

The Rock: 12-12-2021**Advent: The Road to Bethlehem**

First reading: Luke 1:46-55

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO: This week we are looking at Hannah, lets listen to her response to a question that was asked to her.

Title: The broken spirit healed

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:21-28 (black bible Pg. 211)

Theme:

The prayers and care of God's people for us can heal and fill our hearts, help our brokenness and bring about God's promises.

Introduction:

As we continue on our journey down the road to Bethlehem, the supporting characters on the pages of the Bible are as important to me as those main characters we look to really study.

Much as with Ruth last week, and Naomi's impact on her life, Hannah also has a couple who stand out. One is "the other woman" in this marriage, Penennah, and the other is her husband, Elkanah.

Two quick asides as we dig in this morning, because they warrant addressing. First, is this fact that on the pages of Scripture we find things that are culturally acceptable, and even followed by God's people, but are not within His will and perfect plan.

This notion of multiple wives was a culturally acceptable thing, and honestly served the purpose of producing heirs in a culture where that was the prime function and desire of a couple.

It does not remove the fact that this is not the way God would have it to be, given that He defined marriage, as we spoke on about a month ago, as being between one man and one woman.

We need to remember that nothing happens outside of God's will, but not everything that does happen is His will. The very fact that there is bitterness and division here because of multiple wives, is one of many indicators that this is not the way things ought to be.

But the Bible gives us everything remember. The good, the bad, and the ugly. It's up to us to work it out in God's goodness. Most especially as we look at how He constantly uses the broken, the outcast and the dysfunctional to bring about His plan.

That's mercy, and that's grace.

Second, I always thought that this Elkanah fellow was a bit of a goofball, and "a typical man" as he seemed out of touch with Hannah's dilemma.

Her lack of kids made her a second-class citizen in every respect, and was probably the reason he took a second wife, making her feel even more of an outcast in her own home.

Yet, what I discovered in my studies, is that even then, men did not understand women, but that does not make him a fool.

His heart is in the right place and his posture before God and Hannah is appropriate. Where he is failing, is to understand that a woman without kids is of little value in their culture:

-1 Samuel 1:5 (ESV)

"But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb."

-1 Samuel 1:8 (ESV)

"And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

He desperately wants her happiness, and tries as best he can. Here is where it struck me: "because he loved her..." is huge. In that culture, and at times even today, the way in which men treat women can make or break them.

Here is a man who simply loves her for who she is, as it ought to be. Not for what she can give or not give. Whether she has a child or not, he deeply loves her, and is really trying to say to her: kids or not, you are my wife and I am ok with that being enough.

What is lacking today, as I thought about this, is this type of genuine Biblical manhood. Let's stop letting the culture drive the narrative with the "toxic" comments about men.

We need men like Elkanah. A bit oblivious at times, but in reality, deeply in love with his wife, and he exhibits a tender affection, in spite of having no kids. It reveals for us this tender heart and care of a man for his wife, in a world that de-values her.

The Story:

As he prays for her happiness, Hannah is broken in spirit and prays as well. Not for a double portion of food, but rather

for a son. So much so that she draws the attention of Eli, the priest:

-1 Samuel 1:9-11 (ESV)

"After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

She promises God, in her pain, that if He answers her prayer to give her a son, she will in turn hand him right back to Him for His service.

We discover here, Eli the priest is initially very unhelpful. He assumes she is drunk and making a scene, so he reprimands her:

-1 Samuel 1:12-14 (ESV)

"As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken

woman. And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you."

Assuming much, and knowing little. A place we can easily go when we don't take the time to create space and relationship with someone.

We don't want to fault Eli, as he has his own set of issues, and we all at one time or another have done the same and assumed the worst before reaching out to actually learn someone's story.

Because, we move on and discover a woman whose faith is strong:

-1 Samuel 1:15-16 (ESV)

"But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation."

Hannah is broken, and feeling unheard in her grief, she tells him to hold his horses. "I'm not drunk, I am open and bare before the LORD because my heart is broken, and I desperately want Him to answer me.

How many of us "press in" like this in our prayer time? In our grief and pain, we go to Him on our knees until we hear from Him?

I wonder, how many of our prayers go unanswered because they remain unasked. We just tend to move on putting more of our effort into other things, hoping that effort bring about our heart's desires.

This certainly is an area I struggle with and a work on all the time. Like many of you, I fight to carve out the time to learn the patience of long-term faithfulness, and having a spirit of waiting on the LORD. Raving and pleading His promises.

Hannah's passion in prayer doesn't go unnoticed, even though her pleas before God seemed to. Verse 16 seems to be a gentle rebuke of Eli.

"I am not a worthless woman! (Barren and accused of being drunk). I've been telling people what my struggles are, but I am unheard. It's obvious that you haven't listened."

In a quick turn of events, Eli it seems apologizes to Hannah:

-1 Samuel 1:17-18 (ESV)

"Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad."

Go in peace, and may God give you what you ask for. Again, her heart shows, broken as it is, that she just wants to be heard, and finally is.

-1 Samuel 1:19-20 (ESV)

"They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the Lord."

"The LORD remembered her..."

There is something by way of application here -How many of us feel forgotten, ignored, left out sometimes. Life feels lonely, in loss, in friendships, in direction.

Marginalized in life maybe, and perhaps even within your family. God, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus, when talking about worry and such,

reminded those listening, that even the hairs on their heads are numbered by God.

You see, when everyone else forgets, God remembers. Too often, in the false notion of name it-claim it nonsense, the Christian tends to forget to pray and plead the genuine promises of God for your life.

He promises to never forget you! Even if at times, like me, you forget Him and His promises to you -He never forgets!

Here, in Hannah's story, we see that promise: "The LORD remembered her!"

She has a son. She names him Samuel, and in the Hebrew that name, when spoken, sounds like: "Heard of God."

Hannah was heard of and by God. Don't forget this! You see, the reason Jesus came, saving us from the bondage of sin, was in part because of the prayer and plea of God's people who believed His promises that He would listen. He did, and answered by sending His son.

It is a beautiful and powerful truth of the Bible, that the one who created the universe, who put all the stars in the sky, hears the prayers of His people.

In fact, King David tells us in the 40th Psalm:

-Psalms 40:1 (ESV)

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry."

The picture here of Yahweh bowing down to hear the prayers of His people ought to give us pause. It ought to bring us pleasure.

How often do we run about trying to figure it all out, going up and down that emotional roller coaster? Only then, after we have done everything else, and at the end of our rope, do we go to Him for help.

Prayer should be the first, the middle and the last thing we do, all the while remaining active in our lives. Why then, do we all too often, resort to it as our last-ditch effort?

I'm reminded of an old song we used to sing: "I love the LORD, because He hears my prayers and answers them. Because He bows down to listen, I will pray as long as I live."

The Road to Bethlehem -paved with prayer and faith -fulfills the promises of God that:

-Luke 2:11-12 (ESV)

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Hannah had her prayers answered, and she enjoyed the blessing of a son until she no longer nursed him, that three years of growth and bonding with her boy.

Staying away from temple that entire time:

-1 Samuel 1:21-22 (ESV)

"The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever."

"Listen honey, I'll get there. Let me enjoy our son, let me raise and teach him about how he is the answer to prayer and the delight of my heart."

Elkanah, obviously having learned a bit over the past few years, allows her to stay home and nurture their son. He too, knows that Samuel is special and a part of God's plan for His people Israel.

I can only imagine the tender care of Hannah in those three years, the most formidable of any child. Who he would become came from, at least in great measure, his mom and her care during that time.

How many of these men in the Bible, who had an impact on their world, had their worldview formed by their moms?

Boaz from last week and Rahab comes back to mind. She was a prostitute and a foreigner, an outcast accepted by God because of her faith.

Ruth and Obed also. How God had, in His providential care, brought her and Naomi back to Bethlehem in order that His promises continue through their redeemer.

What a picture of our great redeemer, Jesus. His mom too would show Him what it meant to be sensitive, to be kind, to be a biblical man, and to care for those who are on the margins of life.

How to be a man who cares for and respects women, and all others who would typically be ignored at the well because their reputation was perhaps a bit less than stellar.

Great men raised by great women; faithful women who dared to believe God had a plan for them in what were impossible

situations. Hope when there is no hope.
Life where life seems impossible.

Their dad's too, being a great example by
how they treat and care for their mom's,
and all others around them.

Samuel would be a great prophet, judge,
and priest of the people of Israel.
Births like his are always an indication
that God is about to do something great.

We'll learn more of that next week as we
follow the grown Samuel as he journeys to
Bethlehem to anoint a king. But for now:

-1 Samuel 1:24-28 (ESV)

"And when she had weaned him, she took
him up with her, along with a three-year-
old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin
of wine, and she brought him to the house
of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was
young. Then they slaughtered the bull,
and they brought the child to Eli. And
she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my
lord, I am the woman who was standing
here in your presence, praying to the
Lord. For this child I prayed, and the
Lord has granted me my petition that I
made to him. Therefore I have lent him to
the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent
to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord
there."

As she left him, she prayed and sang:

1 Samuel 2:1 (ESV)

"My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation."

The prophet, and priest, and promise from God. Hannah understood she was a servant of the LORD, and in hearing her prayers, God gave to her a son.

Our first reading this morning for Advent is familiar to us and is known as the Magnificat -Mary's song.

-Luke 1:46-49 (ESV)

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

The same yesterday, today and forever. God is on the move, even in our time. Faithful people who will believe His promises and live in such a way that shows the world -that Jesus, another son of the promise is the king and savior of the world.

I don't have to wonder if Mary recalled Hannah and her story. Her song, so much

like Hannah's reminds me that she too was waiting, believing and praying for God to work on her behalf.

Come to Him, believe in Him. Trust that His promises to you will come to pass. Pray like it depends on God, and get to work like it depends on you -because it does.

He is waiting for you, and he wants to heal and restore your spirit...