

“Hannah’s Humble Prayer”
1 Samuel 1:1-17
(Preached at Trinity, April 3, 2016)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. I’ve spent much prayer and given much consideration regarding where to take us in our next sermon series.
I’ve preached through Genesis where we saw the fall of man and the early display of God’s redemptive purpose to save His elect. God raised up Abraham and made a covenant with him that through his seed all of the nations of the earth would be blessed.
2. I’ve preached through Exodus and we witnessed God’s covenant faithfulness in delivering His people Israel from the slavery of Egypt and the journey to the Promised Land. In the prologue to the Ten Commandments we read:
Exodus 20:2 NAU - "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."
We also witnessed in Exodus God’s establishment of His worship and of the sacrificial system that foreshadowed Christ.
3. I’ve preached through Joshua and we witnessed God’s mighty power in defeating Israel’s enemies and giving them possession of the land.
4. We’ve gone through the Book of Judges and witnessed the sad period of Israel’s unfaithfulness in the Land of Promise, their continuous rebellion against God.
We are told the reason why:
Judges 2:8-10 NAU - " Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten. ⁹ And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰ All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."
The Book of Judges ends with:
Judges 21:25 NAU - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
5. We just completed the Book of Ruth where we saw that in the midst of Israel’s sin God was continuing to carry out His redemptive purpose. God chose a young Moabite woman to continue in the lineage of the coming Redeemer. Ruth and Boaz were married and had a son whom they named Obed. This child grew up and became the father of Jesse who became the father of David, the King of Israel.
6. So I’ve decided it would be good for our congregation to continue chronologically in God’s redemptive history and enter the period of the kings. So Lord willing, I’m going to take us into 1st and 2nd Samuel where we’ll see the beginning of the period of the kings. We’ll see God raise up and reject Saul and then raise up King David and the beginning of the eternal throne that would ultimately be occupied by Christ.

7. After 1st and 2nd Samuel we'll continue into 1st and 2nd Kings where we'll see the death of David and the reign of Solomon. After Solomon we'll see the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern kingdoms, and the continued sinfulness of Israel and her kings. We'll see God announcing warnings through His prophets and finally judgment came.

At the close of 2 Kings we read:

2 Kings 25:21 NAU - "So Judah was led away into exile from its land."

8. But God's redemptive purpose had not come to an end. So after our journey through the kings, if the Lord wills, I'd like us to look at the Book of Micah where we will see God as both a God of judgment and of forgiveness and mercy. Micah preaches against both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms and warns of the pending judgment of God and the invasion of the Assyrians and Babylonians. But in the midst of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness God's covenant faithfulness and steadfast love promises a Shepherd-King. Micah tells of One born in Bethlehem who will deliver His people from their sins.

So now you have the next several years of preaching at Trinity on Sunday nights.

9. This journey begins tonight as we enter **1 Samuel**.

In this Book we find a major turning point in the history of Israel and God's redemptive purpose. **1 Samuel** introduces the monarchy in Israel. More important, however, this monarchy will pave the way for an eternal dynasty. God promises David:

2 Samuel 7:16 NAU - "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."

This Kingdom, of course, is fulfilled by the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

10. My focus on a particular Biblical text always has an eye upon your edification and your ever growing relationship with Christ. So while I want to dig deep into the text I'm going to purposely avoid many of the difficulties that can bog us down in the quest of our edification.

A. On commentator wrote of the difficulties of Samuel:

"There are numerous textual difficulties and an ongoing discussion over the corruption of the traditional Hebrew text and whether the fragments of Cave 4 Qumran show a more excellent way. Or how is one to evaluate supposed sources and complexes? How many tentacles does the Deuteronomistic octopus—that ubiquitous mascot of current Old Testament studies—have wrapped around the Samuel materials?¹

B. Not wishing to diminish the importance of scholarship on these issues, we will steer clear of the octopus altogether lest his tentacles choke the lifeblood of the rich application I hope to bring from our study in the text, which is at the heart of pastoral preaching.

11. Samuel is referred to as the last of the Judges and first of the Prophets. **1 Samuel** is actually a continuation of the Book of **Judges**. After occupying the Promised Land and the tribes of Israel settled into their territories there was no central government and no king. Eventually, the Philistines grew in strength and threatened to drive Israel out of their homeland. In this context Israel approached Samuel and cried out for a king.

¹ Davis, D. R. (2000). *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (p. 7). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

12. **1 Samuel** opens with the account of Samuel's birth. (*Read 1 Samuel 1:1-18*)
We are introduced to a Hebrew man by the name of Elkanah. In **1 Chronicles** we read that he was of the family of Kohath which means he was a Levite.
- A. We are told that he had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Since Hannah is mentioned first she was most likely his first wife. We are told she was barren.
- B. It could be that Elkanah took the second wife due to Hannah's barrenness.
13. As the years passed Hannah became more and more filled with sorrow due to her barrenness. Elkanah expressed his love for her, yet she could not be comforted in her childlessness. To make matters worse, Peninnah resented Elkanah's love for Hannah and often mocked her because of her condition—**Verses 7-8**
14. Of course, Hannah was not the only barren woman in the Old Testament. She comes alongside Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson's mother, and of course, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. One thing we find with them all is that God often used barren women as instruments in the birth of key figures in redemptive history.
15. **Verse 8** tells us that although Elkanah loved Hannah he hadn't truly entered into her life. He didn't really understand her misery and seemed to give greater attention to himself: **1 Samuel 1:8 NAU** - "Am I not better to you than ten sons?"
16. How did Hannah respond to her situation? She prayed. Tonight I want us to direct our attention to Hannah's prayer. At the annual festival Hannah was in no mood for celebration. She went to the entrance to the Tabernacle and prayed. Tonight I want us to look at Hannah's prayer.
- I. It was a reverent prayer
- 1 Samuel 1:11 NAU** - "She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts,"
- A. "O LORD of hosts" is a high declaration of God's infinite greatness
1. **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת** – tsebaoth – NIV – "LORD Almighty"
LORD of Hosts – 239 times in NASB
 2. It is a declaration of God's reign over all things
Psalms 24:10 NAU - "Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. "
Daniel 4:35 NAU - "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"
 3. God's people find great confidence in His overwhelming power
1 Samuel 17:45 NAU - "Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted."
- B. We must approach God with holy reverence
1. Hannah's words express her respect and devotion to God recognizing His superiority over all.
 - a. There was no doubt that God was sovereign in her barrenness.
1 Samuel 1:5 NAU - "but the LORD had closed her womb."
 - b. But there is also no doubt as to who could open her womb.
So she approached God's throne with holy reverence.

2. Jesus taught us to pray in this manner
 “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name.”
 - a. It is a declaration that God is high above where He dwells in majesty, splendor, power, and dominion and where He is worshipped with myriads of angels.
 - b. It is also a declaration that He is holy. He is separate from us. Everything about God distinguishes Him from creation.
 The Psalmist writes:
Psalm 113:4-5 NAU - "The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high"
3. To come before God is to approach Him in holy reverence.
 - a. We live in a casual day. Men used to wear coats and hats as common wear. Ladies wore dresses. Today signs have to be posted so people will have on shirts and shoes before entering a restaurant. Jeans with holes in the knees are considered designer.
 - b. Surnames and titles used to be used as a sign of respect.
 - c. It is great folly to think we can approach God in a common, casual manner.
4. It has been said that the tremblings of Sinai have been replaced by the grace of the Gospel. It is true that the Law for the Christian no longer contains threats and warnings. But the holy reverence of Sinai shall never be replaced.
Exodus 19:16 NAU - "So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled."

II. It was a humble prayer -

Verse 11 - " if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant"

- A. Hannah refers to herself as a מַדְבָּרָה – translated here as “maidservant.”
 1. It refers to a female slave. LXX - δούλη
 2. She uses the word to refer to herself 3 times in **verse 11**.
 3. She was approaching God as a servant would approach his master declaring her absolute submission to Him.
 4. This means that if God had chosen to leave her barren as His servant she would have been bound to accept it.
 - a. This was at the heart of our Lord’s Words,
Matthew 26:39 NAU - "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."
 - b. When Eli learned of God’s judgment upon his house because of the sins of his sons Hophni and Phinehas – that his sons were about to be struck down
1 Samuel 3:18 NAU - "let Him do what seems good to Him."

- c. When Job lost his sons and his daughters, his flocks and herds in a single day he could only say,
Job 1:21 NAU - "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."
5. Prayer demands casting aside our foolish pride and humbling ourselves
 Abraham saw his smallness before God:
Genesis 18:27 NAS - "behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am *but* dust and ashes."
6. The starting place with God is to confess our smallness, our inability and God's greatness. God doesn't know any great men. He always begins with nothing and then He makes us useful to Himself.
7. Leon Morris – "When his people are without strength, without resources, without hope, without human gimmicks—then He loves to stretch forth his hand from heaven."
- B. What is God's attitude towards the foolish pride of men?
1. God hates pride
Proverbs 8:13 NAU - "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate."
Proverbs 6:16 KJV – "These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look . . ."
2. God resists the proud
1 Peter 5:5-6 NAS - "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time"
- a. "Resists" is from the word ἀντιτάσσομαι – also means "to oppose," "to range in battle against"
- b. The proud man goes before God in prayer and God is opposing him
3. God hates pride but loves humility – He desires humility, he demands humility
Micah 6:8 NAU - " He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

III. It was a fervent prayer -

Verse 10 - "She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly."

A. Hannah prayed with earnestness and great passion

Verse 15 - " I have poured out my soul before the LORD."

- Hannah was of a heavy spirit. She carried great grief in her heart. The text doesn't tell us that she complained to others about her affliction
- This is in contrast to Rachel suffering the same affliction
Genesis 30:1 NAU - "Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."
- Hannah was grieved greatly and carried her affliction before the throne of God. It was a passionate, fervent prayer.

- B. The only way to approach God is with earnestness
1. God isn't interested in half-hearted prayers. He demands that we see our helplessness and confess our great need of Him. He expects us to press on in prayer. Hannah knew what she wanted and asked for it fervently.
 2. As Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord he persisted and exclaimed: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."
 3. God turns His ear towards earnest prayers
James 5:16 – "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
 4. Spurgeon: "As for our great King, when we venture into His presence, let us have an errand there. As I said the other Sabbath, let us beware of playing at praying. I must realize that I am speaking to God himself, and that I have business to transact with the great Lord."

Conclusion:

1. One more thing we must notice about Hannah and her prayer before God. It was a prayer of faith. Notice after she prayed and Eli blessed her she went away in peace.
1 Samuel 1:18 NAU - "So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad."
2. She came to prayer broken and distressed. She left in peace.
Philippians 4:6-7 NAU - " Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
3. The text tells us:
1 Samuel 1:19 NAU - "And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her."
But what about those times when it seems that God has not remembered us. What about the woman who prays fervently and faithfully and does not conceive? What about the mother who prays for her sick child and the child is not healed? What about the single person who prays for a mate and does not get married? And on and on with the many times we do not receive an immediate answer?
4. We must pray. We must pray reverently. We must pray humbly. We must pray fervently. And then we must trust God to do that which is pleasing to Himself.
5. It may be that we will pray for many years, but pray we must. We must not leave off praying. We must pray without ceasing. And we must trust that our LORD God Almighty will bless us in due time.