



“Rachab”

Where is the space?”

adapted from a previous EQUIP message by the same title.

September 3, 2017

Courage Church, Detroit, MI

Scriptures: Genesis 26:12-25, Psalm 31:15.

We are concluding our two part mini series this morning... it is called “rachab” (rah-have) - if you were with us last week, we began to explore this word that shows up a few times in the Old Testament... The word means: “to GROW WIDE” or “to ENLARGE.”

and we explored the life of Joseph, and talked about how God continued to expand the ground that Joseph walked on as his capacity to handle difficulty expanded... and that is the concept of “rachab” (rah-have). Today we are going to explore another story of another bible legend...the story of Isaac, who was Jacob’s Father, so He would have been the Grand Father of Joseph... and the way that the word “rachab” (rah-have) is used in Isaac’s story really stuck out to me... and I believe that it really resonates with where we are as a church, and as a city...

So lets look at it, we will read the whole account and then go from there! lets open our Bibles to Genesis 26:12-25 -

Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him, and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.) And Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.”

So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given

them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah. And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

From there he went up to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake." So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

When we were living in New York City, our family moved around a couple different times trying to figure out which neighborhood really best fit our lives... we lived in Manhattan... then we conveniently moved to Rockaway Beach a few weeks before Hurricane Sandy, and then when we wanted to be closer to the city but still not on the island, we moved to a neighborhood in Brooklyn just on the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge...

it was the last place we lived before moving to Detroit.

and I remember very distinctly, a time when I was talking to our oldest daughter Milly about the new neighborhood... Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, New York... and I was asking her if she loved our new town, because Dawn and I thought it was just the perfect place for our family...

I said to her, "its amazing here isn't it? There is a great school for you to go to... Its so close to the city... There are so many coffee shops for mommy and daddy... there are so many toy stores and even more parks to play in!"

and with a huge smile and wide eyes, she responded, "yeah, and so many tiny rooms!"

Because she and her two sisters, together, shared a bedroom, about the size of a walk in closet... really it was a closet off of Dawn and I's room. Which is funny because when Milly was first born, and we lived in Los

Angeles, she literally lived in a closet... it wasn't even a walk in closet or a half bedroom then... it was just a normal depth, small closet... So for probably about a third of her life she lived in a closet...

but in New York we packed three of them into what was called "a half bedroom" - that is how they marketed the apartment... as "a one and a half BEDROOM."

The space in New York, it is just so limited. For Dawn and I especially, it was challenging... it was very hard to find separation from the kids... even most coffee shops were not really set up to study in. Our commutes were on packed subway cars... so we had to kind of "master" this art of creating through the chaos of our lives.

As you know from last week, our lives are still kind of in that same balance... even though at least where we are now, there is a light at the end of that tunnel... but the whole time in New York we tried to master that...

When I found myself on the train without kids (which was rare) I would right away, sitting or standing, get out my iPad and either start reading or writing something. I would use evernote and I would write for my entire commute when I could, trying to drown out the noise. When I would get home, it would be the same thing... constant noise.

Constant needs, and all in this semi-claustrophobic environment.

It made me start to question... I am living in New York, the creative epicenter of the universe...

in Brooklyn at that...

but I kept finding myself in the same place, asking the same question:

Where is the space?

And at first, I just figured, oh, "its in Detroit."

And then we got here, and ran into a different form of the same problems... and we found ourselves still feeling so limited in what we can do... which can be very frustrating when you really believe that you know what God wants to do in your life... and yet you keep hitting walls.

I realized that the same limitations that were put on my life in previous cities I have lived in, have not been lifted merely because I moved into a place where physical space is cheaper and more attainable. There are real, genuine, super natural things that come against us, that try and eat away our time, and eat away our lives.

Our flesh is naturally distracted and easily discouraged. Staying the course is difficult.

and that brings us to Isaac.

See, we think that because our modern world is so technologically advanced, and people deal with insane amounts of debts now that are so easy to acquire... and we face countless distractions and things that limit us from getting where we think we should get to...

it seems like it would be hard to find things we can relate to in a text written thousands of years ago before credit cards and cell phones and Facebook existed.

But the reason I like to teach out of the Old Testament often, is because of how timeless it really is... Because so many of their stories, are OUR stories, in a different package.

Isaac is the son of Abraham, And Abraham had gone before him and had dug all of these wells... but the Philistines were were jealous and wanted to destroy them, so they went around and they plugged up all of the wells so there would be no access to water.

Suddenly, people would be dying of thirst... of dehydration, because they couldn't get to the water that was right beneath them, only a few feet down.

How much of our lives are like that?

Everything we need, it is right there. It is right in front of us, or right below us, and yet we don't do what it takes to actually get it? All it takes is digging. The water is there.

and I know at least for me... so many times, I begin to start digging... I begin to start taking the action steps towards my dreams or whatever God has put into our hearts to do... and it feels like the moment that I do that, I hit a wall... something resists us...

Something is always standing between where we are trying to go, and where we currently are standing.

One of my favorite Hebrew word pictures is the picture for the word "vision."

The word "vision" is the word *chaza*

it is three Hebrew letters, chet, zayin, and hey.

and the word picture for those three letters is a picture of a fence, a picture of what appears to be a hammer or an axe which typically represented to cut, to cut off, or cut through...

and the letter "hey" is an image of what looks like someone shouting and it means "to reveal or what comes from..."



So the ancient illustration you get for the concept of vision is:

WHAT IS REVEALED WHEN YOU CUT THROUGH THE FENCE.

or **WHAT COMES FROM CUTTING THROUGH THE FENCE.**

now, word pictures are illustrations, not definitions... so think of this as more of a story that explains a truth, rather than something you read out of the dictionary...

Vision comes, when you see past the barriers. When you can see past all the things that everybody else sees, and they let get in the way of what they are supposed to do.

You see, everybody hits the walls.

I don't know a single person who had a dream and didn't have to work for it... I don't know a single person who wanted to do something significant with their life, and didn't have multiple times along the journey where THEY WANTED TO GIVE UP, PACK UP, AND GO HOME.

Even in Isaac's day... he hit walls... He has all of these people who have no access to water, and an enemy undoing every good thing that his father did... plugging these wells... but lets look closely at this:

Look at verse 18-20. This is fascinating!

And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.

He named the well "Esek" because they contended with him... The word Esek *literally means* contention. They saw that there was something good... something that Isaacs men had worked for, and when they saw that it was good they challenged Isaac and tried to take it from him...

in other words... THEY OPPOSED HIM.

As soon as a little success came, he felt pushback. He felt opposition. Isaac has to be thinking here, "man God, I am trying to do what you say.

And as soon as it seems like there is a little fruit, I get attacked.” Here they are, taking away from me that which we have worked for.

Its never easy!

Isaac hit a wall... he came to a fence. Next verse:

Genesis 26:21

"Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah.”

So Isaac didn't give up... He dug another well, but the same thing happened. So he called the second well Sitnah.

The word "Sitnah" means “hostility.” but get this... It comes from the same Hebrew word as the word “Satan” - the enemy, who seeks to kill and destroy our lives, our families, our friendships, our dreams, our passions...

He drives wedges between us, and does literally everything he can, using the only weapon that he has in his arsenal... LIES... and he tells us lie after lie to drive wedges into our relationships and to separate us from our dreams.

I had a friend, and we did a lot of ministry together and we were working toward so many amazing things... but one day something happened that neither of us wanted to happen, but something that nobody could prevent... and it put a wrench between us...

but this guy got real mad at me... and somebody who used to believe in me, and in the work we were doing, suddenly grew really cold to that, and in the middle of the night he would send me these text messages that would say things like: YOU ARE GOING TO FAIL.

YOU ARE GOING TO FAIL.

and then, I think in an effort to just cut a little deeper each time... he started talking about my kids, and just weird stuff all built around the idea that every single thing I touch is going to fail...

and I would wake up in the morning, and while still in bed read these messages, and they would crush me before my day would even start... I didn't even want to get up.

I would hit a wall before I would even start my day.

What is that? It is Satan... It is *Sitnah*... it is hostility...

and it lead me to thinking all sorts of thoughts of uncertainty and insecurity... I began to, almost "buy in" to what was being said in these brief yet hostile text messages... I began thinking about how we were in a fundraising time, trying to rally together and buy the first Courage House...

but all I could hear were those words "you are going to fail" - so I started letting myself believe lies that nobody was even saying to me... I just let words I had heard lead to these weird thoughts that I would just make up...

things like:

"you will never get a house for the first Courage House... It will never work."

It is *Sitnah*. It comes from Satan himself.

but GUESS WHAT Satan, Father of all lies: we did get our first house... and it has a side lot for the reconciliation table that we ARE going to build... and it has two units so that we can begin accepting guy and girl interns...

and its only spurring more ideas... more creativity... more ministry... more people reached..

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and I don't know what exactly that voice sounds like to you... maybe nobody has ever actually physically said anything like that to you before, but maybe you are just at war with your own thoughts, and your own self esteem and confidence... and you just hear this subtle voice that feels like it comes out of nowhere, reminding you of all the reasons why YOU ARE NOT ENOUGH and you will never be what God has called you too...

I don't know all of your stories...

but I do know that the devil is a liar. and if all it takes for him to stop you, is just putting up a fence between you and your dreams, then we are making his job way too easy.

You get to the fence... you cut through the fence, because you know how important it is to get to the other side of it... and you keep going. That is what divides a person of vision, from a someone who just has daydreams.

That is one thing that used to say to us when we were in LA... at the Dream Center... they would say: "vision without execution is just a hallucination" - if you feel like God gave it to you, but you aren't willing to work through the resistance, then all it will ever amount to is a daydream.

Everything that Isaac was trying to do had enormous opposition, BECAUSE IT MATTERED.

People needed water.

and just like that, people need what you have. The world needs YOUR God sized vision to come to pass. We have enough daydreams... we have enough talking...

we need people of action to step up and say I will never sit on another dream from God again... and I will go where he says to go, believing that he will advance and expand my territory as I continue to step out in faith.

Do you remember what we talked about last week? How David had a WIDE PLACE to put his feet? The Hebrew word "*rachab*" (rah-have) - his capacity literally expanded as he faced hardships, and resistance, and

BECAUSE he never let it stop him, but instead always let himself GROW FROM IT... he reached a point in his life when God literally said of him, in all of his sins and messes, that "HE IS A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART."

That can just as easily be you. That can just as easily be US.

You are a child of God. Who has an amazing and beautiful plan already written for you to walk in. And as you try and walk in that, you have to let God create the space for you that it will take to live that calling out. It all comes back to trust.

Do you trust God so much that you will step out, even when it doesn't look like there is ground to step on?

One of my favorite moments in Indiana Jones and the last crusade is when Indiana Jones steps out when it looks like there is no ground beneath him, in what he calls "a leap a faith" - as he steps out, he catches the ground...

and it is such an amazing picture, because there was no other way across, other than faith.

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God has an amazing plan for our church. I believe he has an amazing plan for my family, and for your family, and for our relationships to grow and for our impact to be expanded in our city, but if we constantly try and grab onto the things that are within our reach, God will never make room for the things that are out of our reach.

Watch this:

Genesis 26:22 "And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the Lord **has made room for us**, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

Isaac kept pushing. He kept moving on. he kept digging more wells! and at the first sign of a little success, came opposition... It looked like success,

then it looked like failure. You think you are out of it, then you are right back in it.

He kept going, and digging more wells, and even after overcoming the opposition, now there was this feeling of enmity... this feeling of rocks beating against each other but no progress being made... this feeling of, "everything I am doing is NOT working. There is no progress, there is no forward motion." This feeling of "I thought I was on track, but then I hit a wall..."

I know that you have been there! I've been there 100 times!!!

But Isaac keeps going. And then look what happens. They name the third well Rehoboth saying "NOW! The Lord has **made room** for us!"

Or you could say it this way: Now! The Lord has "rachab" (rah-have) for us. Because that is what it says... The Hebrew word for "made room" is the word "rachab" (rah-have)

Through our struggles... our toils... even our defeats... BECAUSE we never gave up, we finally have arrived at a moment in time, when God has made room for us.

So they named that well Rehoboth, which, of course, comes from the word "rachab" (rah-have)... and the word Rehoboth means SPACE.

That well represented God creating space in His world for his people, and them setting up shop right in the middle of it.

and I just believe in my heart that God has this for us at Courage Church, here in Detroit... with all of our dreams of Courage Houses, Co-Ops, coffee shops, reconciliation tables, churches, mentoring programs, short term missions and discipleship schools...

with all of the dreams that God has put on each and every one of your hearts for amazing ways that God will use you to change our city...

things that, for most of us... are leaps and bounds beyond anything that in the tangible we could possibly grasp... I believe that on the other side of the fence is a space...

a space that is expanding, with every step of faith that we take...

and it is in that space... I believe with all of my heart, that the Lord has made room for us.

But there is just one more thing...

Genesis 26:23-25

From there he went up to Beersheba (well of the oath - founded by Abraham)... And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake." So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

This is pretty amazing. This is probably the most crucially important thing we could possibly catch moving into this fall as a church... through all of the changes, and transitions... through many of our friends and people who have been so close, moving away onto the next things that God has for them, and new people beginning to come here and settle in and find their place... and see how God is using them in what he is doing in Detroit through our little community...

It has been so crazy for me, to talk to so many people and have them tell me "God put this on my heart" or "God put THAT on my heart" and it be so similar or even identical to the things that God has spoken to Dawn and I for the vision of our church...

There is something to that... But nothing just happens, just because. There is an ordering of steps... God has to expand your capacity so that the ground you walk on is wide enough to hold you... and in order to really do that, I think we need to Look closely at what Isaac did *differently* the last time... the one thing different about the last well he dug...

as you look over the progression, you notice:

There was opposition.

There was enmity, and hostility... and resistance...

Then suddenly, there was space.

Because all along, God was preparing a place for them... he was making room, and he was preparing Isaac and his people...

and when he got up to Beersheba, the well of the oath from his Father... he did something different before digging a well.

This time, first, he built an altar.

Then he dug a well.

The water was under him the whole time. The water was there everywhere they went, but at the well of the oath, he built an altar.

He said, before we dig... we worship.

Before we dig, we repent... we ask God to create space in us by clearing out the things that are in us which need not be there...

He called upon the name of the Lord, and THAT IS WHERE he pitched his tent, and then built the well.

And if you are having trouble in your life making space for Jesus, or making space for your gifts and your calling and the things that you believe you were created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10) to accomplish, look what does Isaac finally do... He builds an altar.

And at an altar, there is a payment, being made on behalf of something else. Something has to be killed in order for something else to find life.

and in the Old Testament, it was a lamb or a goat... spotless and without blemish... but in the New Testament, when John the Baptist sees Jesus

Christ coming toward him he says to his followers “Behold, the LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD.”

and it was on the altar that we now know as the cross of Calvary, that Jesus died for you for your sins... for all the times that you gave up when you should have kept going...

for all the times that you did the wrong thing... that you screwed up, that you sinned...

Jesus died so that you could have eternal life in Heaven, and so that you can live NOW in this world, bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth...

The bible says that without Jesus we are literally DEAD in our sins... we are dead..

but most people get saved... they accept Jesus into their heart... who literally brings them from death back to life... and yet they keep living like they are dead... waiting for the day that they really die, just so they can go to heaven... when God has made room for them NOW.

Here in this world.

And if we keep living like that, we aren't going to change anything...

So let me ask you this...

What is it for you, that is keeping you from your calling? What is keeping you living life as if you don't actually have any... What is keeping you living dead?

What is taking up the space in your mind? In your heart? In your life?
What is filling the space?

What needs to be laid on the altar to create space in your life for what Jesus wants to do?

What has you bound and maybe you don't even know it?

Perhaps the best way to answer that, is to answer this question:

What is taking your time?

Psalm 31:15 says "my times are in your hand;"

We need to be like David, and place our times into the hands of Jesus. Time is a most valuable asset, and we will waste it if we remain distracted and never create space for the spirit to move in our lives.

There is water below you. What you need, its right here. The space you need in your life, its here. God knows what he is doing. He knows what is best, he gave us the amount of time we need to accomplish the work that he has created us for, and he is in the business of creating space... making room for the people who seek him.

So as we prepare for the fall... as everyone goes back to school and gets back into the swing of things... lets start it off right.

Lets start, by building an altar.