and then failed again... Now I actually have a good idea about the best way to respond to this!

David had to learn to take refuge in the Lord before he could know how to lead a nation.

but the thing that I love about this short section of Psalm 18 (and 2 Samuel 22) - is that it says that God gave David a WIDE PLACE for his steps under him. This just jumped out at me this week.

What that word in the Hebrew is, is the word *rachab* (rah-have) - and this is what it means... “to GROW WIDE” or “to ENLARGE.”

So it is not a foundation that right off of the bat was wide. It expanded over time... and when you read the Bible, you clearly see that as David was facing giant after giant in his life, the level ground that God was preparing for him to walk on as he faced the things he faced was expanding wider and wider, THE MORE THAT HE WENT THROUGH. So by the time that he was running and hiding FROM the King, and had armies after Him, his trust in God had been SO EXPANDED, that the bible says “his feet were firm.” “He did not slip”

but this is the key thing of all things to learn about David and try and apply to our lives: Later in his life, though he would commit some of the most unthinkable SINS you could imagine, including adultery and murder,

God himself said this of David... “That is a man after my own heart...” and then He says this to explain why: “because he will do everything that I tell Him.”

David didn't even think about it... when God said go, he went. He didn't weigh what it would mean for his bank account, how far it would remove him from his comfort zone, or his friends and family... he didn't question how he was going to navigate his circumstances... He just determined in his heart, that if God has it for him, there must be a reason... and so he did

it. and because of it, to God, David wasn't defined by his mistakes... though there were many! He was defined by his obedience.

But what you see as you study David's life, is that as his obedience expanded, so did his capacity... so did his ability to lead...

I think all too often in our lives, we look in the mirror and we see someone who we know is screwed up, and we think, "how could God ever use me?"

we think: How could he use me after I did *that*?

But can I propose to you this morning that God is less interested in who you were on your worst day, than He is with you waking up to discover His new mercies, *every day*...

He is looking for people who will say yes.

He is looking for people who will wake up every day, and say to themselves, "I may not be the most qualified, but I am going to move boldly in the direction that God is leading me whether I am in over my head, or not!"

It is that simple. He wants people who will say yes to the call when everyone else says no.

He is looking for people who will love the people that nobody else will love... he is looking for people who will go to the places that nobody else will go... he is looking for people who care LESS about THEIR comfort than they do their neighbor's eternity... and if you want to do great things for Jesus, you can start, by stopping looking in the mirror and making excuses about why you can't be used, and start looking up, and thanking God that He has made you someone WHO HE IS USING.

There is another story in the Bible about a man named Joseph.

It is found in Genesis, which is the first book of the Bible and is definitely one of my favorite, if not my VERY favorite book in the bible to study...

Genesis of course is where you get the story of creation, Cain and Abel, the Flood... it is where you get the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. You read about the Tower of Babel... and all of these significant moments, stories that we all know... then, toward the end of the book, you get to this guy Joseph.

and one reason that I believe that this man's story is so incredibly significant is because of how much of the book of Genesis is spent on him.

The book is 50 chapters long. And basically the last 13 of those chapters are focused on the narrative arc that is the story of Joseph and his family. Which to me says "this guy matters."

It is just this massive chunk of scripture to spend on someone, if their story just didn't matter...

and in a nutshell, it goes like this:

Joseph is the 11th born son to Jacob. and His Father loves him the most... because Joseph was the Son given to Jacob in his old age.

In fact, this is very telling... Genesis 37:2 puts it this way:

"These are the generations of Jacob.
Joseph..."

and then it goes on to describe Joseph and his role in the family. Another translation says "This is the STORY of Jacob: Joseph." There were so many other names that could have been listed there, and Genealogies almost always only list the first born... but the writer of Genesis was trying to tell us something different here, other than just "who Jacob's sons were"

The lump sum of Jacob's life culminated at Joseph, and what He would go on to accomplish. This is significant! It spoke volumes of the destiny Joseph obviously had on his life, but it caused all sorts of problems and tensions in their family.

His brothers hate him because of how much his Father loves him.

It doesn't help that he has dreams about his whole family worshipping him.

So, we are going to cliff notes through this... Basically, the sons all go out, they plot to kill Joseph but instead they leave him in a pit, before selling him for 20 pieces of silver and they bring back his coat covered in blood to make Jacob think that he was dead...

Through a series of events, Joseph ends up being sold to the house of Potiphar in Egypt, and over time He gains great favor with Potiphar... and in fact Joseph is withheld nothing in Potiphar's house except for Potiphar's wife... who tries to seduce Joseph. Joseph does the RIGHT thing... and he refuses to sleep with her, but she of course is furious about this, lies about him, says he tried to throw himself upon HER, and so Joseph is thrown into prison.

In prison, people start sharing dreams with Joseph, and he interprets them... one of the dreams was from Pharaoh's cup bearer, the other from his baker... and the dreams are very similar.

and Joseph told them that the dreams mean that the cup bearer will be reinstated, but the baker will be killed... which is exactly what happened.

Joseph asked cup bearing to please remember Joseph when he is out, and help get him out of prison.

But of course, the cup bearer gets out, and forgets all about Joseph... so Joseph just continues to rot in prison.

but two years later, Pharaoh himself had a dream that nobody could interpret, and so FINALLY the cup bearer remembered Joseph, and they brought Joseph out to interpret the dream for Pharaoh...

and again, through a series of events, Joseph rose to power in Egypt.

And because Joseph had the inside scoop that there would be 7 years where the earth would produce plentifully, followed by 7 years of drought, Joseph lead the Egyptians to store up food so that there would be enough

to cover the 7 year drought. Which made them extremely powerful... everyone had to come to them for food, and Joseph basically ran the whole operation.

Things had really begun to change for him...

So it was a very tough road, but it lead to him basically being in control of practically everything.

and the Bible says that Joseph had two sons who were born the year before the famine came, and its significant that this is mentioned...

it says their names were: Manasseh meaning "God has made me FORGET all my hardship and all my father's house."

and Ephraim, meaning "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

He named one as a reminder that even when it feels like nothing is going to work out, God is bigger than our circumstances... His son was a reminder of the way things turned out even though the path didn't look like it was leading to a desirable destination... but when he got to the destination, he no longer remembered the hardships.

he named the other as a reminder that "yes, there was affliction... BUT GOD MADE ME FRUITFUL THROUGH IT!"

How powerful is that? I think a lot of us try and live mountaintop lives... always on the top, always high... but fruit grows much more in the valleys... I heard Billy Graham say that once... "the view is great on the mountaintop, but the fruit grows in the valley."

and that was Joseph... fruit that came out of affliction.

Now I am not going to for a moment, pretend like anything that I have experienced in my life can compare to being almost murdered by your brothers, sold into slavery by them, thrown into prison and forgotten for

years just because you were faithful to your master and did the right thing...

but I think that a lot of us can resonate with feeling like life doesn't always go exactly the way that we thought it would...

we can relate to feeling overwhelmed, struggling to see what is on the other side of it all.

and I wouldn't always call it affliction... but I know I speak for many of us when I say that I WANT TO BE FRUITFUL "in the land of my life not going exactly the way that I thought it was going to go." I want to be fruitful in the land of chaos that sometimes surrounds me....

I want to forget about all of my hardship and set my eyes on what is being birthed out of it.

Sometimes it feels like we have taken on too much, or we are in over our heads, or in some instances it even feels like the whole world is against us... but I want to share with you something that I hope you catch... something that David had... and Joseph had... something that I pray to God we develop and cultivate as we continue to actively pursue the call of God on our lives. And that thing is CAPACITY...

Dawn posted this picture on Facebook last week, of our 4th baby, Eloise, sleeping on a pile of seminary books.

Its extremely cute, and everyone who saw it loved it. But the thing that I love most about it is that, as powerful of a description as it is for what Dawn's life is like right now, it doesn't do her reality justice.

In order to do that, she would have had to of shot the picture in one of the many other rooms of our house that are still totally upside and incomplete, and the other three small kids would have had to of been tackling each other in the background... and somewhere in the distance out a window you would probably see the bell tower of the church reminding her of all the work to be done here.

So, just to explain what I mean: as most of you remember from last month, during 4 days, we brought in our pastors from New York, so we were hosting them all week, while also hosting 4 days... on Friday, the day of our biggest outreach all year, the backpack giveaway in Boyer Park, Dawn and I were at the Karmanos Birthing Center and she was delivering Eloise.

On Saturday night we got out of the hospital, Sunday morning we were here to see Pastor Brad, and on Monday morning that week, Dawn started her masters program at Northpoint Bible College.

In that picture, was all of the books that she has to read this semester, by the last week of September.

Thats crazy!

In addition to that, our home has been a construction zone for a while... and I know you are probably like “we don't want to see any more pictures of your house without walls... especially your toilets without walls” well the good news is, we have walls getting put on it today actually... yesterday Dawn and I spent literally all day and most of the night finishing up preparing it for drywall.

but because so many rooms are being rebuilt, all of our stuff is in the couple of rooms that we do live in, so space is just INSANELY limited right now.

It is summer break for two more weeks, so the kids aren't in school... so needless to say, there is a lot going on.

We were talking to Jonathan and Kendra about it at Mohan and Freddie's going away party, and when they asked about the house I tried to explain it but keep my spirits bright... and one thing Kendra said was “I just hope you guys don't just get 'used' to the chaos. I don't want that to become normal for you.”

and this actually was a very profound statement spoken into our lives in my opinion, because the truth is,

we have to find the balance between working FOR a better reality while embracing the current one.

its crucial we don't just accept it,

But if we can learn to function in the chaos that is our lives, we are going to enjoy it much more, because the truth is, IT IS WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW.

but see, here is the miracle... our house is actually a decent size... it is just not all livable yet... For example... the girls are share a room downstairs... they have for two years... but WHEN we finish the second floor, we will ALL move upstairs, and then the room they currently live in downstairs will become an office.

I can barely even imagine what that is going to be like!

Now, IF I can function now... where our living room and my bedroom are the same room, and I try and work and write on our couch while the kids watch TV, and there is no separation at all... and I am actually able to accomplish something good in those less than ideal circumstances...

what it that going to do for me when we have a private office, and we create space JUST to work at?

See, what is actually happening, is AS I AM BEING STRETCHED, my life is not moving backward, it is moving forward... so I am learning how to function at a higher and higher capacity under difficult circumstances, which will leave me in a place where I am higher capacity, and able to function in a much MORE IDEAL circumstance.

What that is, is stretching.

If Dawn can go to college, and can function, and work toward her masters, and finish the first couple semesters while mothering a newborn child, with three other kids home with them all summer, and working in that same crazy house environment, how much more will she be able to accomplish

when the baby doesn't have to be fed as often, the kids go to school, and she can actually close a door and work in our home office (someday)...

Circumstances are changing and yet we are learning how to handle the most difficult ones. I think that is why Peter says what he says... in 1 Peter 5:10 - it is one of my favorite verses in the Bible, we did a whole series on it last year but he says:

"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

he is saying, "let the hard times shape you, because then, when the God of all grace steps in and establishes your life... he is establishing it on something that he knows he can work with AND TRUST... He is establishing something on a person who he knows will be faithful even if some days don't go their way.

Joseph was faithful to do the right thing with Potiphar's wife when nobody else was looking... he was faithful to speak what the Lord directed him when he was in prison not knowing that it would be his ticket out.

He trusted God when he was thrown into the pit by his brothers, and sold as a slave.

and God's hand was ALWAYS on Joseph even when the way seemed hard... and it lead him to places that he didn't intend himself on being but God always has a bigger picture for our lives than we can possibly see in our own abilities and with our own eyes.

We have to keep going when everything in life is trying to shut us down, because there is a miracle on the other side of that mountain...

and we are being stretched to be ready for it.

what that is, is: *rachab* (rah-have) - it an enlargement of your capacity... it is roots growing deeper and wider in a way that it can actually support the weight of what will be put on it.

See, in our lives... I always anticipate that every hardship that we ever encounter is going to one day culminate in this amazing moment of grace... and I certainly believe that that does happen. But I am realizing more and more that grace is not only found in the end result but also in the stretching moments BETWEEN where we start, and where we end up, and the people we become as we navigate the difficult roads.

Because character develops as capacity is expanded.

and ALL OF US WANT TO GROW!

but it is often said that one of the worst things that can happen to any organization or entity, is for it to grow too big, too fast. Because what happens is it grows without a foundation, and at some point, the bottom falls out from it and a lot of people get hurt.

Just like that, we want to build our lives in a way that we can continue to take on more and more, as we become ready for it.

Now... it is easy for me to speak to what it is like to have kids, because I have 4 very small children who are growing up incredibly fast right before my eyes, so I will keep using that example, and I hope that you can see this...

I talk to many parents who have one child, and in many cases, they are very overwhelmed by the task of raising this one child, and they say "I can't imagine doing this with four." - and there is nothing wrong with that... Dawn and I literally were there just a few years ago... I think we got less sleep when the ONLY baby we had was Milly, our oldest... than we do now, with a BRAND NEW BABY, and three others, two of which almost every night come wake us up for one reason or another.

And I think that I understand why that is, but I am learning every single day...

See, the more children you have, the more you learn about having them.

You begin to learn how to respond, and how to give them what they need... and the more you figure out, the easier the process becomes...

and so suddenly, yes, we add another into the mix, but we aren't learning a whole new set of rules... we aren't learning the art of what it means to be a parent to a baby anymore...

the second time around the art becomes learning what that BALANCE is between raising a toddler alongside of parenting a newborn.

With every child comes something new to balance, and something new to learn... but the daunting, overwhelming task of learning what it means to have a child...is beyond us.

But as Milly gets older, the parenting role that we have for her is beginning to shift... it will become less and less "do this, don't do that..." - it will be less and less boundaries, but more and more coaching.

It will be more talking through life and where she is at and what her needs are... and making sure that she is heard, and that she feels like she is heard."

but as we become THAT more and more for her, our capacity for leading our children expands to a whole new territory...

even though every child is unique and has their own personality and presents their own series of challenges, as we learn one, our capacity for parenting a child that age expands...

and as we are able to handle more, God gives us more... and it always feels at first like IT IS JUST WAY TOO MUCH!

but it always ends up settling into a place where Dawn and I can stop, breathe, look at each other and say "we got this."

But if you have kids, or you don't have kids, the same principle can be applied to so many areas of your life...

we all want to grow, and continue to expand and move along further through life, but God grows people through moments of testing and refinement... He grows them by stretching them out and seeing just how flexible they are.

how we handle ourselves shows us how much we can handle.

Life is not easy for anyone. It is just like what Peter says:

in the same way that God established the earth, bringing order out of chaos... our lives are founded on the hard times... the valley moments, and about the person who we become on the other side of those moments.

and that is why *rachab* (rah-have) is so important... God growing us wider... enlarging our capacity SO THAT he can enlarge our territory.

-

Now... I want to end this by looking at something that is mentioned at the very beginning of the Joseph story in Genesis. Something that REALLY REALLY made me think as I was studying this, this week.

Before Joseph was sold by his brothers, before he went to prison, rose from the ashes, became the governor... before his brothers one day bowed to him just like in the dream he had when he was 17 years old... before all of that...

The bible describes Joseph as being the FAVORITE son of Jacob, and we mentioned this at the beginning, but the bible describes why... it says (Genesis 37:3) -

“because He was the son of his old age.”

This is a strange passage, considering the enormous emphasis that was put on the FIRST BORN in that day and in that culture. The first born got everything... they got the blessing, they got the inheritance... they were the ones that the Father usually put all of his chips in for...

and let me just say this... what I am going to pull from this is something that IS IN MY HEART... I don't know Jacob's heart as on this matter, but as a father now of 4 children, I have discovered something that I hope that many of you can discover even before you begin to have children. and maybe it will help make more sense of what was happening here.

Because what people tend to realize as they get older, is what really matters... relationships.. friendships... family... you don't get to your death bed and say "I wish I bought more TVs in my lifetime..."

over time, they realize that no matter what you acquire... no matter what you BUILD... it is rubbish IF it was at the expense of your children... IF it was at the expense of your relationships.

Kids or no kids... whatever stuff you may have, it is rubbish if it is at the expense of the experiences that life is supposed to be about... Solomon figured this out... he writes in Ecclesiastes about his realization, after giving himself everything that he EVER DESIRED... that in the end, he will be just like the next guy... "the same thing happens to us all." (Ecclesiastes 2:14)

you can build an entire life off of trying to get somewhere and then one day land in that place and finally stop and realize... "I don't even remember how I got here... or why I wanted to get here in the first place?"

and I believe that Jacob, who deceived people all of his life to get ahead, who stole the blessing of His Father from his brother, who bribed his brother into giving away his birthright...

who literally wrestled with God...

He got to this point in his life all of those memories later... all of those children later... when God granted him a child in his old age...

and suddenly, with the hindsight of making so much of his life about the WRONG THINGS, Joseph would have been the image of a second chance.

Of a son that Jacob could enjoy the journey with rather than just drag along for ride.

One of the greatest fears I have... that I am trying really hard to WORK AGAINST, is this... I don't want my kids to grow up, and hate the church because it took so much of my life and my energy away from them. If I can't minister to you all out of a healthy relationship with my family, then what good is it?

but I see people sacrifice their relationships with their kids, just so they can "give their kids a better future" - so they can work hard and provide... and I see the trap... even me... with the birth of our 4th daughter... there are SO MANY AREAS OF LIFE that I cant help but think "maybe I messed this up with the first 3, BUT I AM GOING TO GET IT RIGHT WITH HER." and I know the kids are still young, but I don't want to blink and they are 18, and be sitting here thinking "I missed the only opportunity I had to make the greatest impact I could possibly make... because I was trying to make an impact somewhere else."

Pastor Brad and I were talking about this when he was here... He said that one thing he noticed, being a little older when Chelsea and Caleb, his younger two were born... he noticed that with them he has been much more present, right from the beginning.

Because when you watch the years go by in seconds like they do... and suddenly your first child is almost 8 years old like Milly is about to be, you can't help but wonder what along that path got missed...

and so I wonder if for Jacob, Joseph was that... he was the child that Jacob had in his old age... after he realized that the things that matter are NOT whether or not you get ahead, or have more than your neighbor... but what matters are your children, and the world you leave for them.

Think about it like this... Think of Abraham and Sarah... Sarah was 90 years old before Isaac was born, and that was her first son.

She was barren for 90 years before God gave her a son. She lived her entire life wanting a child but not having a child... and so when God finally

gave her one, in her tender, old age, he was EVERYTHING to her, was he not? Because He was the promise of God fulfilled in the life of someone who had certainly begun to wonder if God was going to show up in her life at all.

We rejoice when the newly weds announce they are pregnant, and all life should be celebrate...

but we rejoice with a little more intensity when the barren couple who had tried for 15 years with no luck, finally gets pregnant...

But for Jacob, he had all of these kids, and he lived his life in all of these ways... and in his old age, God gave him another one... Joseph... the child of his old age... the first child with his wife Rachel...

another chance.

But Jacob's partiality... his extra love for one son over the others, and the problems that it caused in his family, should be a lesson to all of us... because if Jacob would have been able to love Reuben, his first born, and enjoy him just as much as he did Joseph, how much better would all of their lives of been? If he had given Judah that same energy... what could it have meant for the culture in their home?

But life found Jacob somewhere else, when he should have been here...

Everyone loves a second chance... but if you make your life about the journey, you are going to need less second chances.

and I think that is a key to your capacity. And I really had to challenge myself with this, this week.

Am I pushing aside the chaos of life so that I can accomplish whatever little goal I have in that moment... or am I journeying with the chaos, learning how to navigate it, but not ignore it.

Am I letting life grow and develop me, on a foundation that is deeply rooted and widely spread? or do I push aside real life while trying to bring to life an imaginary one?

I have the capacity to be the man that God has called me to be, and so do you. But we need to say yes. We need to be like David...

If Jesus Christ can say yes to dying a horrible death after living a perfect life... just so that you and I could experience life in the Kingdom of God... then we should welcome things that stretch us into Kingdom people. A larger capacity means an ability to reach more people in more effective ways, and that is the heart of God, and my prayer is that every one of us pursues that.