

05-10-15 Hannah – A Mother God Blessed

1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:1, 11

NEWSDAY Article – Read Portion ... How will we be honoring our Mom's this year?

1 SAMUEL – This book is about the story of three men of God... King Saul, “the man of the flesh,” King David, “the man of faith,” and Samuel, the last judge and the first prophet of Israel use by God in a mighty way. Both Kings were chosen by God and anointed to their positions by Samuel. In order to appreciate the importance of Samuel in this story, we need to look at his life from the beginning, or even earlier. This time period identifies and major shift in Israel's history: the end of the era of the Judges, the beginning of the era of the Prophets, and the introduction of the era of the Monarchy. Please turn to the beginning of 1 Samuel as we read about Samuel's birth and Hannah, the Godly mother who God chose to use for this special event in History.

READ 1 SAM. 1:1 – 2:1, 11

A GODLY MOTHER REMAINS FAITHFUL TO GOD

1 Sam. 1:1-8 – The Message – “1 There once was a man... whose name was Elkanah... 2 He had two wives. The first was Hannah; the second was Peninnah. Peninnah had children; Hannah did not. 3 Every year this man went from his hometown up to Shiloh to worship and offer a sacrifice to God-of-the-Angel-Armies. Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, served as the priests of God there. 4 When Elkanah sacrificed, he passed helpings from the sacrificial meal around to his wife Peninnah and all her children, 5 but he always gave an especially generous helping to Hannah because he loved her so much, and because God had not given her children. 6 But her rival wife taunted her cruelly, rubbing it in and never letting her forget that God had not given her children. 7 This went on year after year. Every time she went to the sanctuary of God she could expect to be taunted. Hannah was reduced to tears and had no appetite. 8 Her husband Elkanah said, "Oh, Hannah, why are you crying? Why aren't you eating? And why are you so upset? Am I not of more worth to you than ten sons?"

Hannah was one of two wives of Elkanah. Peninnah, the other wife, had borne several children to Elkanah, while Hannah was barren and distraught over this. However, Elkanah loved Hannah more and treated her specially. Peninnah was quiet the mean one and chided Hannah every chance she could about her barrenness. Hannah was very disturbed by all this even though Elkanah continually tried to encourage her. Like most events in the O.T., there is the actual event local to the story and a symbolic meaning that speaks of Israel's spiritual condition before God. Hannah's barrenness was symbolic of Israel's spiritual barrenness. The nation suffered spiritual infertility and fruitlessness. The priesthood deteriorated as we will see more clearly. Hannah sings of this demise in her song, part of which says: **vv.2:3-5 – The Message – “For God knows what's going on. He takes the measure of everything that happens. The weapons of the strong are smashed to pieces, while the weak are infused with fresh strength. The well-fed are out begging in the streets for crusts, while the hungry are getting second helpings. The barren woman has a houseful of children, while the mother of many is bereft.”**

The proud, self-confident heart vs. the humble spirit that depends on God... That's what 1 Samuel is all about! The people were rebellious – refusing to come to God in repentance. So, the priesthood dropped out of the active picture, starting with Eli's two sons, priests, Hophni and Phinehas. These two priests had so corrupted the priesthood that God killed them both on the same day.

A GODLY MOTHER PRAYS – THROUGH EVERYTHING

1 Sam. 1:9-17 - The Message - *So Hannah ate. Then she pulled herself together, slipped away quietly, and entered the sanctuary. The priest Eli was on duty at the entrance to God's Temple in the customary seat. 10 Crushed in soul, Hannah prayed to God and cried and cried - inconsolably. 11 Then she made a vow: Oh, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, If you'll take a good, hard look at my pain, If you'll quit neglecting me and go into action for me By giving me a son, I'll give him completely, unreservedly to you. I'll set him apart for a life of holy discipline. 12 It so happened that as she continued in prayer before God, Eli was watching her closely. 13 Hannah was praying in her heart, silently. Her lips moved, but no sound was heard. Eli jumped to the conclusion that she was drunk. 14 He approached her and said, "You're drunk! How long do you plan to keep this up? Sober up, woman!" 15 Hannah said, "Oh no, sir - please! I'm a woman hard used. I haven't been drinking. Not a drop of wine or beer. The only thing I've been pouring out is my heart, pouring it out to God. 16 Don't for a minute think I'm a bad woman. It's because I'm so desperately unhappy and in such pain that I've stayed here so long." 17 Eli answered her, "Go in peace. And may the God of Israel give you what you have asked of him."*

Hannah was not ashamed. She went to the Temple and prayed and cried before the Lord. It was just her and God at that point. She didn't care who was there, who saw her, or what they thought. And her actions cause some crazy thoughts, but she was innocent. Eli – The High Priest thought she was drunk, because her lips were moving, but there was no voice to hear. Don't you ever pray and move your lips, but say nothing out loud? I do – or I mumble under my breath – I must be drunk. What model for prayer do you follow? Are you ashamed to pray out loud? Maybe you haven't been desperate enough. Hannah was desperate – she held nothing back at this point, and then she was chastised and falsely accused by the Priest. However, Hannah was committed and boldly spoke up for herself. God saw she was determined and sincere. He heard her prayer and granted her petition. Eli said, "May the God of Israel give you what you have asked of Him."

Hannah made a vow to God that she would dedicate a son to God forever if He would answer her prayer. It's one thing to promise God something in a desperate plea to get an answer, but it's another thing to then follow through on that promise. I had a Godly mother all my life. It was a great experience, but I didn't always appreciate it until I was older. When I was sick with cancer, my mom pledged to God that she would give her life for mine if he would heal me and save my life. I didn't know that at the time, but my sister did. When my mom was diagnosed with cancer, she resolved that this was payback time. She made a vow to God that she was perfectly willing to live up to. She gave up her life that day. It was my birthday – May 21, 1999. They told her the diagnosis and she turned her head to the window and said, "Well, that's not what I expected." That was it. There was no talking sense into her after that. She gave up her life willingly and died four months later. She would say to me, "Don't be sad, Nicky. It's OK. It's all in God's hands."

This was a really bad year for me. After dedicating my life and ministry to God and began to pursue the Nazarene Minister's course of study, I lost my best friend in early May, then my mom's diagnosis in late May and her death on Sept. 14, 1999. I was really quite rattled and at the same time feeling the strength of the Lord taking me through. I would not have imagined or been able to predict where I would be now in serving God back then. I was ready to pull the plug on the whole ministry thing.

Hannah's was amazing. She cried out in pain and tears, but also vowed and gave back to God. She prayed for a son, and at the same time, promised to give this son back to God forever. *"Centuries later, rabbis would see Hannah as a model of authentic prayer, the prayer of the heart, that eventually replaced sacrifice altogether."* (Eugene Peterson)

A GODLY MOTHER SACRIFICES FOR HER CHILDREN

Enter Samuel – his birth and childhood! Hannah dedicated him to the Lord forever – and meant it!

1 Sam. 1:18-26 – The Message - *"Think well of me - and pray for me!" she said, and went her way. Then she ate heartily, her face radiant. 19 Up before dawn, they worshiped God and returned home to Ramah. Elkanah slept with Hannah his wife, and God began making the necessary arrangements in response to what she had asked. 20 Before the year was out, Hannah had conceived and given birth to a son. She named him Samuel, explaining, "I asked God for him." 21 When Elkanah next took his family on their annual trip to Shiloh to worship God, offering sacrifices and keeping his vow, 22 Hannah didn't go. She told her husband, "After the child is weaned, I'll bring him myself and present him before God - and that's where he'll stay, for good." 23 Elkanah said to his wife, "Do what you think is best. Stay home until you have weaned him. Yes! Let God complete what he has begun!" 24 Then she took him up to Shiloh, bringing also the makings of a generous sacrificial meal - a prize bull, flour, and wine. The child was so young to be sent off! 25 They first butchered the bull, then brought the child to Eli. 26 Hannah said, "Excuse me, sir. Would you believe that I'm the very woman who was standing before you at this very spot, praying to God? 27 I prayed for this child, and God gave me what I asked for. 28 And now I have dedicated him to God. He's dedicated to God for life." Then and there, they worshiped God.*

Hannah had waited so long for this child. She endured much during her barren years. Now she finally received the answer to her heart's desire. God had surely blessed her. BUT - - There was that vow, you know. She was so appreciative that God heard and answered her prayer, that she could give up her only son to serve that loving God and still feel joy and blessing from the Lord. Hannah was truly blessed because she never considered the rewards of the world or the even for her personal desires. She thought first and foremost about pleasing God and serving him only. A mother or anyone who has that constitution will surely be blessed by God. She considered and realized the blessings of God to be more important than anything this world has to offer. Her sacrifice was real. She gave up her son and never claimed ownership of his life again. She gave him completely to serve the Lord – physically, emotionally, spiritually, and never looked back, or regretted her decision. It was of God.

HANNAH – BLESSED GOING FORWARD IN HISTORY

1 Sam. 2:1,10-11 – The Message – “Hannah prayed: I'm bursting with God-news! I'm walking on air. I'm laughing at my rivals. I'm dancing my salvation. God's enemies will be blasted out of the sky, crashed in a heap and burned. God will set things right all over the earth, he'll give strength to his king, he'll set his anointed on top of the world! Elkanah went home to Ramah. The boy stayed and served God in the company of Eli the priest.”

Hannah prayed with rejoicing – not so much about her new son, an answer to prayer, but about the magnificence of God in answering prayer and granting this wonderful request. She rejoiced in this incomparable God and his incredible ways.

“The word anointed is in the last line of the prayer, but it doesn't create a conclusion; rather, it creates an anticipation, preparing us for what is coming. The word in Hebrew is transliterated elsewhere as “messiah,” a person, usually a king, set apart to represent God's sovereign rule and saving presence among his people. Hannah is presented as praying more than she knew, anticipating the anointed king Saul, and anticipating the anointed King David – and for those of us who now have the whole story laid out before us, anticipating Jesus, who is God's anointed Heir to the throne. A thousand years later Mary took this same song and personalized it to sing her joyful witness to the Child in her womb who would bring salvation to the world (Luke 1:46-55).” (Eugene Peterson)

Luke 1:46-49, 54-55 – The Message - And Mary said, I'm bursting with God-news; 47 I'm dancing the song of my Savior God. 48 God took one good look at me, and look what happened - I'm the most fortunate woman on earth! What God has done for me will never be forgotten, 49 the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.

54 He embraced his chosen child, Israel; he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high. 55 It's exactly what he promised, beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

Hannah was truly a blessed woman of God – a great mother – and example to us all. She was used mightily by God to teach a great lesson to the people of Israel. Her prayer is a model for all, and her attitude commendable. Her son was a mighty man of God, dedicated to Him for his entire life. He was used by God as a powerful prophet, and to usher in the first two kings of Israel. All this was part of major lessons God was teaching his people. If that weren't enough, God also use Hannah as an example of anticipating the Messiah, Jesus a thousand years later. Her prayer and her song of rejoicing were remembered and Mary used these for her own song of rejoicing in the God of Salvation.

So – What is true blessing? Is it how we are honored now by our children, grandchildren, etc.? This is nice and important, but what's really the heart of it all? Isn't it – or shouldn't it be how we are honored by God. How well are we serving him and devoting all we have to him and his use? My mom may not have been honored as well in this life as she should have been. We learned more about her in her dying and death than we knew in her life, but she was and is truly blessed by God and that's more important in the long run than anything. Shouldn't that be a goal for each of us?

So we honor and bless our moms today and every day, but more importantly, be a mom that is blessed by God for all eternity.