

Hannah – 1 Sam 1

We're just a few weeks into our theme for the year, and corresponding series, called . . .

Simple – Learn the Lessons, Live the Life

From 1 Cor 10:11 where it says that the examples and events of those who have gone before us, were *written down for our instruction*

The implication being that we should learn the lessons from their day, in order to live the life in ours – the life God requires *of* us; and the life he desires *for* us

So having looked at the life of *Joseph* last week, we now turn our attention to Hannah some 800 years later, to learn some lessons from hers (**Title slide – Hannah**)

It's found in 1 Sam 1

- As with Joseph last week, we first need to understand **HER SITUATION**

So I'm going to read and make a few comments on the passage first . . .

And then draw out the lessons from her life, in order to apply them to ours (1 Sam 1)

1 – all that to establish Samuel's legitimacy, Elkanah's future son, b/c of his important role in the life of God's people at the time

2 – let me say this about polygamy

Although it's never *explicitly* condemned in the Bible, it's definitely not God's intent

The verbiage in Gen 2:24 says that a man shall cling to his *wife* (singular), not wives

And the *two* shall become one flesh, not 3 or 4

So even though you see it from time to time in the OT, largely for *practical* reasons . . .

Like the need for large numbers of children to shepherd, or work the fields

Or to offset the high mortality rate among women in childbirth

Or the simple desire to carry on the family name – which was likely the case with

Elkanah, seeing how Hannah was barren

The fact remains – it's still contrary to God's design

And when you act contrary to God's design, there are *always* complications, and the results are *always* less than desirable, as we'll see in Hannah's case

3 – Shiloh as opposed to Jerusalem, b/c it would be another 100 years before the tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant made their way there

But for now, Shiloh was it – located about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, and a 2 day journey from Hannah's home

11 – meaning, I'll dedicate him as a Nazarite (Nu 6) – someone who's devoted to God and his service

21 – fulfill his commitment of giving his tithes and offerings

22 – I'm going to wait until I can leave him there, until he's weaned; which was probably around the age of 2 or 3 in that culture

23 – it's not clear what Elkanah is referring to re God's *word*

It could be something that isn't recorded for us in the text . . .

Or, more likely, I think it's a general reference to God's promise to use those whose lives are dedicated to his service, like the Nazarites

28 – It's important to note that Hannah is not only fulfilling her vow, but carrying out

God's command given 300 years earlier . . .

For the Israelites to dedicate their firstborn child to the work of ministry

- That's her situation

And our first lesson (**OUR LESSONS**) lies in the fact that Hannah was at the end of her rope, and the bottom of her barrel . . .

When God began a miraculous work in her; IOW . . .

Lesson 1 – Rock bottom is often the foundation God uses, to do a work in your life (v1-8)

That's where Hannah was – she had hit rock bottom

Think about it – she shared her *home* with another woman

She shared her *husband* with another woman

She was barren (5b) – which was considered a total disgrace

You were barely a woman and less than a wife if you couldn't have kids

She endured the presence of Peninnah's kids underfoot – a *constant* reminder of her barrenness

And as if that wasn't enough, Peninnah was a hateful, shameless, thorn in her flesh, who threw Hannah's misfortune in her face every chance she got

You can imagine the cutting conversations between them

"Hannah, have you seen Bobby and Jimmy lately – I just can't seem to keep track of *so many* kids?"

"Maybe *you* could help me since you don't seem to have any of your *own*"

"And by the way, did I tell you I'm *pregnant* again? Elkanah is going to be *so* happy"

And so it went v7 says – *year by year*

Year in and year out, she *provoked her grievously to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb.* (6)

7b – *Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat.*

Rock bottom

- And yet, she remained true to the Lord

She worshipped regularly – continuing to go the temple where the contrast between her barrenness and Peninnah's fruitfulness was apparent for all to see

One went to thank the Lord, the other to petition him

One was filled with joy, and the other with grief

And everyone was probably whispering and wondering as Hannah walked by w/ no kids

And yet she remained true to God in worship

True despite the abuse; True despite the pain; The shame; The emptiness

Rock bottom or not, Hannah remained *true* to the Lord

And so must we – otherwise we risk missing out on God's *work* in our lives

It's no secret that hopelessness and helplessness are sometimes the prerequisites for a mighty move of God

It's no secret that God's best often starts at our worst

When we come to the end of ourselves; When we hit rock bottom

• Is that you?
Have you hit rock bottom due to *personal* circumstances like Hannah?
Maybe yours is exactly the same as hers – you’re trying to have a baby and you can’t
And you’re tired of it
It’s straining your marriage; It’s eating up your time
It’s costing you more money than you have; And you’ve hit rock bottom

Or maybe you’ve hit rock bottom b/c of a *Peninnah* in your life
Someone who lives to make your life miserable – or at least it seems like it
Someone who goes out of their way to make sure you know they don’t like you
Someone with a childish mentality of holding a grudge and making a mountain out of a mole hill
And you’re done; No more patience; Is *that* you?

Or maybe you’ve hit rock bottom b/c of an unfulfilled desire of your heart
Like wanting to be married, but experiencing nothing but disappointment
Or wanting to be used by God in some significant way, but not seeing it
Or wanting to feel appreciated, or even noticed?

Or maybe you’re your financial dreams have gone down the tube
Or your business is failing; Or you’ve lost your job; Or you’re in trouble with the law

Have you hit rock bottom? If so, stay true
That is – stay in God’s word, stay in prayer, stay in fellowship with other believers, and keep worshipping the Lord
B/c in God’s economy, in God’s way of doing things – blessing is often borne out of adversity
And hitting rock bottom is often the foundation he uses, to do a work in your life

Lesson 2 – When you’re drowning in despair, take it to the Lord in prayer (v9-20)

10 – *She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.*
She was in an utter state of despair; drowning; *Deeply* distressed, and weeping *bitterly*
So what did she do? She *prayed to the Lord* (10)

She didn’t curl up in a corner, though I’m sure she wanted to
She didn’t appeal to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob; Nor to St. John or St. Peter or St. Mary, or any number of other people that we think hear us in times of need
They don’t; Nor could they answer even if they did; It’s not biblical
In fact, it’s idolatry; It’s putting someone else in place of Jesus as your mediator between you and God . . .
When 1 Timothy 2:5 says – *There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

She didn’t appeal to dead saints, nor did she talk to an idol – no matter how “well fed” or prominently placed it was
She didn’t hang a crystal on her rearview mirror – hoping to capture some divine essence . . .
And she didn’t pray to a figment of someone’s imagination, no matter how well meaning . . .
Like Allah or Buddha or Brahman or any number of other gods, small “g,”

She prayed to Yahweh – *the LORD* (10)
Creator of the heavens and the earth; Worker of miracles; Wonder of nations
Lover of souls; Giver of life
The one who knows and has told, the end from the beginning
King of kings and Lord of lords
When she was drowning in despair, she took it to the *Lord*

• And it wasn’t just a convenient arrow sent up to heaven, it was *ongoing* prayer
V12 says – *she continued praying before the Lord*

Ongoing and *genuine*
13 – *Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard.*
Her feelings were so deep and so many, she either couldn’t or wouldn’t give utterance to them; It was genuine

And *heart-felt*
I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord (15b)
Holding nothing back; Letting it all out
Speaking out of her *great anxiety and vexation* (exasperation; 16b) – heart-felt

And *open* – right there in the tabernacle for everyone to see, including Eli
Which didn’t matter b/c she was drowning – drowning in despair

• When you’re drowning in despair, take it to the Lord in ongoing, genuine, heart-felt prayer
Pour out your soul to him like David did in **Ps 142:1-2** when he was hiding from Saul in a cave, and said . . .
With my voice I cry out to the Lord; with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.

Or in **Ps 69:1-3** – *Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. ²I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. ³I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.*

When you’re drowning in despair, take it to the Lord in prayer, and pour out your soul like *that* *****

• And if necessary, use words – Hannah didn’t
If the drip of your tears is the loudest sound you make – no matter; God hears
If the bend of your knee is the only *movement* you make – no matter; God sees

And whatever God answers . . .
Whether like Hannah he gives u the desire of your heart; Or like Paul, the thorn remains
Rest assured, that when you take it to the Lord in prayer – he hears, and he *cares*

Some of you need to do that, right now
And I’m going to give you a chance to do so at the end of the service
To come down front, get on your knees before the Lord . . .
And just pour out your soul to him in open, honest, heart-felt prayer

If that's you, if you're drowning in despair, take it to the Lord in prayer – just like Hannah

Lesson 3 – If you make a commitment to the Lord, keep it (v21-28)

That's what Hannah did

20 – *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 significance of which is that Samuel's name sounds like "heard of God" in Hebrew
She asked God, he heard her, and Samuel is living proof – hence his name

And after weaning him for a few years . . .

She kept her promise and took him to the tabernacle to be used of God in service to the priests, and eventually *as* a priest, all the days of his life (read v27-28)

She made a commitment, and *kept* it – and we should do the same

Whether it's a commitment to turn from your sin and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life . . .

Or a commitment to train up your kids in the discipline and instruction of the Lord – which *everyone* should do . . .

Or a commitment to *do* something if God blesses the work of your hands . . .

Whatever it is, if you make a commitment to the Lord – *keep it*

Let your "yes" be yes, and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. (for lying to God; James 5:12)

- And never, ever condition your worship or your allegiance to God, on his answer
Hannah didn't – she poured out her heart in prayer there in Shiloh, and well before
Samuel was even a gleam in Elkanah's eye, v19 says . . .

They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord

Without knowing whether or not God would answer her prayer – they worshipped, and continued on with life

Never make your worship or allegiance, conditional on God's answer to your prayer

And don't sit around waiting for it

He deserves your worship no matter what your situation

And he deserves the fruit of your life, no matter what your circumstances

Keep first things first – Barren or not; Rich or poor; Sick or healthy; Swimming/drowning

And if he *does* bless you with your petition – keep your commitment

Let's pray

Invitation

- If you're here this morning and you've hit rock bottom, or you're well on your way, drowning in despair . . .
Stay true – it may very well be the foundation, on which God does a work in your life
But it starts, with taking it to him in prayer (music)

If you need to do that, if you need to pour out your heart to the Lord this morning . . .

Just slip out of your seat, make your way down front, and get on your knees before the Lord – right now, as I speak

When you do, one of our staff or leaders will join you, kneel with you, and pray with you if you'd like

Or just remain silent and simply be there for you

It might be a physical ailment that has you down

It might be your marriage; Your business; A struggle with sin

It might be an unfulfilled desire of your heart that you long to have met

Whatever it is . . .

Come to me [Jesus said], *all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . .*

Cast all your cares on him, b/c he cares for you (Mt 11:28-29; 1 Pet 5:7)

If you're drowning in despair, take it to the Lord in prayer as the worship team sings

(What a Friend We Have in Jesus)

- Before we close our time, let me read Is 41:9b-10 . . .

"You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off;" [Therefore] fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Pray

