

Hannah
1 Samuel 1-2

Well, this is Mother's Day! And it has been our tradition in the past that on this particular day that we would give a message that in some form or fashion would be related to the theme of motherhood. And we will once again be doing that this morning as we look at a woman named Hannah in **1 Samuel 1-2**.

So let me begin this morning by giving you a little background in terms of the time in which she lived. I know, we think we live in a tough time today and in many ways we do. But the time we live in today is no tougher than the time in which Hannah lived. It was the period of the judges of Israel. And the situation in Israel was extremely difficult. Samson had died and with the death of Samson there was no great leader in the land. And the land was in a state of fluctuation and turmoil and confusion. And there was a desperate need for a great leader in the chaos and the sinfulness of the day.

The Philistines who were the archenemies of the Israelites were gaining ground. The priesthood that was supposed to lead the people of God had become totally corrupted. There were vile and sinful men in the priesthood. Even in the temple itself there were moral scandals so that the children of the high priest himself were carrying on sexual orgies at the foot of the temple steps. It was a wretched time, a time of gross evil, a time when not only was the leadership gone but the priesthood had abandoned its calling. The nation was weak. The nation was impotent. And the nation additionally had limited prophetic voice. It was a time of tremendous slide away from the divine standard. And so it was a time when God needed a special man. But where would this man come from? How would this man be supplied? This brings us now to Hannah.

And what was Hannah's specific situation at this particular time? Let me read for you **1 Samuel 1:1-2**. **"Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, and son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. (2) And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had**

children, but Hannah had no children.” This is the situation that Hannah found herself in.

Hannah was childless while Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife, was not. Did Hannah’s inability to have children cause her husband to love her the less. No! In fact, the Scriptures makes it clear to us in **1 Samuel 1** that it was Hannah that Elkanah loved rather than Peninnah even though He was married to both women.

So how would you think Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife, a rival for his affection, might have treated Hannah? You would hope that she would have treated her kindly in this unfortunate situation but this was not the case at all. Peninnah provoked Hannah incessantly and sought every opportunity to remind Hannah that she was childless. And did these actions produce grief in Hannah? Absolutely! According to **1 Samuel 1** it was a source of tremendous grief and there were times when she wouldn’t even eat. So this was her situation.

But there is far more to this story that we will consider this morning than simply the difficulties that Israel as a nation and Hannah as an individual were facing.

The greater part of this story is Hannah herself and the kind of person she was. And that is what we want to focus on this morning. We want to look at this woman, this would-be mother and learn from her and be challenged by her life. What is it about Hannah that made her so special?

She was a woman of prayer (1 Samuel 1:9-11). Clearly we see this in **1 Samuel 1:9-11**. In these verses we find Hannah with her husband Elkanah at Shiloh the central place of worship for the Children of Israel during the time of the judges. And it was while she was there with her husband presenting their sacrifices that Hannah took the time to pour out her heart to God about her childless condition. Let me read for you those verses, **“Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. (10) And she, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. (11) And she made a vow and said, ‘O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and remember me, and not forget Thy maidservant, but wilt give Thy maidservant a son, then I will give him**

to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.” Certainly you can tell from these verses that the distress of being childless was pretty intense. In fact, it was so intense that she vowed that if God were to give her a son she would give her son back to the Lord all the days of his life and that no razor would touch his head. In other words, when Hannah prayed in 1 Samuel 1:9-11 she vowed to God that if He were to give her a son her son would become a Nazirite for life. This is what she in effect was telling the Lord.

So what exactly was a Nazirite? A Nazirite was someone who was bound by a vow to God’s service for either a specific period of time or for life. A Nazirite’s devotion to God was evidenced outwardly by not cutting the hair, abstaining from alcohol and avoiding contact with the dead.

So let me ask you this question. Did Hannah in pouring out her heart to God and making this vow to Him believe that God was somehow obligated in light of these things to give her a son? And the answer is no she did not believe that He was obligated to give her a son simply because she had prayed fervently and even had made a vow. This was not her thinking at all.

How do we know this? We know this because of the way she had approached Him in prayer. What did she say to the Lord? **“O Lord of hosts, If Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and remember me, and not forget Thy maidservant, but wilt give Thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.”** She knew that the Lord was not obligated in any way to give her a son simply because she had prayed or even given a vow. Why?

When we pray about things that have not been revealed to us in the Scriptures we should always pray in the same way Hannah prayed in 1 Samuel 1:11, “If thou wilt.”

In other words, we, like Hannah, should not look at prayer as the means to get what we want. But rather we should look at prayer as the means to get what He wants. And this should even be true in matters that are causing us great personal distress, such as was the case with Hannah in terms of her being childless.

And what will the benefit be to us when we pray in this way? If we humbly, when making requests of God, pray with the same attitude as Hannah, “if thou wilt,” we should invariably experience a personal inward peace (1 Samuel 1:18). Why? We should invariably experience a personal inward peace when we pray in this way because when we pray in this way we are in effect saying He knows better than us what is best for our lives.

And did Hannah after pouring out her out to God experience this kind of peace? And the answer is yes! After she had finished praying and after she had received what she most likely thought was a prophetic blessing from Eli the high priest **1 Samuel 1:18** says this, **“So the woman [referring to Hannah] went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.”**

So was Hannah a woman of prayer. Absolutely! But what about us? Could we be described in this very same way? Hopefully we can. Hopefully when we look at our prayer lives we will not only see the same kind of passion as Hannah when it comes to making our requests known to God but that we would also see the same kind of humility. So what else is there about Hannah that made her so special?

She was a woman of principle (1 Samuel 1:19-28). Clearly we see this in **1 Samuel 1:19-28**. In these verses shortly after returning back to their home in Ramah we learn that Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son whom she and her husband named Samuel. We see this in **1 Samuel 1:19-20**.

But now we come to a very interesting question. What will Hannah now do? She had asked the Lord for a son if that in fact was His will and He in fact gave her a son. But will she keep her vow. Will she give her son back to the Lord to serve the Lord as a Nazirite all the days of his life? This is where the rubber meets the road. She knew what was right but would she do it?

Let me now read for you **1 Samuel 1:21-28**. **“Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. (22) But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever.’ (23) And Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the Lord confirm His word.’ So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned**

him. (24) Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, although the child was young. (25) Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. (26) And she said, ‘Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord. (27) For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. (28) So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.’ And He worshiped the Lord there.” So did Hannah keep her vow? Absolutely! She was a woman of principle.

Now let us go back and look at these verses a little more carefully. Let us begin by looking at **verse 21**. What does it say? **“Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow.”** When it says, “and pay His vow,” we should not understand this as the vow that Hannah had made but rather as a vow that He had made. Apparently they both had made vows that if the Lord would give them a son that they would do certain things. Elkanah according to this verse was preparing Himself to follow through on his vow. But what about Hannah’s vow? Would she follow His lead?

And the answer is no, she did not follow his lead. Let me read for you **verse 22**. **“But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever.’”** So what do you think? Why didn’t Hannah follow the lead of her husband? Was she struggling with her vow or was she just simply seeking to do what she would have thought the Lord would have wanted her to do in respect to her vow. I believe it would be the latter.

When Hannah chose to remain behind until Samuel was weaned she would have been doing what she felt the Lord would have wanted her to do in light of Samuel’s needs.

In other words, Hannah was far better equipped to take care of Samuel’s needs as an infant than Eli the Jewish High priest. So it would seem only right for her to remain and to take care of Samuel’s needs until she was no longer needed.

Did Elkanah agree with His wife that this would be the best way for her to fulfill her vow to the Lord? Yes! Let me read for you **verse 23**. **“And Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you. Remain in until you have weaned him.’”** This seems to be an excellent relationship. She was very comfortable in sharing her thoughts with her husband and he obviously valued her input and supported her in what she felt was right. But this is not all that he said. He then went on to say, **“Only may the Lord confirm His word.”** When Elkanah said, “only may the Lord confirm His word,” in 1 Samuel 1:23 he most likely was referring to what he thought was a prophetic blessing in 1 Samuel 1:17. And why would this have been important to Elkanah? I would think that this would have been important to because he would have thought that the confirmation of that blessing by the Lord would entail the protection of Samuel until Hannah was able to fulfill Her vow.

And then it says at the very end of **verse 23**, **“So the woman [Hannah] remained [in Ramah] and nursed her son until she weaned Him.”** So how long might that have taken? According to 2 Maccabees 7:28 Jewish women nursed their children for three years.

So what happened after the three years? Let me now finish the rest of the passage. Let me begin reading in **verse 24**. **“Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, although the child was young. (25) Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. (26) And she said, ‘Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord. (27) For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. (28) So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.”** So what happened after the three years?

After Samuel had been weaned Hannah fulfilled her vow by bringing Samuel to Shiloh and leaving Samuel in the care of the high priest of Israel. Why did she do this? She did this because she had made a vow and she believed that it was the right thing for her to do? Was Hannah a highly principled woman? Absolutely!

But what about us can we be described in this same way? Are we willing no matter how difficult something might be to do what we believe is right before the Lord? Hopefully our answer would be yes. So what else made Hannah so special?

She was a woman of praise (1 Samuel 2:1-3). So let me ask you this question. After Hannah entrusted Samuel into the care of Eli and walked away from Him, what did she do? Did she weep? Did she cry? Oh she may have shed some tears but what truly characterized her life when she walked away from him? It was praise.

Let me read for you **1 Samuel 2:1-3**, **“Then Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Thy salvation. (2) There is no one holy like the Lord, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God.’”**

How could do this be? How could she be filled with praise in a moment like that? It is quite simple. Hannah was able to rejoice and be filled with praise because she chose at that moment in time to approach the Lord in prayer and to dwell on His glory (1 Samuel 2:1-3).

Let me read for you **Psalms 100**. **“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. (2) Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. (3) Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. (4) Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. (5) For the Lord is good; His loving kindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.”**

Are you facing a difficult situation this morning and feel kind of beaten down? Then I would encourage you to do what Hannah did. Come into the Lord’s presence in prayer and dwell on His glory and be filled with praise!

So what happened to Samuel? Samuel maintained a long distance relationship with his mom and dad while he grew into a faithful servant of God that the Lord used to once again bring strong spiritual leadership to the nation of Israel. And what about Hannah? Did she have any other children?

Yes, she did. **1 Samuel 2:21** tells us that she went on to have 3 sons and 2 daughters.

Was Hannah a special woman? Absolutely! And hopefully our consideration of some of what made her so special has challenged us.

This weekend we are celebrating Mother's Day and what better way for us to celebrate it than by seeking to be more like Hannah, a very well-known mother who possessed certain wonderful qualities that hopefully we would seek to emulate throughout our lives.

May God give us the grace to be passionate in prayer, highly principled and full of praise.