

Hannah's Prayer (1 Samuel 1:1-20 & Romans 8:18-30) 27-May-2018

G'Day everyone

Today we're starting a new series on the OT book of 1 Samuel.

So please turn your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 1

If taking notes helps you concentrate, please use the sermon outline in your bulletin

Let me pray before we begin

Context

Before we look at the passage from 1 Samuel

Let's get the context

[Powerpoint1-Context]

It's around about 1064BC

The Israelites are in the Promised Land of Canaan

The people are ruled by Judges - who try to help the people obey God's rules

Judges like: Ehud, Jephthah, Gideon, Samson and Deborah

During this period of the Judges ruling

There was a pattern of the nation continuing in sin and rebellion against God, then God would step in and pass judgement on the people; the people would repent; God would raise up a new Judge; but after a while - the nation would continue their sin and rebellion, God would step in and pass judgement again and the people would repent again - then God would raise up another new Judge.

This pattern continued for some time with the nation spiralling out of control

So by the time we get to the end of the period of Judges

The assessment of the nation is summarised really well in Judges 21:25

[PowerPoint 2-Judges 21:25]

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit

So as we enter the time of 1 Samuel

Not only are the people out of control - but so are the priests

The Priests who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation - and the ones who make animal sacrifices to God on behalf of the people - for their sin - well these Priests are corrupt and out of control too.

So 1 Samuel is a book of transition

As the nation transitions from being ruled by Judges and Priests - to being ruled by a king

All the time the nation is forgetting that they already have a King
God Himself...

It's really not much different today - is it?

We live in a nation where many have forgotten about God - and many do as they see fit...

(pause)

Intro

[PowerPoint 3-Blank]

Now we can look at today's passage...

Have you ever phoned a store - like Bunnings say - to ask if they have a particular product in stock?

And they put you on hold whilst they check their stock

The music plays

And you're hanging on and hanging on...

And it's like they've forgotten about you?

And you think - I could've driven to the store and back by now.

Sometimes we can feel like God has put us on hold

We've been struggling with a situation in our lives

We've prayed and prayed - and it's like God has put us on hold - and the music is playing....

Anyone ever felt like that?

That's the situation in today's passage from 1 Samuel

A lady named Hannah has been praying for some time - and God appears to - not be listening - and not answering - and has put Hannah on hold!

Hannah's situation (1 Samuel 1:1-8)

So let's look at Hannah's situation - in verses 1 to 8

[PowerPoint 4-Hannah's situation]

She's married to Elkanah

And Elkanah has another wife - Peninnah

Peninnah has children with Elkanah - but Hannah is unable to have children

Elkanah is a godly man - he takes worshipping God seriously

And every year Elkanah takes his wives and family up to Shiloh

At that time the tabernacle and the place for sacrifices was at Shiloh and not at Jerusalem

The priests that make the sacrifices at Shiloh are Eli and his 2 sons Hophni and Phinehas - and as we'll see later on in our series - Eli's sons are corrupt

Now it's likely that because Hannah couldn't have children - that Elkanah took a 2nd wife - Peninnah - we say that because Hannah is mentioned first in v2

And we see from v4 that when Elkanah made the sacrifices he favoured Hannah and gave her a double portion of meat - because as it says in v5 - he loved Hannah and clearly felt for her - as she was unable to have children

To make matters worse for Hannah - in v6 and v7 - Elkanah's second wife, Peninnah, tormented Hannah because Hannah couldn't have children!

People can be cruel can't they?

It's sad when we see or hear people being teased and tormented because of a disability of any kind - isn't it?

(pause)

This torment caused Hannah great distress - so much so - in v7 - she cried and couldn't eat

Elkanah tries to help - see v8

Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?

Us blokes can be a bit insensitive sometimes - can't we?

Elkanah's heart's in the right place - but his brain is not in gear

I'm sure I've probably said something just as insensitive to Heather at times...

Elkanah doesn't understand what it feels like for Hannah not to be able to have a child.

Women are designed to have children - and a women's yearning for a child and a mother's love for a child - can really only be fully understood by another woman - and that yearning and love can't be replaced by a husband - no matter how well meaning they are...

A Word to those who can't have children or have a disability

But it begs the question as to what we say to someone who can't have a child or to someone who has a permanent disability - and why this has to happen to them?

[PowerPoint 5h-A Word]

What are we going to say to the barren woman or the disabled person?

(pause)

You see in the OT and even in Jesus' time -

There was a view that if a woman was barren - or if a person was blind, deaf, or disabled - then they had been cursed and rejected by God - and it was probably because of some sin in their lives or in their parents' lives.

But that's not what the Bible says

[PowerPoint 5a-Deut 28/John 9]

Back in Deuteronomy 28 - and you might want to look it up when you get home

There is a whole chapter which basically says

The Nation of Israel will be blessed for obedience to God - and the Nation will be cursed for disobedience to God

These promises are Corporate - for the whole nation - not necessarily for individuals

If Israel as a nation is obedient to God - they will be blessed

If they are disobedient - they will be cursed

Israel chose to be disobedient (especially the leadership) - and that's why they eventually ended up being kicked out of their own land and exiled in Assyria and Babylon

Jesus Himself tackles the same wrong assumption - that disability is a curse - in John chapter 9

When his disciples come across a blind man - they ask Jesus - why is the man blind - is it the man's sin or his parents?

Jesus answers - neither - but that it is to show God's glory in the man's life

So what do we say to the couple who can't have children or the person who is permanently disabled with no cure?

[PowerPoint 5b-Rom 12:15]

I can only give you answers from the Bible

Like Romans 12:15

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

All we can do is be by their side - sympathise, empathise if we can - and cry with them

The Apostle Paul - tells of his own situation - where he had a thorn in his side - what that thorn was we aren't told - whether it was a physical disability or an emotional one - we don't know

[PowerPoint 5c-thorn/grace]

But here's how he dealt with it - from 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 - Paul says

I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for

Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

So all we can tell the barren woman or the disabled person

Is that like the Apostle Paul - God's grace is sufficient for them - and that

God's power is made perfect in their weakness

And that God's glory and strength can be revealed even in their disability

I have a friend - Jason Forbes - with cerebral palsy - in his weakness and struggles - I've seen God's power, strength and glory - raise Jason up to be a brilliant scholar, an ordained minister and an advocate for the disabled in the Presbyterian Church. In Jason's weaknesses - I see God's power and glory at work...

Just one more verse that we can hang on to

And that's from our NT reading today

[PowerPoint 5d-Rom 8:28]

From Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things [including being barren or disabled] God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

So we can be sure that in every detail in our lives - as we love God - God is working those details into something good

So for the couple who can't have children - God has other good things planned

For the disabled person like Jason - God had other good things planned

God reveals those plans in His own perfect way and timing.

What Hannah does about her situation? (1 Samuel 1:9-20)

So back to Hannah's story

[PowerPoint 6-Hannah's situation]

We left her weeping and unable to eat

So what does she do about her situation?

She prays to the Lord - see v10

And she makes a vow that if the Lord gives her a son

She will give him - dedicate him - to the Lord's service

So committed is she to this promise

That she makes a Nazirite vow

The word Nazir in Hebrew - means consecrated or dedicated to the Lord -

So Hannah's is promising that if she has a son - he will be in full time service to the Lord and this Nazirite vow - will mean that the boy never has his hair cut - the hair will be a symbol (like a wedding ring is a symbol of marriage) - the hair will be a symbol of the boy's committed service to the Lord

What an amazing vow - Hannah is making - she so desperately wants a son - but is willing to give him to the Lord - which will mean she won't see too much of her son - but that's her way of thanking and praising God for answering her prayer

As she prays in v12 - Eli - the priest - notices that Hannah's lips are moving - but there are no audible words coming out of her mouth

Sometimes - we don't know what to pray or how to pray - and the words just won't come - Anyone had that happen?

Well that's what's going on for Hannah - she's praying in her heart because she hasn't got the words

Prayer is a heart to heart communication - or spirit to spirit communication

Our Spirit communicating with God's Spirit

In our NT passage from Romans 8:26-27 it says:

²⁶ ... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

So when we don't know what to pray or how to pray - isn't it wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit helps us - and the Holy Spirit takes over - and understands the prayers of our hearts - and even makes prayers out of our wordless groans and aching hearts - how awesome is that?

And it's probably worth mentioning at this point that what we are praying for needs to be valid.

Let me explain

It's quite fair and reasonable for a woman to pray for a child -

Women are designed to have children - and it's God's purpose for women to have children

So it's OK to pray for things which we would expect as part of who we are

So it's OK for a woman to pray for a child - or a husband

It's OK for a man to pray for a wife

It's OK for a minister to pray for ministries to be blessed

All those are fair and reasonable prayer requests

There may be things that aren't so fair and reasonable

Like winning the Lotto, having a luxury car or boat (unless you're going into the fishing business) - or a helicopter...

So it's worth examining what we're praying for...

(pause)

As Hannah makes her wordless prayer from the heart

Eli makes an awful misjudgement - in v13

He thinks Hannah is drunk

This gives us some indication of how things are in Shiloh

For Eli to assume Hannah was drunk

Suggests that it was a regular occurrence for people to arrive at God's House drunk - and when we see what Eli's sons were like in the coming weeks - sleeping with women at the entrance to the tabernacle - it's clear the spiritual life of Eli, his sons, and the whole of Israel had reached alarming proportions

As we said at the beginning - everyone did as they saw fit in their own eyes!

So Hannah explains that she is not drunk as Eli presumes but that she is deeply troubled and was actually praying

Finally Eli gets it - in v17

And tells her to go in peace and prays that God will grant her prayer request

After praying and getting acceptance from Eli

Hannah feels peace and she is no longer downcast and is able to eat - in v18
 Prayer often has that effect - as we hand over our prayer requests to God - as
 we learnt from the Apostle Paul - in Philippians recently - handing over
 everything to God in prayer - gives that peace from God - that surpasses all
 understanding

Elkanah and Hannah show faith in Hannah's prayer

See v19 & 20 - They arose the next morning and worshipped the Lord

And when they returned home - they made love

In due course Hannah become pregnant

And she gave birth to a son called Samuel - which means "*heard by God*" or "*his name is God*"

The Point of Hannah's Story

So God answered Hannah's prayer and granted her a son

But what's the point of the story?

[PowerPoint 7-Point]

It's NOT that we can cry out in prayer and God will grant us everything we ask

God may grant our request - He may not?

It must be according to his will

When we pray the Lord's Prayer

It starts off

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done

So the prayer begins with God's will being done

Before the prayer moves on to our will - and our requests

Give us this day - our daily bread

So the point of Hannah's story is for God to achieve His plans and purposes

The Nation of Israel has a great need

The need for a godly man -

Eli, his sons and the nation are in spiritual decline

There is a great need for someone to get the nation back to worshipping God as they should be

In the process of God achieving His plan - he blesses Hannah who can't have children - and answers Hannah's prayer....

(pause)

There are lots of barren women mentioned in the Bible

Each time - we read about a barren woman in the Bible - something amazing happens

Sarah-Isaac

Rebekah- has twins Jacob/Esau

Rachel - has Joseph and Benjamin

Samson's mother - Samson becomes a Judge

Elizabeth - has John the Baptist - the forerunner to Jesus

So when we read Hannah is barren - it should be a great big hint that God is going to do something special

Hannah having Samuel - means Israel have a new prophet and priest - a Godly man - to replace Eli and his sons and the corrupt priesthood...

Application

So what can we take home today from this story

[In our Bible Study we were asked how Hannah's story relates to Jesus]

[PowerPoint 8a]

1. Firstly look at Hannah's response to being hurt and ridiculed and feeling abandoned - she does not react but responds in prayer - we can do the same. Hannah prays for a child who will serve God. We can be praying for our children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces to be Godly followers of Jesus. We can be praying for our nation to have Godly leaders!

[PowerPoint 8b]

2. The birth of Samuel is a miraculous birth by a barren woman. Jesus' birth is a miraculous birth from a virgin called Mary. Nothing is impossible with God.

[PowerPoint 8c]

3. The birth of Samuel points to Jesus. Hannah was willing to give up her son - for God's purposes. In a far far greater way - God the Father was willing to give up His Only Son - Jesus - for His purpose of saving the world from sin and death - and offering the free gift and grace of forgiveness and eternal life.

Hannah's story is all about God working out His plans and purposes - to bring glory to Himself - and in the process of working His plans and purposes - we see time and time again - how He blesses faithful people.

Let's pray...