

A Prayer Answered

- Recap story so far...
- God's answers to prayer not only deal with our needs, they also serve to increase our love for him.
 - the Psalmist says in Psalm 116:1-2 'I love the Lord, because he hears my voice and my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me I will call on him as long as I live.'
 - God's faithfulness affirms us in our faith in his continuing goodness to us.
- So, Hannah became a happy mother
 - but her happiness did not obliterate from her mind the promise she had made to give her son to God's service in the tabernacle
 - however she did not take Samuel to Shiloh until he was ready to be left with Eli when he was about three years old

A Promise Kept

- When Hannah presents little Samuel to Eli she stressed that he was asked for:
 - a more literal rendering of 1:27-28 is: 'For this boy I asked, and the Lord has given my asking which I asked from him; I now give him back what was asked of the Lord; all the days he lives he is one that is asked of the Lord.'
 - it's a play on what 'Samuel' means - 'asked of the Lord'
 - it also echoes Eli's blessing in verse 17, literally, 'May the God of Israel give you the asking which you asked from him.'
- Now a bit of Hebrew!
 - the root sha-al is in Samuel's name ('Shemu-el')
 - in verse 28 it takes the form sha-ul ('given' or 'lent') and is the same as the first king, Saul (Sha-ul)
 - it conveys the idea that Samuel is the true national leader - the true 'given'
 - particularly over against Saul, the one the people wanted
- The idea of a mother handing over her three-year-old son is hard to take
 - but in our modern society what is even worse is the cost to Samuel deprived of a normal family upbringing
 - we have to realise that this is not a model situation
 - it is unique... Samuel is special
- Yet at the same time, Hannah's making over Samuel to the Lord is what all parents ought to do
 - our children are ours, but it is more important that they should be his - this is Hannah's prayer, it should be ours
 - it doesn't matter about anything else - what job they get, where they live - this one thing is paramount, that they are the Lord's

A Song Sung

- In her song of thanksgiving (2:1-10) Hannah also gives a view of the Kingdom of God
 - a thousand years later when the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was announced, Mary based her song (the Magnificat Luke 1:46-55) on Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving
 - in the course of her praise Hannah moves from the particular - her own experience - to the general
 - what the Lord had done for her simply demonstrated his ways
 - in the first three verses Hannah expresses her great joy over the relief the Lord brought to her in her distress
 - v.2 is a confession of her faith and in verse 3 she issues an admonition
 - it is not particularly directed at Peninnah because the word 'your' is plural
 - however, it is a warning to all self-sufficient boasters
 - what Hannah has experienced is what we might call 'micro-salvation'

- the way the Lord delivered her, the Lord does on global terms - vs.4-8 express this
- when any of his people are being crushed and are ready to drop the Lord gives strength
- In effect Hannah is saying, I was barren, the Lord made me fruitful; I was poor and he made me rich... (vs.1-3)
 - but this is not really surprising because that's the way he is! (vs.4-8)
- **And then the horizon broadens in verses 9 and 10:**
 - Hannah has moved from **how it was for her**, **what it is like for all God's people now**, to **what it will be like when the Lord's Kingdom comes on earth**
 - the Lord's grand finale is to deliver his covenant people
 - his enemies and our enemies will be shattered
 - the Lord will judge the ends of the earth
- Now Hannah expects this to happen through the Lord's king (v.10) - his anointed one - if she'd lived long enough to see them crowned, through Saul or David or ...
 - this leads some scholars to think that this must have been added later because there was no king in Hannah's time
 - but there are a number of pointers to a king coming long before
 - Abraham was told that some of his descendents would be kings
 - Moses was given directions about choosing a king and of his duties

A Conclusion Drawn

- These opening verses of 1 Samuel are not just a nice story introducing Samuel
 - they show us what is going to happen
 - **the Lord rules and will bring in his kingdom**
 - Hannah is a **thumbnail icon** of his greater work
 - so, every time God lifts you out of the miry bog and sets you on a rock it's a down payment of what he is working towards in human history
- Do you wear a wedding ring?
 - that ring is a token - a sign - of your partner's love for you
 - it's only a sign
 - it's not the love itself
 - the real thing is much greater than the sign
 - but nevertheless you don't despise the ring and sell it in a car boot sale because it is not the real thing!!
- The little works of God are not to be despised either
 - he is giving you a trailer of the big picture!
 - we should be comforted by God's little works in our lives
 - the Lord drove Hannah to pray in her distress to bring forth a lad who would shield all his people.
- **Pray on - the Lord is at work!**