

Your Kingdom Come

Series on 1 Samuel

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Bible Text: 1 Samuel 1; 1 Samuel 2

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I want to read from 1 Samuel chapter one verse 21 and following, following up from last Sunday morning's sermon, but before I do I want to say a word to someone who might be here this morning or is listening by the internet who has been upset or troubled by the events of the last few days and by the prophecies and promises that the end of the world was going to come and you woke up this morning and you came to church with some trepidation as I did. I was counting the elders in. But it is no joke if you were disturbed and upset by those kind of comments.

And so I want to say we are going to read in a moment or two words that you can trust. The Bible has a very simple rule, really, for prophecy. Prophecies have to come through 100 percent of the time, no ifs, buts or maybes. One of the reasons that the early Christians turned to the Old Testament was they saw those prophecies coming true 100 percent of the time. The prophets earned their title the prophet way that Moses had spelled out in Deuteronomy. A prophet says something, it doesn't come true, then you know they are a false prophet, period. The Bible makes it very clear that nobody knows the day or the hour when the end of the world will come. In fact, it says that is not your business. It is above your pay grade and mine.

The secret things belong to God and the revealed things belong to us.

We are going to read some of the revealed things this morning and we are going to find a lady whose role in the history of salvation was such that things that she spoke about came true. So you can trust her words as we read them in a moment or two.

So let's read together, shall we, 1 Samuel chapter one and verse 21.

The man Elkanah [that is the husband of Hannah] and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever."

Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word.”

So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.”

And he [Samuel] worshiped the LORD there.

And Hannah prayed and said,

“My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in the LORD.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in your salvation.

“There is none holy like the LORD;
there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God.

Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble bind on strength.

Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.

The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.

The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.

He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.

For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s,
and on them he has set the world.

“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.

The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
against them he will thunder in heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king
and exalt the power of his anointed.”

Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy ministered to the LORD
in the presence of Eli the priest.¹

The academic professor Harlan Brown has argued in his research which is basically about the re-paganization of Britain has argued that what brought Christianity’s Roman society, British society to an abrupt and catastrophic end was, he says, the part played by women. He stresses the part played by women historically in upholding piety and in passing on the faith in the home and he argues that it was this loss of faith and piety among women that caused the steep decline in Christian observance in all sections of British society. That is not only of Britain, of course, that that happens. It happens around the world. And it is true to say as you read the Bible that godly women, women of piety are intimately involved in the story of sustaining true religion.

We find religion under attack in Hannah’s days and at that time she is... well, she is the only one who can go to Eli the priest and say after some period of time, “You remember, I am the woman you saw praying in the sanctuary.”

Obviously it is was so unfamiliar that she could with some assurance remind him that she was the one that he has once seen praying in the shrine, in the sanctuary of God. And actually in reading her story you discover here is a woman who had a vital and a living relationship with God. It is to God, we saw last time, that she pours out her soul when she is finding herself under attack from that other wife that she has to live with, from her husband who doesn’t understand her and from the circumstances that she is facing in her life. It is to God she comes and it is to God she pours out her soul.

But it is also to Hannah that is given the insight to see that what was going on in her own personal life, her own little story, if you will, was part of the bigger story that was going on in the world.

And so we find in this little section we have read that after she has been gifted with this child, after she has weaned the child and that could be anything up to about five or six years of age. In ancient society and, as far as I know, having spoken to a couple of women who have done that, even up to date, right, you may not be the one who wants to wean your child that old, but I have known friends of mine who have. And so he could be a boy of about five or six, the point of the story that we are reading today.

¹ 1 Samuel 1:21—1 Samuel 2:11.

And it is at that point that we have a bit of a problem. If you are a thinking person and you read the story you think, well, what woman would do this kind of thing?

If that never entered your head, you have still [?] doesn't enter your head. But it entered my head. I thought, which mother would abandon her child even in the sanctuary?

The passage emphasizes that this wasn't the best place to be. We have had reference to Eli and Eli did not have a good track record of bringing up his children. We have had reference earlier in the text to the sons of Eli. We are going to find out later in the story that those boys who were priests in the temple were, well, they are some of the lowest form of being there is. They were the lowest form of life you can imagine serving God and serving themselves more than serving God in the temple.

There it is, the story. She leaves Samuel with Eli.

I want to say to the children earlier on today that their moms and dads would never do that to them. They would be wrong for you to do that because this is not here in the Bible as a model for you to take home with you. Hannah is a great woman, but she is not a model in either sense of the word in this respect. Hannah's story here is utterly unique. It is unique for a number of reasons. One reason is that she prays and God does give her this direct answer to prayer in relation to her barrenness and she has a miracle boy. It is a miracle boy that she is given. But she is also unique in what she does with the boy. In taking him to the temple, in putting herself through the grief.

By the way, the text doesn't talk about her feelings or her emotions in that respect, but by putting her through this experience this she does by her own initiative. She chooses to do this. There is no word from God telling her to do this. This is her response to what God has done for her. The generosity of God is met by the generosity of this woman who lends her son to the Lord.

Well, I hope this will make sense later in the sermon. I want you to just keep that in the back of your mind and say, "Well, what possible reason, what possible cause, what possible grounds could we find for this incident occurring the way it does in the Scripture?"

Well, what I want to focus on this morning is on what Hannah says. As he reflects on what she does, she has left her son there. We are told at the end of verse... of chapter one that he was worshipping... Samuel was worshipping the Lord there. And we are given to understand as we read that repeated several times in the story that from the earliest days this little boy loved God and enjoyed the service of God.

Now I know there are some Christian people and they would wonder about that. Their view of children is that they are little strangers, little pagans who live in our homes until at some point in the future [?] at some point in the future by some dramatic act of God they are changed to become the saints that you always knew they could be and wondered if they ever would.

No, believing as we do that the children of believers are covenant children, we also believe that it is possible for little boys and girls from a very early age to love the Lord Jesus and to have a very real relationship with the Lord Jesus.

We know that they may love the Lord Jesus and behave badly. But then if they only knew us. It has taken us, some of us a long time to get our act together in so many areas and if we cut them as much slack as we cut ourselves when it comes to the behavior matching up to the belief, then I think we would be softer on them rather than harsher.

Now when I read the story of Samuel I am reminded of my own experience. I don't remember a time when I didn't love the Lord Jesus and I don't remember a time when going to church on Sundays wasn't to me the highlight of my week. I am no Samuel, but I recognize in Samuel's experience something that boys and girls—and you may be a boy or a girl listening to me today—boys and girls, you may love the Lord Jesus and we want to affirm you and accept you in that love that you have for him.

But I want to focus now on what Hannah said, this great payer that we are told that she prayed. And people wonder whether she prayed it. I think she did. I think these are her words. I think that this is a godly woman and everything else we have learned about her in the previous chapter suggests here is a woman who knew God, knew God's Word and knew the impact of that Word on her own heart and life.

And the theme of her prayer is that God reigns, that God is the King. And that is interesting because she is the first person in the Bible, really, to see with the clarity that she sees this truth. There were intimations, of course, that God is King. It is assumed right from the very beginning that God is king, but beginning with Hannah this begins to come together, a lot of the threads, the strands of God's truth come together with her. And, interestingly, the book of Samuel which tells the story of David who is the great king of Israel, begins and ends with a song. It begins with Hannah's song and ends at the end of 2 Samuel with David's song. And when David the king is summing up his reign and reflecting on what God has done through him and what God is going to do in the future through an even greater king, he draws on Hannah's song. And the outline of David's song is based on and drawn from Hannah's song. She lays the footprint of what happens as the story develops as we go through.

So that was a very long introduction to an even longer sermon. So worry about that. In which I am going to look at how God works personally, how God works generally and then how God works ultimately. That is what Hannah speaks about.

First of all, how God works personally. You can see that in the first few verses, one to three, she is talking about herself. You can see that from the language she uses.

“My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.”²

² 1 Samuel 2:1.

She is talking about herself and her experience. And you can see immediately there is a change in the mood of this lady. The last time we were looking at her earlier on in chapter one verse 10 she was deeply distressed. She was weeping bitterly. Her husband is saying to her, “Why is your heart sad? Why are you not eating?”

And now she says, “My heart exults in the LORD. My strength is exalted in the LORD.”³

The heart is more than just the seat of the emotions in the Bible. The heart is the center of a person’s personality. It is everything they are. It represents the core, the center of a person’s being. And she is saying, “Everything in me, all that I am exults in God. I am just rejoicing in God.”

Not only that she is saying, “No matter what you may think about me, no matter how inadequate or insignificant you may feel that I am, I feel like I a king. I feel like someone who has power, not that I am powerless. Oh, yes, I may be powerless in the eyes of the world, but I feel as if I am... I have at my disposal resources that are the kind of resources that you would normally associate with the people who have influence and power in the world.”

“My strength is exalted in the LORD.”⁴

She is using a word there, literally, “My horn...” The horn was the beauty or the power of the animal. The horn was the glory of the animal and also the focal point of the animal’s power when it was charging, the power of the animal.

We had an illustration of this when I was growing up. My mother and my father and my brother and I were on vacation, not holiday. Holidays, English; vacation is American. Get it right. I am translating for you this morning. No more kitchen rolls or anything else that I mentioned last Sunday night which were paper towels again. I will never use kitchen roll ever again.

We were on vacation. We were... my mother and father had gone out for a walk and my memory is of when they returned from this walk my mother was giggling like a kid. I had never heard her giggle before and I wondered what was going on and I soon discovered they had gone for a walk. They were walking through a field and they were attacked by a goat. My father being old and noble lifted my mother over the fence and then he started running. The goat ran after him. The next half an hour my mother said she stood there while this goat bounced my father three or four times up in the air. She said, “I couldn’t believe it.” He was a big man. Up in the air, this goat. The power behind the goat.

So that is what I think of whenever I read this story, my father is bouncing around on a field somewhere in deepest, darkest England.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

But here when Hannah is using this, of course, she is thinking of the powerful animal and she is thinking of how that is often a symbol, of course, for a great power, a leader, a king. You often find that in the Old Testament, the king is a leader, his horn is exalted. This, his power is great power.

And she says, “I feel like a king. I feel like someone who has power. I am no longer at the mercy of my circumstances. I feel I have some control back in my circumstances.”

She is rejoicing in the Lord. She is rejoicing in the power that God has given to her and she is rejoicing in the salvation that God has brought into her life. She feels she has been rescued from her barrenness, rescued from the assaults of that woman that she lived with, that this other wife who was always getting at her and annoying her. And she feels that within the confines of her little life she has experienced something, a little thing of the salvation, the rescue that God achieves in the bigger scene of the world as we shall see.

And she tells us why she believes this has happened in verse two.

She uses the language that Moses uses. The language of salvation comes straight out of Moses’ song in Exodus 15 and she goes on to say, “This is why what has happened to me is utterly unique.”

“There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.”⁵

And all of those things flow from one another. What does it mean, “There is none holy like the LORD”?⁶ It means there is nobody like him. It means he is utterly unique. He is apart from us. He is above us. He is set against us even. But God the Lord is utterly holy. There is nothing that you can compare him to. There is nothing that rivals him.

“There is none holy like the LORD.”⁷

And she explains it.

“There is none besides you.”⁸

There is no other influence in the world that rivals God.

“There is no rock like our God.”⁹

The nations round about Israel, they call their gods the rock. But she says, “You know, their rocks, their gods are unstable. They are not dependable. They will rise and they will

⁵ 1 Samuel 2:2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

fall. They will come and they will go, but you, oh Lord, you are the only rock there is. You are the only source of stability and security in the whole wide world.”

No God like our God. That is what grips her life.

And the effect of knowing that there is no God like our God on a person, on an individual, she spells out in verse three. It is to leave us humble it is to leave us with our mouths shut. It is to leave us not doing the kind of thing that this foolish man was doing when he was making his predictions, not speculating above his pay grade, not going where we are not supposed to go. Why? Because we talk no more very proudly in the arrogance of our mouths. Why? Because only the Lord is the God of knowledge. He is the only one who really, really knows and in the end of the day he is the one who will weight our actions whether in what we do or what we say or what we think or what we sing. We obey him and follow him.

So it leads to humility in the life of the individual.

Well, the second thing that we see is that she then goes on in verses four to eight to expand this.

She says, “Well, if that is true in my little life, I think it is true in my little life because this is the way God is. This is how he acts generally in the world.”

And that is the central section of this passage.

“The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.”¹⁰

What is she saying there? Well, she is very simply saying that God is the God who changes circumstances. God had changed her circumstances. She had come barren. Now she has a baby. She was being criticized and being made a fool of, but now her critic has been silenced.

And that is what God does in the world generally. He silences his enemies. He silences our adversaries. He reverses things. He chooses the poor and the weak and the insignificant of this world and he exalts them. He chose Israel. Israel was nothing. He chose Israel and he set his love on Israel not because they were more numerous than anybody else or better than anyone else, but because the Lord loved them.

And as I look around this room and I look at us I say, “Isn’t it amazing that God should choose us and he should call us to himself, that he should set his love upon us?”

And maybe you are here this morning and you feel insignificant. And I want to say, “Look, this is what God does for people like us.” He acts in power. He acts in grace. He

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 2:4-5.

exalts whom he will. He casts down whom he will. He raises up the fallen. He strengthens the weary. This is how God acts generally in the world.

Look at the way he acts towards his enemies. He breaks their bows and he gives strength to the... That is the kind of God we worship. We are surrounded by forces of secularism, Atheism, false religion.

The Church of Jesus Christ very often feels itself hemmed in by these enemies, but what does the Bible say?

“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed.”¹¹

What does the Lord say?

He says, “Who are you kidding?”

I paraphrase.

“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.”¹²

That is how he operates. He allows men in his arrogance to strut his stuff on the stage of history for a little time and then he says the Word and it all ends.

This God is in charge of history.

And she goes further. Do you notice in verse six she says everything in my life and your life is in the hands of this God.

“The LORD kills and brings to life,”¹³ she says. That is an interesting insight because here is a lady who lives before the resurrection of Jesus, but she has worked out this, that if God is king that means God is in charge of everything. That means there is nothing that happens in my life or your life, there is nothing that occurs in history that occurs outside of the orbit of his will or his purposes or his plans. And if that is true, if God so orders life that the bad things that happen are in his hands, then guess what? The same God can reserve those bad things in a mega sense. If he took my barrenness and made me fruitful, God can take my deadness and bring life out of deadness. Here is the logic of faith working. Here is the logic of a believer who has begun to understand the workings of God in her life and she is seeing this is what God can do.

Now very often we think when we read these Old Testament believers that they didn't understand as much as we do and that is true. On one level they didn't understand all that

¹¹ Psalm 2:1-2.

¹² Psalm 2:4.

¹³ 1 Samuel 2:6.

we understand, of course not, because of where they are in the unfolding story of the Bible.

But to this one and that one in the Old Testament there is granted the insight to see that God can even raise the dead.

Of course, we look back and we say, “Well, yes, of course. God raised our Jesus from the dead.”

Here is this woman and she says, you know, this is perfectly within the orbit of God’s will that he might raise the dead. And if God can raise the dead, you need to know that in your circumstances, in your life he is in charge, that these things don’t happen by accident, that your life in all its ways is in the hands of God to teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Oh, she uses language here that you can go and revert to over and over again whenever you feel that you are under pressure, that God turns things around.

John Calvin once reflected on these very words in his own experience. His wife Idelette had died and he was writing to his friend William Farel and he wrote this.

“May the Lord Jesus support me under this heavy affliction which would certainly have destroyed me had not he who raises up the prostrate, strengthens the weak and refreshes the weary stretch forth his hand from heaven to help me.”

Now you can find that in your own life and own experience.

Hannah is saying, “That is how it was for me. That is how God is. God lifts up the fallen. He supports the weak.”

But there is a third thing here that you need to see and that is that Hannah is also given the insight to see how God works ultimately. She sees beyond herself, beyond the way God is working within history to see how God is going to work towards the end of history in these last verses.

And as you read these verses I want you to notice that she emphasizes several things here. First of all that God will guard the feet of his faithful ones, that is, of his believing ones, his believing people.

Now if you are a believer today then you can come to this and find comfort there. God will guard his believing people. She couldn’t have explained to you the perseverance of the saints. She couldn’t have explained to you the doctrine that God guards those who are in Christ and does not let them fall. She couldn’t have quoted to you the words of the Lord Jesus, “No one will ever snatch them out of my Father’s hand,” but she saw the heart of what all that means. God will guard the feet of his faithful ones.

But the wicked he will cut off. There is a warning today, isn't there, for you if you are not a Christian, if you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus. There is a warning for you. And I urge you to take that warning seriously. He will guard the feet of his faithful ones.

And then a second thing in verse 10.

“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven.”¹⁴

There is this coming again which all these people who arrogantly thumb their nose at God, pour out their abuse against God. There is coming a day when God himself will deal with them and it will not be a good day. It will not be a good day for the world. It will be a day of vengeance of our God. The Bible says that.

You know, we live within, between these times and the word for believers here, the word for Christian people now in this age is this. Don't take revenge, my friends. Don't be vengeful. Why? Because vengeance belongs to God. And when the day comes for vengeance, it won't be you or I or the Church. It will be God in Christ who will bring vengeance on his enemies.

And then she takes us to the high point in her insight. And this is a thing that is going to shape the future of the story of the Bible. This is where Hannah is so unique in the Bible. She sees that all of this that is coming, all of this ultimate stuff that is going to happen long term in the future of the history of the world is going to be focused on God's King. The Lord is going to do it, she says. The Lord's King is going to do it. You see.

“He will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed.”¹⁵

Now I want you to notice that her song is bracketed by this expression “The horn or the strength.” She has talked about her strength in her own experience, her horn of power that she feels empowered by God through God's intervention in her life. Now she is looking to another and she is saying there is coming a day when real power, real strength, the horn of the king, the focus of his power and his energy will be unleashed upon the world. The Lord will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed, his Messiah.

So she ends her song, you see, by pointing us into the future.

Now I said at the end of the book of Samuel, the end of 2 Samuel David picks up this very theme. He sees the connection. He sees that Hannah was led to see that the solution to the problem of leadership in Israel was God's problem and God was going to solve it his way.

¹⁴ 1 Samuel 2:10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

At the end of the day at that time, the answer to the leadership problem in Israel was the raising up of King David, but even King David, for all his usefulness in the service of God, was a fallen man. He was a sinful man. He was disqualified in various levels. He wasn't the Lord's Messiah in the ultimate sense. And it is King David who in the book of Psalms, for example, gives us the vocabulary which was started by Hannah and expanded by David that helps us to understand that God is the King of the universe. He is the King of everything and that God's Messiah is to be the King, that all the nations are to be given to him, that all the nations of the world will be his inheritance and that he will ultimately crush all his adversaries and that he will reign from shore to shore and from the river to the ends of the earth, God's King.

Hannah saw that clearly for the first time.

That is why her story is in the Bible. But I suggest to you there is another why her story is in the Bible. We started off, didn't we, thinking about this fact. Here is Hannah and she gives up her son. I don't think there is a mom here who would do it or if you could become a mom you wouldn't do that. You wouldn't do what she did. But she does it and she does it with rejoicing because she has learned to see that her little life is part of the bigger picture of God's purposes.

I said that is not something you should copy. It is unique in the Bible, nearly unique in the Bible. For there is another young mom in the Bible who found her comfort in Hannah's story. We know this. And where do you look? If God this time comes to you and he says you are going to have a son, but he is not going to be yours, at least you can't keep him. He is going to be God's King. And he is going to be taken away from you and your heart is going to be shot through with all sorts of sorrows and griefs, because though you will have him, you won't have him.

Where do you go to when that is what God is saying?

Well, if you are a believer, you go to the Bible, don't you? And Mary, that other young mom, went to the story of Hannah and she said, "Well, Hannah in the Bible understands my unique place. She had to give up her young boy. She did it voluntarily. I am not going to be able to do it voluntarily, but my, I am going to lose him." And she needed to see the story in its bigger picture.

And when Mary is reflecting, you see, on what she has to do in her life, she finds in Hannah the comfort that she needs. And you can hear Mary's song, because she sings as well. And she sings, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."¹⁶

Mary's song leans heavily on Hannah's song, because Mary found in Hannah's words the framework that she needed to understand the bigger thing that God was doing, because her son was going to be your King and my King, King Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords who will one day be assured of this.

¹⁶ Luke 1:46-47.

Be assured also I don't know the day, but be assured of this. He will bring his adversaries to nothing and he will exalt his people in the day of his power.

Let us pray together.

Father, we pray that you would take your Word and apply it as medicine to our hearts, comfort to our souls, strength to our will. And we pray that you would use us in the world for your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.