

Title: Promise Kept: A Sweet Surrender
Text: 1 Samuel 1:21-28
Theme: Trusting God that your kid will make a difference
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmt: Amazing Grace demands a generous faith.

Read Text:

It is easy to see at birthdays and Christmas. A child is given a gift. A child is **given** a gift. The child did not pay for the gift or work for it. It is given to the child. But what is freely given is immediately owned. It is mine. Another child may want to see it, touch it, even play with it and in some cases, take it. It is natural for us to respond to God's grace in our lives with a sense of entitlement or selfishness. For years Hannah suffered in the silence of being childless. While her husband had children with Peninnah, it is clear that he loved her and to that degree he suffered with her. But now, after this painfully long time, Hannah conceives and bears a son. For the first time, Hannah is a mom.

It's fun to watch first time parents, unless of course, you are the first-time parent. It is also no secret that the longer you go without children, the more you are inclined to indulge your child when he or she comes along. Years ago, the orphanages in Russia were a steady source of children for parents in the U.S. who were looking to adopt. I would often be on a plane with them from NY to Moscow. They were excited and because they were generally a little older and a little more established, they brought with them about every toy and whistle you could think of for a child. They were prepared. They were ready. This was going to be incredible. They were going to get their child. They were going to get their child from an orphanage and they were going to bring this child, like Annie back to a setting where the child would sing songs of admiration, and set the table and clean up dishes without asking and spend the rest of his or her life extolling the amazing kindness of his parents. Isn't that how adopting works?

Then, I would see them on the flight back from Moscow to NY. Did you know that some children have the capacity to scream for 12 hours? At the beginning of the flight, these newly baptized parents were bringing out every treat, every toy, every gadget they had in an effort to calm their little one and it wasn't working. At the beginning of the flight, these parents were protective, hovering, committed to be calming and soothing. About 8 hours later they were giving their kid away to anyone. If Hannah was indulgent, we would understand. If Hannah reconsidered her promise to give Samuel to the Lord, or promised to give the next one to the Lord, we would not be surprised. After all, it is easy to give something back to the Lord that you don't have. Hannah, however, does not appear to second guess her commitment at all. Her focused faith is captivating. This is an amazing woman. No wonder she was an amazing mother. She responded to the amazing grace of God in her life with a generous faith that the Lord used to help change the world. Hannah's story is such a sweet and tender reminder of how God so often uses the tenacious faith of the overlooked and marginalized to accomplish the extraordinary. But, why did Hannah want a child so badly? After all...

1. This is not the time to be raising a family.

Do you remember the book of Judges? Not just the stories of Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and Samson, but do you remember how the book is summarized in chapters 19-21? Here is what chapter 19.1 says, *“In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a certain Levite was sojourning in the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim....”* Now compare that to 1 Samuel 1.1. Elkanah (who was a Levite) was *“of the hill country of Ephraim.”* Judges 19 is the story of the Levite, who’s concubine was raped to death by the men of Gibeah because they were angry that they could not have sex with him. The Levite was staying that night in the home of another man who was from the hill country of Ephraim (Judges 19.16). This event, which triggered a civil war which almost destroyed the tribe of Benjamin was a picture of what life was like in Israel. When we read about the design of the Tabernacle in Exodus and the function of the Tabernacle and Levites in Exodus and Leviticus, it is common to assume that this is how things were. In other words, in the midst of all of this mess in the country, there was at least this place, this spot in Shiloh, where the faithful few, the remnant of godly people could still come and offer their sacrifices and renew their commitment to follow God. And, to a degree there was some of that, but we don’t even get out of the 2nd chapter when we find out the sons of the high priest, who served with their dad at the Tabernacle, were fornicating with all the women they could.

Israel was idolatrous, morally corrupt and violent. What kind of a world do you want to raise your children in? I’m guessing that most of you do not want it to be like that. But, if you are waiting for this world to be a good place or for this country to be morally sane before you have children, you will never have children. Humanly speaking, this is not the time to be raising a family. Or is it? Thank God, that is not how Hannah saw it. Now, I am giving away a little bit of the story, but I do not want you to think that Hannah is only grieved that she was never able to have a child – and that’s it. When you read what Hannah says in verse 22, her resolve in v.28 and what she prays in chapter 2, it is very clear that Hannah realizes that her situation is so much bigger than whether or not she will have a baby. I am convinced from the text that she is grieved because she does not yet have the opportunity to raise up a soldier for the army of God to be a force for good in this present and growing darkness. For Hannah and I would argue for Elkanah as well, while they were grieved over the darkness, the darkness was not a reason to not have children, it revealed an urgent need to have children and to raise them to confront it.

I fear that for many of you, your view of parenting is defined by America instead of God. The goal is not to get a good job, buy a nice house, and have a nice retirement with toys. We need parents who will raise warriors for the gospel to live as lighthouses in the darkness and who are willing to give up what they cannot keep in order to gain what they cannot lose.

2. God loves to use faithful husbands. (21-23a)

A. **This is a godly husband.** “only may the LORD establish his word.”

Elkanah was from the tribe of Levi, but he lived in Ephraim. The men of Ephraim did not have a good reputation. In Judges 1 they fail to follow through on the Lord’s directives. In Judges 8 and

Judges 11 they are presented as hot-heads who are easily offended and perceive to be slighted and disrespected. They look for reasons to be angry.

To the men: Brothers, the culture is in rebellion to God. This world, the flesh and the devil hate God and is hell-bent on resisting his rule. Therefore, we recognize that the attempt at rejecting gender distinctions and gender roles, and the historical, logical and biblical definition of marriage is nothing more than our world trying to collectively flip God the bird. It doesn't matter how many voices scream this; you can't change it. Babies are born as male or female. That's DNA. You may get a court to say that two men can be legally married, but two men cannot give birth to a baby without some really funky medical stuff going on. And two women cannot conceive a child without somehow getting a male involved. Now, part of the fallout in all of this insanity is the attempt at blurring the God-given roles of men and women, husbands and wives. We've witnessed this for years in commercials, sit-coms and movies. The man is passive, ignorant and immature. We hate that caricature. But what it has done is set up people for a reaction. In response to that passivity, indecisive, complacent, basement-living, video-game playing, rudder-less, hollow, mindless goon, people are drawn to the tough, demanding, in-your-face, who gives a rip figure who mocks political correctness by shocking and at times destroying people. This is a man's man! This is what our church needs. We need a pastor like this! This is what our country needs. We need a president like this. This is what our homes need. We need husbands like this! You don't ask your wife for permission – you tell her what is going to happen. Your children obey you.

And there is some truth in that. Wives are to respect their husbands. That is biblical. That is godly. Children are to obey their parents. That is biblical. But what I am getting at is this. What is a man's man? What is the ultimate definition of a man? When the Bible tells husbands how to love their wives, what is the ultimate example of that? It is Jesus.

B. This is a tender and supportive husband. "do what seems best to you"

He is not threatened by Hannah's commitments, but rather participates whole-heartedly in them. He loves her. He sees the evidence of God's grace in her life and he supports her decision and her vow. In spite of the challenging situation in the home, the relationship between Elkanah and Hannah is consistently presented as one of tenderness and trust. Hannah is not damaged goods and unimportant because she can't have a child. She is not marginalized by her husband, which may have been encouraging to Hannah who may have wondered if she had been marginalized by God.

Why do you love me if I can't bear you a child? Why do you stick with me? I have cancer. Why are you faithful to me, when there are more attractive women in the world? Why would you love me, when my family is so dysfunctional? Why would you stay around when everyone has walked out on me?

Look at how Elkanah is portrayed in this text. He is faithful. He is tender. He is supportive. He sees and supports the faith of his wife. Samuel is his son too. If Samuel was going to be given to

the Lord at the Tabernacle, Elkanah had to be in agreement, and he was. Elkanah had an amazing wife and he was not intimidated by it, he helped put air in her wings of faith. Look at the relationship between verses 22 and 23. Is Hannah giving Elkanah an order in v.22? Was that presented as a directive as if Elkanah had to do what she said? I don't think so. When you read his response in verse 23, he is affirming her desire, her wish, her counsel and he is blessing it. Elkanah shows complete faith in his wife. Do what seems best to you, but this is not a passive, "I don't care, do whatever you want to do" thing. Oh no! Elkanah is very engaged. He recognizes what is going on. He says, (and I think this is a very telling statement) "only, may the LORD establish his word."

Husbands, I want to ask you some questions and I want all of the single guys to listen carefully.

- Does your wife know that you love her? Another way of asking that would be, does your wife feel loved by you? I'm going to push you a little more. On a scale of 1-10 rate yourself on how much your wife feels loved by you with 1 being, she does not feel it at all, in fact she feels hostility from you, to 10 being, she is consistently surrounded and reminded of your love for her. Give yourself a number. Now, before the day is over, ask your wife to rate you. If you give yourself an 8 and she gives you a 2, that may explain a few things, right?
- Related to that would be this question. Does your wife know that you are for her? You support her? You want to see her thrive? When she has a good idea does she feel excited about sharing it with you because she is fairly sure that you welcome that sort of thing? Does your wife know that you have faith in her? Or do you consistently pick at her faults, expose her weaknesses, remind her of her failures and generally make her feel as a commodity that is not all that valuable?

I was talking to a group of pastors this week and I said that for pastors it is easy to look at how my marriage serves my ministry, when my marriage is my ministry. Brothers, the reason that pastors have to be mindful of that is because this is a challenge for all husbands. It is so natural to look at how my marriage serves my life instead of realizing that my marriage is my platform to serve. Jesus is the ultimate husband. We, the church, are his wife. There is no question that he is the leader, but how does he lead? He dies for his wife. He washes her feet. He loves her, forgives her, provides for her, listens to her, supports her, cherishes her and stays near her. And in that atmosphere of love, support, grace and provision – she thrives! Men, that is the vision!

3. **God loves to use faith-focused women.** (22-28a)

Hannah is clearly the focus of this story. She is the one who articulates the plan, the vision, the desire, and feels so much of the weight of the sacrifice as well as joy. That becomes very clear. This commitment on the part of Hannah is not born out of being caught between a rock and hard place. This is not the frustrated resignation of the person who tells God that God has left him with no other choice. This is not a God pushing Hannah down, demanding that she give up her dream for a child and demanding that she give the child to him. Oh no! This is a woman

who tells God that if he does this miracle, this amazing act of grace that she will do everything that she can to make sure that no one ever forgets it. She wanted her world to know that God is her God and her God remembered her. That's what God does. He cares for the weak, the needy, the overlooked and marginalized. But what kind of a response could she make that would, at least to some degree reflect the magnitude of God's grace to her? She settles on it. She will give her son to the Lord to serve him at the Tabernacle. Elkanah is from the tribe of Levi, so that works, but greater still is this. What is a little boy doing living at the tabernacle? Where are his parents? Where else and how else would this story be heard potentially throughout the tribes of Israel?

A. Hannah realized that this life matters for the next life. (22b)

"I will bring him, so that (purpose clause) he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever." What does that sound like? The 23rd Psalm, right? And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Forever is a very long time.

Beloved, I want to talk to you about American Christianity vs. Biblical Christianity.

American

Jesus will help you get good grades.

Jesus will help your soccer team win.

Jesus will help you get accepted into a good college.

Jesus will help you not do bad stuff that could mess up your future.

Jesus will help you find a good job

Jesus will help you find a good spouse, a nice house, get a good retirement, and raise kids who can get good grades, be on good soccer teams, go to good colleges, not do bad stuff, etc.

Compare that to Biblical Christianity

What happens if your kid reads the Bible and reads that Jesus tells him to lay down everything, take up his cross and follow him? What happens if the fact that there are people in language groups in the world who have never heard about Jesus and your kid can't sleep at night because his heart is exploding over their lostness? What happens when your kid says, mom, dad, I need to give up this respected career here in the states, but go in undercover in a country that is hostile to Christianity, because there are sheep there who have to hear the shepherds voice? How do you respond to that? Do you say, are you kidding me? Can't someone else do that? Are you going to take MY grandchildren away from me like that? You might as well stab me in the heart and let me die now. Let the missionaries do that stuff. We can give a couple of extra dollars for them to do that. Why you? Or do you say? I have prayed for that! I have prayed for you to live your life consumed for the glory of God, no matter what. Here, somewhere else, it does not matter. I will miss you like crazy, but I will rejoice that the ultimate mission is being advanced through you. How you answer that depends on how you pray for them. What do you pray for, for your kids? Do you pray for them to lay it all down for Jesus, no matter what that

means? Do you pray with open hands or do you pray an American, tight-grip, keep them close, my comfort, best life now, kind of prayer?

We are tempted to look at this based on what Hannah is “losing.” Hannah, seriously, how could you even consider giving up your little son like that? You can’t facetime, text, email, call, or even visit other than once a year. But Hannah does not seem to look at this based on what she is losing, but based on what she has already gained. If she has a son from the Lord, then does it not make sense to give him back?

B. Hannah knows where her child came from. (27)

Look at verse 27. “For this child I prayed and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him.” I love what Bill Arnold said. *“Having come to God with nothing, she now returns to Shiloh to give back that which means everything.”*

C. Hannah knows what her mission is. (28)

Her mission is to live for the glory of God. That means that whatever the Lord gives her, it is be used somehow for him. There is a resolve and a permanence to her resolve. “I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.” Hannah, what are you saying? I am saying that this boy that I prayed for, conceived, loved, birthed, sang to, nursed, and cared for, is not mine to keep. He is the Lord’s and that is my mission.

“And he worshiped the LORD there.” This is the first of several statements that show the progression of Samuel’s life. (2.11b, 2.21b, 3.19) The LORD is not done with Hannah as we will see. But her part now begins to fade and by the middle of chapter 2, the focus moves from Hannah to Samuel, where it stays for a long time. She completed her mission.

This sermon has 3 points. The first one was the setting and the next two focus on the commendable characteristics of a husband and a wife in contrast to that setting. But, look at how I worded points 2 and 3. “God loves to use...” Elkanah and Hannah are the characters that we see, but God is the One who is really the primary mover. Elkanah is loving, God is faithful. Hannah is faithful and hopeful, God is powerful and faithful. The nation of Israel is in a terrible place. She desperately needs a new direction, and new life. What hope is there for her? What hope is there for you? There is a faithful and powerful God who will act on your behalf and in fact, has already acted. In some ways Elkanah reminds me of Joseph. In many ways, Hannah points to Mary. In even more ways, Samuel points to Jesus because ultimately, Israel and you and me, need Jesus.