

## Given to the Lord

May 28, 2017 | Seventh Sunday of Easter

### 1 Samuel 1:21-28

21 When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, 22 Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, “After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always.” 23 “Do what seems best to you,” her husband Elkanah told her. “Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good his word.” So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. 24 After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. 25 When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, 26 and she said to him, “Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. 27 I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. 28 So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there.

Three years old is about the age we start to see kids come to our preschool here at Redeeming Grace; it's an exciting time in the kid's development, because they're starting to really pick things up... letters, counting, even their conversational and social skills are really starting to develop. Many parents know that feeling of dropping your kid off for their first day of school—maybe there's sorrow: they're growing up, but then there is also a little bit of relief too; yes! They're growing up! The diaper phase is over! Just imagine dropping them off for good? Today, we see a young mother named Hanna who is a courageous example of faith that isn't afraid to let go.

#### *I. A mother asks for help*

Hannah, was a woman who would not give up; she is the epitome of persistent prayer and faithful endurance during her years of waiting. We are told that she suffered greatly on account of her fellow “sister wife” Peninnah who lived to torment Hannah on account that she had no children of her own. (It seems the women's husband, Elkanah was oblivious to this inner turmoil in his own house.) Hannah was tormented by Peninnah so much that we are told she stopped eating entirely—wasting away. Where did Hannah flee? At the point of despair caught between her tormentor and her yearning to have her own child, she threw herself entirely upon the Lord—She prayed in the court of the tabernacle “pouring her soul out to the Lord.”

Hannah teaches us an important lesson about prayer. Don't give up. It doesn't matter how small or trivial the request might seem, Jesus Himself encourages us to be persistent in prayer, but her prayer wasn't just for a child—it was also for deliverance from her enemy. It is clear that Peninnah resented Hannah, that she was living to make her life unlivable—yes Hannah wanted a child, but through a child the Lord would deliver her from Peninnah's constant prodding. Hannah was praying that through delivering her own child, the Lord would deliver her from her spiritual conflict.

Yes, it is good and right to pray for physical blessings, Jesus Himself taught us to pray “give us this day our daily bread,” We are very good at asking for the “desires of our heart,” those things we long and yearn for—they probably aren’t bad either. We desire good things for ourselves and our families, and God desires good things for us as well... as long as they are also a spiritual blessing for us. But Jesus also taught us to pray, “deliver us from evil.” We can easily ignore the spiritual attacks from the devil that drive our concerns for what the Bible calls “our daily bread.” What is on your heart the most this morning? My wife and I this last week have been wrestling in prayer over whether or not its the right time to get a new car; I marvel at how quick I was to pray for the physical blessing, but then how long it took me to ask God for contentment. Financial concerns weigh down on most people—yes, it is good to ask God to provide, but then just as persistently, request from God a trusting heart.

## *II. A mother gives up her son*

Hannah did something over and beyond, however, she promised the Lord that if He honored her request, she would give her son up entirely to the Lord. We are told that “the Lord remembered” and He answered Hannah’s prayer. It was not on account of Hannah praying a certain way or making the right offer, but entirely out of God’s grace He decided the timing was right to grant her request. The Lord almighty who both “gives and takes away” opened Hannah’s womb and granted her the desire of her heart. She keeps her son, Samuel, for about three years until he can eat normal food, and then she brings him to the Lord. She gives up her son entirely—Why? Because Samuel was her first-fruit. He was her first born Son, and she gives her first and best portion to God. In a very real way, Samuel was a sacrifice to God. She gave up her son so that he could worship the Lord all the days of his life.

Another statement is used about the boy Samuel a little later in his life: “And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men” (1 Samuel 2:26). This same phrase is echoed by Luke about 1,100 years later after an episode when another mother left her child at the Temple, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

The boy Samuel, whose life was given entirely over to service for the Lord, points us to Jesus. Jesus was the child born who would ultimately deliver us from the Satanic nagging Peninnah who accuses us before the throne of God. Jesus as the Only Begotten of the Father; He is the first-born of God, and was given entirely over to a life of service as God’s gift of first-fruits for us. Sometimes we think of Jesus’ sacrifice for us only in the narrow sense—giving Himself for us on the altar of the cross, but in truth, Jesus entire life was lived as a sacrifice on our behalf. He served God faithfully all His days—living in righteousness and purity before God so that His prayer on the cross “Father forgive them,” would not just be a hopeful wish, but a certain promise; that on account of His perfect life and death, the Father would give us the greatest spiritual blessing through His Son, Jesus Christ. And now, Jesus, the first-fruits from the dead—the first to rise with total victory over death, continues to live in service to us. He is our mediator—the one who stands between us and the Father to ensure your prayers are heard.

### *III. A mother responds to God's grace*

So how does Hannah respond? She has just given her first-born to the Lord and we might think she would be filled with sorrow—like our first time sending the kids off to college—but instead, she is filled with joy and gratitude! She doesn't just bring her son, she brings additional offerings of a bull, grain, and wine! To top that, she leaves God's house that day saying, "My heart rejoices in the Lord!" (1 Samuel 2:1). How could she do that? Hannah was grateful to God because of His mercy toward her. He had delivered her, He had given her her heart's desire, more than that she believed in God's ultimate act of deliverance through Jesus. Her response to God's grace in her life was not a token 10%—she gave her son entirely to the Lord, and then she brought additional offerings on top of that! Hannah gave God 110%!

Paul says in Romans 12:1 "Therefore I urge you... in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." In view of God's mercies, how do we tell God "thank you?" We might offer a token 10% back in the offering plate, but often our mistake is thinking God is looking for a number from us. He isn't; He is looking for you. The little bit that goes in the offering plate isn't the sacrifice of thanksgiving God is hoping for, but your life. All of you. 110%. How do I glorify God with my entire life? Well, we first realize that all of it—the car, house, children, even our lives as blood bought children—belongs to God. It is a wonderful blessing to realize we really own nothing, because then we can really lose nothing. Like Job, we can say, "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). Knowing that even our children are gifts from God, we dedicate what has been entrusted to us to the Lord. No, this doesn't mean dropping your kids off at church to be raised by pastor, but it does mean making the Lord the first priority in their life and in our life. Whether it's our time, our money, or our car we use it all to the glory of God.

If Hannah were here today, we might wonder, "How could you do it? How could you give up your one and only child?" Hannah would correct us. She would tell us, "This isn't about me at all—it is about how gracious and loving God has been to me. It's not about my sacrifice, but God's. It's not about what I gave up for God, but what He gave up for me." God sacrificed everything for us, "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things" (Romans 8:32). Amen.