



Series: 1 Samuel

Date: January 9, 2022

Speaker: Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

Text: 1 Samuel 1.1 – 2.11

Title: Hannah's Prayer

CMO

Good morning, Mercy Church! Happy 2023 man I get to open today sharing with you the results of the CMO. This is our offering we give together to support our ministry partners in Charlotte. Like the Dream Center and Pregnancy Resource center and freedom within walls. It also goes to Church planters nationally and internationally. Because the best thing for any local community is a Jesus loving gospel proclaiming church. 100% of this offering goes to these organizations. We don't keep any here. Well like I told you our goal was

\$125,000. Which would be the most we've ever given. Well, all told you gave \$170,000! Praise God! That is the signal of a generous, sending minded church and I am SO glad to be a part of what God is doing here.

If you are new to Mercy Church, I want to welcome you & invite you to get in on what God is doing here. Starting point today right after the service. It's about a 15–20-minute orientation to Mercy Church. We'll share our mission vision &





values and what being involved looks like here. Then give you a chance to stick around and ask questions.

Got your bible - make your way over to 1 Samuel. OT. Right after Ruth. Right before 2 Samuel. We are going to be in this book all the way up to Easter so let me talk a little about what it is & why we need it as we jump into chapter 1.

BOOK INTRO

This book is a historical account of how God took his people from a disorganized group of tribes to a unified kingdom. How they go from being governed by prophets & judges to being Ruled by a king. And our 3 main characters are the last judge and the first two kings.

So, this being a narrative, it will read like a story. And I love that God in his wisdom chose to create us as storytellers & story listeners. We love a good story. We learn through story. Because we see our lives as a story. And God in his grace reveals himself through the written history of his interaction with his people. Now this means something for how you read 1 Samuel. And I REALLY hope you read it. Like go home and read it. You will find tragedy, palace intrigue, friendship, war, goliath, courage, and the clear providence of God. It's awesome.

Running theme in this series - living my life in God's world. I believe there is a God. I believe he is in charge (**sidebar** if you don't believe that yet that's ok too. We are really glad you are here to consider what the bible says about God. This is a huge step, and we want to help you take your next. Would LOVE to read the bible with you.)

So, we believe he's in charge and he's got a plan yes BUT...I still gotta live today. I gotta make decisions. I've got competing desires in my own heart to navigate, I've got relationships to manage, I gotta figure out where to rent an apartment, which job to take, which school to apply to, and so on. It would be really great to know what God's plan is because I want to live like he wants me to live but I don't know his plan. Awesome thing about 1 Samuel is we see God unfold another chapter in his plan through people who like you and I don't know the future either.

Now reading history is different from reading something like a NT letter. So here are a couple of things to remember in reading a narrative in the bible

1. See yourself in the characters but pay attention to what God is doing. Character studies like we will do with Hannah & Eli & Samuel & Saul & David & Jonathan - they will reveal a lot about humanity. You will see yourself in them. Their struggles, their hopes & dreams, their failures, their victories. God has chosen to reveal himself to us through how he interacts with these people. And it is good and right to see how God relates to them and to learn about how you can and should relate to God. We'll see that today with Hannah. BUT we can't stay in their shoes, or we will only say things like "be like Hannah be like David" and miss the bigger message about God and how he is redeeming his people. SO YES, learn from how God relates to people, maybe find some heroes to emulate & some



tragic figures to avoid. But leave learning MORE about God than characters. 2nd point:

2. Keep the bigger story in mind. One of the fascinating things about the bible is that even though it is 66 books written over 1500 years, it is one unified account. What is often called the GRAND NARRATIVE. **The story of God coming to rescue and redeem sinners he loves.** And that's important because we read individual narratives in light of the BIG narrative. And that's big because the hero of the big story is Jesus. Not you or me. So, with each short account you gotta be looking for how this participates in telling the **big story of God sending Jesus to rescue and redeem sinners he loves.** So, we will be looking for Jesus and in an OT book like this, that means we'll see him foreshadowed quite a bit.
 - a. David & Goliath?

Lastly about this book - The object is to tell us how Israel went from a bunch of tribes being led by these prophet leader guys called Judges to a unified kingdom under one monarchy. 1 & 2 Samuel are actually ONE book. Well, they were, but the scroll they were written on was too heavy, so they divided into 2. So that's the part this book plays. From tribes to kingdom. And THAT makes it SO important and such a wonderful foreshadowing of Jesus who talks about bringing the KINGDOM of God to earth. David will be a great king. See there are some good heroes in here, but most have tragic flaws. The kingdom itself even has tragic flaws. But it is further

developing and bringing into focus God's bigger plan of **sending Jesus to rescue and redeem sinners he loves.**

So, with all that said I'm ready, so ready, for us to begin our journey through 1 Samuel. The account of a faithful God who guides his people, protects his people, & ultimately fulfills his plan to establish his kingdom that one day he would send Jesus to rule over. And we start with the person who is perhaps the purest in heart, the most faith-filled person in the entire book. A woman from a rural town named Hannah.

SERMON INTRO

And since we've gone through a book introduction, I'll keep this sermon introduction real short. Today - in a series on living our lives in God's world. We are going to talk about prayer. Really our first 3 weeks are all on prayer. And that is no accident. I came out of my time away last year convinced 2023 was to be a year of big steps of faith for Mercy Church. That 2022 was a year of experiencing the faithfulness of God, and 2023 would be trusting him by taking big steps. I believe our church is hungry for and ready for a big step - For his fame and his glory to see an awakening here in Charlotte carried to the ends of the earth.

But big steps of faith must be preceded by a people submitted to and desperate for God. All great moves of God begin in prayer. So, we are going to pray. I'm going to teach you about prayer these first few weeks, we are going to pray together in our services, and in community groups and in families. My prayer is for Mercy to become a people of prayer. And so, there is no better place to start than 1 Samuel 1 where we see



a faithful woman who keeps praying a prayer that has been unanswered for YEARS. Unanswered prayer. Holy and good desires that God has withheld. It should be easy for you to understand why this matters. How do we respond to God when he doesn't **seem** faithful? **How do I live my life in God's world When there is a gap between my knowledge of God and my experience of him in this world?**

I'm going to show you the account. 1 Samuel 1.1 - 2.10. Make some observations. Then show you 3 prayers that I believe this account offers us as a way to respond to that FELT gap between my knowledge of God and my experience of him.

There was a man from Ramathaim-zophim in the hill country of Ephraim. His name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.
2 He had two wives, the first named Hannah and the second Peninnah.

Ok polygamy. I was with my 2 sons driving somewhere and I said to my phone "Siri, call wife." And Siri responded in the worst way possible - "which wife?" Sons were like WHAT? I said I promise you boys - your mother is awesome. But 1 wife is enough.

Not endorsing polygamy. It's tolerating it. But every time you see it in the OT it's in a negative light. Alec Motyer describes the way the bible presents polygamy as a dark background there as a contrast against God's perfect plan of marriage. In

fact, the sister wife situation here proves to be the setting for a lot of pain & hurt.

Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. 3 This man would go up from his town every year to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of Armies at Shiloh, where Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were the Lord's priests.

A childless woman at the center of the story. If you've been around the bible, you might think...this sounds familiar. And you'd be right.

- Abraham's wife Sarah was barren and then the Lord gave her a child in fulfillment of his plan.
- And then their son's wife Rebekah was barren. And so, Isaac prayed, and the Lord gave them twins - Jacob & Esau...in fulfillment of his plan.
- And then Jacob's wife Rachel was barren. Until God remembered her and gave her a son.
- And Samson's mother was barren until an angel of the Lord appeared to her and said Behold you shall give birth to a son. And then there is Mary, who wasn't barren. But couldn't conceive because she had not been with a man. And when the angel told her what would happen, she said how can it be? Well with God all things are possible.

See when you look at the grand narrative, it seems barren women are some of the pillars of God's redemption plan. And so, a childless woman should signal IMPORTANCE. God's work is underway!



4 Whenever Elkanah offered a sacrifice, he always gave portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to each of her sons and daughters. 5 But he gave a double portion to Hannah, for he loved her even though the Lord had kept her from conceiving. 6 Her rival would taunt her severely just to provoke her, because the Lord had kept Hannah from conceiving. 7 Year after year, when she went up to the Lord's house, her rival taunted her in this way. Hannah would weep and would not eat. 8 "Hannah, why are you crying?" her husband, Elkanah, would ask. "Why won't you eat? Why are you troubled? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Ok I want you to see what our author said twice. **The LORD had kept her from conceiving.** Year after year she went up to the Lord's house. Year after YEAR she prayed for a child. She was not in sin. God was not punishing her for something. And everything in me wants to stop and pastor some of you RIGHT at this moment because you are going through infertility like Hannah. But I believe it may be better to let the story unfold a little further first.

But I KNOW some of you have prayed & wept because God has not given you a child. God has withheld that blessing. And it hurts. Others of you God has given you a child only to take that child away in miscarriage. My wife and I have experienced this. Statistics say it is a mathematical certainty that our church is filled with unfulfilled longing & grief. I just want you to know I know. More importantly God knows. And maybe this is why he had you here today. How do I live my life in God's world when it feels like God just isn't delivering!

Sisters especially, allow the Lord to shepherd you

through this passage. And I promise you sisters in Christ who know your struggle are here and willing to comfort you. God has given Mercy Church mighty women of faith I believe God will work through in your life.

9 On one occasion, Hannah got up after they ate and drank at Shiloh. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple. 10 Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept with many tears. 11 Making a vow, she pleaded, "Lord of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give your servant a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut."

I'll talk about her emotions God has allowed us to see in a second after verse 16 where she talks about it.

this prayer - It's the first time God is addressed in scripture as The Lord of Armies. The Armies are the armies of angels that are at his command at any moment. The armies that appear in 2 Kings 6 surrounding Elisha's enemies. She's acknowledging he commands them...he HAS authority to do whatever he pleases. And she says take notice of your servant's affliction. **WHAT A PRAYER.** This is not a prayer of entitlement. God, **YOU OWE ME,** or God I deserve this. And even more than us today she had reason to believe she deserved a child.

12 "If you listen to and are careful to keep these ordinances, the Lord your God will keep his covenant loyalty with you, as he swore to your ancestors. 13 He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will bless your offspring, and the produce



of your land — your grain, new wine, and fresh oil — the young of your herds, and the newborn of your flocks, in the land he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. 14 You will be blessed above all peoples; there will be no infertile male or female among you or your livestock. -- Deuteronomy 7:12-14

God my knowledge of you is that you are faithful. But there is a gap right now. Where I'm not experiencing it. And it HURTS. Can anyone else relate to this? God, you promise to be with me BUT I feel alone. God, you promise love joy patience, but I waffle between angry and anxious. God, you say the church is family, but I feel like a stranger here. You talk about the good of marriage, But I've been praying for my spouse for years and nothing is changing. There's a gap. Hannah believes he's faithful still, so she makes a vow. We don't know if she's made this vow before. We do know this isn't some "deal with God" like you make. God give me an A on this test, and I'll never play video games again. This is years in the making. And very specific. She's saying God if you give to me, I will give it back to you. As a sacrifice of praise to you God.

12 While she continued praying in the Lord's presence, Eli watched her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying silently, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, "How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!" 15 "No, my lord," Hannah replied. "I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven't had any wine or beer; I've been pouring out my heart before the Lord. 16 Don't think of me as a wicked woman; I've been praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment."

She prayed while v.10- deeply hurt. Then Read that last line. The reason I seem like I've lost control of my faculties is that I have been praying FROM, out of, the depth of my anguish and resentment. Oh man. HOW HONEST IS THIS? How grateful to God are you that he let this conversation unfold and then recorded it for you and me.

And I hope you see that this is a faithful prayer. Sometimes we think we are showing signs of weak faith when we pray from a place of struggle with God. Not so. I would say it takes GREAT faith to pray when you are grieved by God's delay or withholding. Some of you are mad at God and have been giving him the silent treatment because he has withheld something from you. Ok God you gonna ignore me? I'm gonna ignore you!

And it's time for you to GO TO HIM with that anguish and resentment. And bear it all. **This will not be easy.** There is nothing calm cool and collected about Hannah here. This isn't the Instagram post with your coffee mug & tiny green plant & bible serene prayer scene. This is disheveled upset complete outpouring of the soul - IS THAT GIRL DRUNK? Prayer. And it is one of Deep faith. I'm reminded of Psalm 42.7 - "deep calls unto deep." at the roar of your waterfall.

And here I think is the first of 3 prayers I want us to pray together today. We'll do it at the end of the sermon. But the first is the

- **A Servant's Prayer of Desire: Lord of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant's affliction, remember and**



forget me not, and give to your servant _____, I will give _____ back into your service.

It's just verse 11. What is it that you have prayed for God to do, and he just hasn't done it? Where do you feel the gap between your knowledge of God and your experience in his world?

Some don't know. Because you've never prayed. Ok let me ask you this - what has got you worried? What do you think ALOT about? Remember, it's God's world. Not yours. You are living in his world. Maybe it's time to take that to God and surrender to him as his servant.

Some of you know INSTANTLY. And you are not happy with me for telling you to pray that prayer again. Because you are in anguish and resentment towards God. All I can say is - God loves you. He has not forgotten you as you will see. God had a plan bringing you here today so you could go to him. And I promise that was loving of him to do. And you returning to him. Allowing his spirit to begin to take down that wall you've built against him...that's a part of his plan for what he's going to do next in you. You say well Spence is this the secret to getting what I want from God? No, he doesn't work that way. it's the secret to getting closer to God by saying you are worth more to me than my deepest desires. Because if you give me my desire, I'm giving it back anyway.

17 Eli responded, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request you've made of him." 18 "May your servant

find favor with you," she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent.

This little interaction would be easy to move past, but I believe it is very significant. I believe it's the thing we often miss. So, Eli, the priest who stands in between God and his people, blesses her prayer. And I think what I want you to see in this is a confirmation that GOD has HEARD her prayer. Go in peace. She then breaks her fast and goes and eats. Her look changes. She no longer looks despondent. She walks away content, full.

Listen this is so big - She doesn't eat & look joyful now because her CIRCUMSTANCE HAS CHANGED. NOTHING HAS CHANGED. She walks away in PEACE because GOD has heard her prayer. And she trusts God. The depth of faith here and how it translates to living in God's world is remarkable. She leaves her burden with the Lord. And receives his peace. While she still waits. I desire this peace. And friends God offers that to you TODAY. Some of you walked in here deeply burdened and are going to walk out of here with a changed appearance NOT because God has changed the circumstance but because you, at a really deep place you haven't before, pour your need out to God. And then you receive his peace.

And THIS is how we live in God's world when there is a gap we feel. It's in surrender. That burden - I'm giving it to him. And I'm receiving his peace he promises. Whether my life is filled with blessing or cursing I'm laying it at his feet and walking



away with his peace. We read Job 1-2 in our bible reading plan this week

- 9 His wife said to him, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” 10 “You speak as a foolish woman speaks,” he told her. “Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?” -- Job 2:9-10

Philippians 4.4-7 I quote it to you a lot because of how powerful it is.

6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. -- Philippians 4:6-7

2nd prayer I want us to pray today is a receiving prayer.

- A Receiving Prayer: God who has heard my prayer, I receive the peace of God that guards my heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Cast all your cares upon him because he cares for you. I don't know that we do that. I think we walk burdened because we are still carrying burdens because we don't trust the God who hears our prayers. And may Hannah here be a holy help to us. This woman did not STOP caring or desiring. She still desired a child. But she walked away in the peace that comes from knowing God has heard her. I want that peace for you.

19 The next morning Elkanah and Hannah got up early to worship before the Lord. Afterward, they returned home to Ramah. Then Elkanah was intimate with his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. 20 After some time, Hannah

conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, because she said, “I requested him from the Lord.”

Samuel sounds in Hebrew like “Request from the Lord.” Little “answer to prayer” running around everywhere. Every time she says his name she's reminded of God's faithfulness. Pretty powerful. And that would be a beautiful WRAP on this story, wouldn't it? God hears and answers prayer. Amen Hallelujah. And that IS TRUE. But the most powerful part comes next.

Elkanah is set to go on his annual sacrifice trip and Hannah says she's not going. She's gonna wait til the boy is weaned which means 2 or 3 years old. Then take him to stay permanently there. Crazy! Well, the big day comes so they go up to the Lord's house, sacrifice a bull and go to see Eli.

26 “Please, my lord,” she said, “as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. 27 I prayed for this boy, and since the Lord gave me what I asked him for, 28 I now give the boy to the Lord. For as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord.” Then he worshiped the Lord there.

To me this is the most amazing part of all this. She follows through and gives her one and only son back to the God who gave him to her. Yes, that sounds familiar. Giving her one and only son. Didn't Abraham do that with Isaac? Yes. Wait didn't God the father do that with Jesus. Yes! This is a beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus. And as she gives him back to God, she does so in joy-filled worship.



My heart rejoices in the Lord;
my horn is lifted up by the Lord.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
because I rejoice in your salvation.
2 There is no one holy like the Lord.
There is no one besides you!
And there is no rock like our God.
3 Do not boast so proudly,
or let arrogant words come out of your mouth,
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
and actions are weighed by him.
4 The bows of the warriors are broken,
but the feeble are clothed with strength.
5 Those who are full hire themselves out for food,
but those who are starving hunger no more.
The woman who is childless gives birth to seven,
but the woman with many sons pines away.
6 The Lord brings death and gives life;
he sends some down to Sheol, and he raises others up.
7 The Lord brings poverty and gives wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.
8 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the trash heap.
He seats them with noblemen
and gives them a throne of honor.
For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's;
he has set the world on them.
9 He guards the steps of his faithful ones,
but the wicked perish in darkness,
for a person does not prevail by his own strength.

10 Those who oppose the Lord will be shattered;
he will thunder in the heavens against them.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.
He will give power to his king;
he will lift up the horn of his anointed.
11 Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy served the Lord
in the presence of the priest Eli. -- 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11 (CSB)

This last prayer is perhaps the hardest but most important.
Prayer of Sacrificial Worship: Lord, all I have, you have given
me. I joyfully give it back to you as an offering of worship. Do
with my life what you will.

Listen to me - the blessings God has given you...give them
back to him before your heart tries to enthrone them in the
place of God. Whether it's the widows 2 mites or it's a crazy
amount of \$\$ - give it back to him. Maybe you are in retirement
and have TIME. give it to him. Maybe its money. Give it to him.
Maybe its talent. Give your athleticism to him. Give your
musical talent to him. Because if it sits on the throne, it will
disappoint you eventually. It's been cooled to get to
know some really good athletes here at Mercy.

- Ex: "grace" on the golf ball.

Maybe you are finally married. Commit your spouse to the
Lord. You can't control him or her. And he or she cannot
satisfy the desires of your heart. Give them back to God.
Maybe it's a child. Give them to God. Maybe it's your home.
Ya'll I don't know but I know the LORD himself only, and not
his gifts, will satisfy you.



Conclusion - 5-minute time of prayer.

- A Servant's Prayer of Desire: Lord of Armies, if you will take notice of your servant's affliction, remember and forget me not, and give to your servant _____, I will give _____ back into your service.
- A Receiving Prayer: God who has heard my prayer, I receive the peace of God that guards my heart and mind in Christ Jesus.
- Prayer of Sacrificial Worship: Lord, all I have, you have given me. I joyfully give it back to you as an offering of worship. Do with my life what you will.

TRANSITION INTO COMMUNION