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Giving God Room to Work in Every Moment

(Based on thoughts by Erwin McManus)

Joshua 2:1-9, 11-15, 17-18, 21

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Listen to the account of a woman who gave God room to work in a critical moment before her: The Hebrew people had escaped slavery in Egypt. They were nomads for 40 years, led by Moses, and Moses died before entering the Promised Land. Joshua was called to lead the people into the Promised Land: Joshua 2:1 *Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.*

11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death." "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land." So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.

17 The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house.

21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

Something about me you may not know...I'm a bit of a science fiction/fantasy buff. One of my favorites as a kid was "The Time Machine" by H.G. Wells. In my lifetime his imagination has proved to be timeless. "The Time Machine" has gone from literature to radio show to small screen to major motion picture. H.G. Wells has influenced an entire generation fascinated by time travel. While space travel has become a reality in the past 50 years, time travel seems to be destined to elude us forever, except for one important detail—**we are all time travelers!** Although we can't survive in space without help, we were *perfectly* designed to travel through time. Moving through moments is as natural as breathing. Of course, there are two limitations: First, we cannot travel backward, and second, we can only travel through one moment at a time. Nevertheless, we are all time voyagers leaving history in our wake, pioneering into the future. In the recent movie, one point is clear: even with a time machine you can't change the past, you can only change the future. But, since we only can live in the present, the future eludes us. In other words, we only have this one moment.

In the dictionary, the word moment and motion come from the same essence. Life is in constant motion. Moments move, and time waits for no one. It never stands still. When there's no life in them, moments fall to the ground like rose petals. Moments are to be treasured—not just those in the past, but those brimming with life. I can say to you with confidence “Church, this is your moment. It's waiting to be seized.” There may be more to come, but this is what we've got. And when you give God room to work in THIS moment, the results in your life can be transforming. That's why our church is embarking on giving God room to work in this moment through a capital campaign, so that we can be a place of Christ-focused life transformation. Your quest is to live the life God created you to experience. But God won't force himself on you. You have to freely give God room to work. The journey begins right now—in this moment. This might be your moment. And whatever you do, don't underestimate what you may find.

But, before we seize this divine moment, beware of a third problem with moments: Not only can we not travel backwards through them, not only can we only move through one at a time, but the most important moments in your life rarely come at a convenient time. We fill our time up, and we get irritated when God rudely interrupts us with his miracles and love. (Like snow in late April—so we could have a lay low, restful family day yesterday that we so desperately needed. I tell you we seized that one!) But most of the time, don't you wish God would check your calendar first? If we're going to experience God, we have to respond by giving God room to work. When God interrupts us, are we willing to respond in a moment's notice?

One of the reasons we're unprepared to give God room to work is we're unprepared for the moment before us. That's because we're usually stuck in a moment behind us. The 2002 Grammy Award-winning rock album was U2's “All that You Can't Leave Behind.” Right after their hit song “Beautiful Day” is a song titled “Stuck in a Moment You Can't Get Out Of.” Side by side they paint a picture of both our opportunity and our dilemma. A beautiful day is out there to be experienced, but you'll miss it all if you're stuck in a moment you can't get out of. Bono and the Edge write these words:

I never thought you were a fool

But darling, look at you

You gotta stand up straight, carry your own weight

These tears are going nowhere, baby

You've got to get yourself together

You've got stuck in a moment and now you can't get out of it

Don't say that later will be better

Now you're stuck in a moment

And you can't get out of it...

And if the night runs over and if the day won't last

And if your way should falter along the stony pass

It's just a moment

This time will pass

Some of you are saying “They're playin' my song.” You have a moment in your past that continues to haunt every moment of your life now. This moment in your history steals all the moments in your future. Is there a moment you keep reliving again and again? I know how sticky a moment can become. Jim Croce sang “Time in a Bottle,” but for people stuck in a moment past, it's more like “Time in a straight-jacket.” It's stuff that won't let go of you because you won't let go of it. While the world moved on, you kept fighting to live in the past.

Now, remember we're time travelers, designed to go forward, not backward. If you're stuck in a moment, turn around, stop looking backward, and dare to look forward. Time was not created with the power to hold you back. And if the future terrifies you, then just take it one moment at a time and give God room to work his miracles of healing and forgiveness. Claim his promises.

There's one more key to navigating time travel. **The divine potential of a moment is unlocked by the choices we make.** It's as simple as that. Each moment's value is directly related to the choices we must make within it.

The most spiritual activity you will engage in today is making choices. That doesn't just mean at church, but at home, at the office, or at school, you will engage in spiritual activities all week long. While we live in each moment, it is our choices that chart the course and determine the destination. Our choices either move us toward God and all He has for us, or they steer us away from Him to a life of shame and fear and regret, like Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had endless choices, all good—except one. We all know he chose it, and shame, fear, and brokenness entered into history. But there's great hope: even when we get lost in the jungle, God is a seeking God—a missionary God who pursues us and invites us once again, right now in this moment, to His divine adventure.

Either our choices lead us to part ways with God, or they let God part the way. God tells us clearly one way is the road to death, and the other is the way to life. God says "*Now choose life!*" (Deut 30:19).

Right now, the power of this moment makes it a source of great opportunity and hope. No matter what kind of life you've lived, no matter how many wrong choices you've made, the next moment is waiting to give birth to new life. Look at Rahab.

All the Bible tells us before this point is that Rahab was a prostitute. That was the sum total of her life. If you have ever seen the life of a prostitute, you know the work "life" is an overstatement. It's more like "existence, or torment, punishment, or living death." But, in one moment, Rahab's life changed forever.

She'd heard of the God of Israel, and she was convinced that the Lord was God. Based on that conviction, she gave the spies help if they would save her life and the lives of her family members. The family that Rahab saved wasn't her husband or her children. Those relationships aren't usually a part of the life of a prostitute. She saved the lives of her father and mother, her brothers and sisters, and all their families.

When you think of it, she had no one who belonged to her. Here are my questions: Where was her family while she was living the life of a prostitute? Where were her father and mother when she needed guidance and direction? Why didn't her brothers and sisters help her and save her from a life of degrading sex and destruction? How could her heart that should have gone cold and numb still be filled with so much compassion for her family she left behind? Surely the only future she was saving was theirs. What kind of future did she really have, anyway?

But because she gave God room to work in that moment, her future wasn't just saved. It was created. Rahab found more than protection among God's people. She found a new family. (How many people in our community need a new family?) After the Israelites take Jericho, we find that Rahab married an Israelite named Salmon, whose son was Boaz, the husband of Ruth, whose son was Obed, whose son was Jesse, whose son was David, king of Israel. And if you follow the lineage far enough, you find that the blood of Rahab flowed in the veins of Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

By giving God room to work in one defining moment, through one life-altering decision, began a journey that brought her everything she had lost and more than she ever could have imagined. Like Rahab, we are always just one choice from a different life. At our very worst, good is only one decision away.

In your moment of truth what will you choose? Will you give God room to work in your moment? Have we confused the blessing of God with wealth, comfort, and security? That's what the rest of Jericho did. They didn't turn to the Lord. They locked themselves up. What did they trust in? Stone walls. How many people today are locked up, pouring themselves into cold, stone walls? Rahab heard the Lord was God and truly believed. She acted in a moment which gave God room to work, and she experienced God's love in a powerful way. Have you considered that His greatest blessing comes when He calls us to be pioneers, explorers, even conquerors? When you dare to give God room to work, He will work.

God uses individuals of all temperaments and backgrounds to accomplish his purposes. Look at Rahab, a prostitute. Because she gave him room to work, God made sure her past did not equal her future. It's the same with you. Because she faithfully served God, her family lived and was adopted into Hebrew society. She's listed in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 (11:31), because she had faith—belief in action. She became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Himself. (Matthew 1:5). The scarlet cord she let down to save her family led to her being a part of God's story. God sent his Son Jesus, whose blood on the cross becomes our scarlet cord of salvation, let down from heaven.

Do you believe God is about to do a mighty work among us to reach the people of our region with the Gospel of Jesus and his love? Through Isaiah, God said, "*I have planned it. Surely I will do it...My righteousness is not far off. My salvation will not delay*" (Isaiah 46:11, 13). Paul wrote "*it is the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed*" (Rom.13:11). Do you see? It's here—in this moment!

Fellow time travelers: however *ordinary* a moment may look, because of God, miracles wait to be unwrapped in it. You rarely know up front the eternal significance of a moment, and will never know until you choose life as God sees it. The only moment we must take responsibility for right now is the one in front of us. **This is your moment.** God's given it to us. Our job is simply to respond with our time, our talents, and our treasure. We can give God room to work in every moment by seizing every one of them, including *this* one, as divine.