

~AT HOME WORSHIP~

13th December 2020



Advent Series: Extraordinary Women of the Bible

Hannah

Preparation

Take some time to settle yourself, have your sheet in front of you and any technical things ready for listening to or watching the song videos. Allow yourself time to be at peace knowing that God is in your midst, guiding, comforting and encouraging you. You are not alone.

The prayers for today focus on Advent 3 and the Gospel reading from John and the reflection focuses on Hannah, one of the Extraordinary Women of the Bible as part of our Advent theme.

Hymn/Song: The Candle Song by Graham Kendrick

<https://youtu.be/TGAXIGBB10M>

Like a candle flame
Flickering small in our darkness
Uncreated light
Shines through infant eyes

God is with us, alleluia (Men)
God is with us, alleluia (Women)
Come to save us, alleluia (Men)
Come to save us (Women)
Alleluia! (All)

Stars and angels sing
Yet the earth sleeps in shadows
Can this tiny spark
Set a world on fire?

Yet his light shall shine
From our lives, Spirit blazing
As we touch the flame
Of his holy fire

Graham Kendrick
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Opening Prayer

Come, let us rejoice before God.
Let us honour the name of the Most High.
God has looked on us, and brought us
to be a people of light celebrating the light.
Our souls magnify God:
blessed is the name of God for ever.
Let us lift up holy hands and be glad.
Amen.

Some of us are weary or downhearted.
Still we say: let our hearts be glad,
God is always here.
Let us approach God with confidence,
because God has always been with us.
Let our hearts be glad!
Amen.

Prayer for the Day

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Saying Sorry

Forgive us, Lord, when we do not look for your coming and do not notice the ways in which you reach out to us. Forgive us, and give us eyes to see that you come to us through the desert, and through the fields of corn; through the crowds, and through the empty places; through temple courts, and through refugee camps; through the busyness of our lives, and the emptiness of our hearts; when we are weak, and when we are strong. You come to us at Advent and at Christmas. Forgive us, Lord, when we do not see that you have come to us.

Amen.

Saying Sorry – Children’s Prayer

John the Baptist didn’t try to steal the limelight. He said Jesus was greater than him. Forgive us, Lord, when we want to be the centre of attention. Help us to be humble, for that is when our light shines brightest.
Amen.

BIBLE READINGS



John 1:6-8, 19-28

⁶ God sent his messenger, a man named John, ⁷ who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light.

John the Baptist's Message

¹⁹ The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent some priests and Levites to John to ask him, “Who are you?”

²⁰ John did not refuse to answer, but spoke out openly and clearly, saying: “I am not the Messiah.”

²¹ “Who are you, then?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“No, I am not,” John answered.

“Are you the Prophet?” they asked.

“No,” he replied.

²² “Then tell us who you are,” they said. “We have to take an answer back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³ John answered by quoting the prophet Isaiah:

“I am ‘the voice of someone shouting in the desert: Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!’”

²⁴ The messengers, who had been sent by the Pharisees, ²⁵ then asked John, “If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?”

²⁶ John answered, “I baptize with water, but among you stands the one you do not know. ²⁷ He is coming after me, but I am not good enough even to untie his sandals.”

²⁸ All this happened in Bethany on the east side of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

1 Samuel 1:1-28 (Focus on Hannah)

Samuel's Birth and Dedication

¹ There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

³ Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. ⁴ On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; ⁵ but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶ Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. ⁷ So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰ She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. ¹¹ She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

¹² As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴ So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." ¹⁵ But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." ¹⁷ Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." ¹⁸ And she said, "Let your servant find favour in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

¹⁹ They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."

²¹ The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. ²² But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time." ²³ Her husband Elkanah 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. ²⁴ 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. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. ²⁵ Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. ²⁸ Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD."

She left him there for the LORD.

REFLECTION TIME



Short Reflection by Revd Teresa Townsend

Children may choose to use the Activity and Colouring Sheet

When preparing today's reflection, I was struck by how little we really know about some of the amazing women from the Bible, so it is inspiring to spend some time hearing the stories of women such as Lydia and Rahab that we have already focused on, Mary and Anna to come and this week it is the turn of Hannah.

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah from Ramathaim. Hannah was unable to have children but Elkanah loved her deeply. His heart was for her, but as was the custom of the day, it was important for him to have many children to continue his family line and therefore took Peninnah as a second wife. Peninnah had many children for him and taunted Hannah repeatedly about her success. Hannah felt bereft and tormented that she could not have a baby.

She could have railed against God, blaming him for not granting her a child, but her frustration actually turned her more towards God – she was persistent in prayer and went to pray earnestly to God to grant her a son, one that she would be able to offer back to him in service for all of his life. Her focus was entirely on offering to God this desire, praying silently and deeply to him. She could do this because she knew he was already in her heart; she was already in relationship with him and she trusted him.

Hannah prayed for a son and knew from the outset that she would give him up in service to God. She wasn't being tested – she had received a gift. Her prayer was granted and she gave birth to Samuel and she kept him with her until he was weaned. She then took him to the tabernacle and into the care of Eli, the high priest. Her early nurture of Samuel kept him focused on the service to God that she had promised and he grew well.

So how does her devote prayer, consistency of faith and her sacrifice speak to us today? Hannah's story, when told, may still focus on the fact that she is the mother of Samuel and it is because of him that she has a role to play, but if we dig a little deeper we can see that in fact, Hannah is a child of God first and foremost and her heart is focused on serving him fully and completely. Because of the time that she was living in, her serving was by producing a son that would give honour to God and would fulfil her sense of calling. But she wanted to serve him. She worshipped God regularly by going with Elkanah and their household to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices at the tabernacle.

Each one of us, female or male, young or not so young, have the opportunity to live a life that is devoted to God. Finding opportunities to serve God that is faithful and consistent may also be sacrificial. Hannah prayed earnestly to God. Her prayer was answered in time. I cannot imagine the emotion she would have felt when leaving Samuel at the Tabernacle, but she had always known she was going to do so. She knew that her serving would include sacrifice. Her self-worth was therefore not wrapped up in the blanket of motherhood but in her willingness to give to God her most precious gift. I wonder what we would be willing to pray for earnestly, to offer sacrificially and know that God is at the heart of all?

When life becomes difficult and there is no way forward, as Hannah found when Peninnah joined the family, it is easy to turn in on ourselves, become self-focused and distant from God. Hannah's gift to us, through her story, is to know that we can lay all our burdens at the altar and our loads can be lightened. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you". This verse reminds us that even our deepest worries can be laid at the altar.

Whilst we may not get an answer to prayer straight away or in the way in which we would like it, it does not mean that God has not lightened our burden. Like Hannah, we too can know him deeply in our hearts and feel our burdens lightened by being in his presence. And we can show others what it means to be a part of his kingdom here on earth by living our lives prayerfully and faithfully.

To finish, I would like to recommend to you the beginning of the next chapter of 1 Samuel. Chapter 2 v1-10 is Hannah's Prayer. It speaks of her thanks, the favour that had been given to her by God and gives a glorious account of who God is and what he can do for us. *Amen.*



Family Song (optional)

<https://youtu.be/0K3TUFFpmhA> Our God is a Great Big God

Time for Prayer

In the Gospel passage, we read that when people were praying for the Messiah to come, the Messiah was already among them. We never need to look for God, as if God is not already here. We need to turn to God who is always here, always ready, always listening. Take time to listen to the breath, to the heart that is always beating, knowing that as surely as the heart beats, God is always with us. For Hannah, she knew to pray earnestly and to give God the fullness of her heart and to lay her burden down to her.

Take some time to pray quietly for the world and for our nation; for those who are struggling during this time in body, mind and spirit and for the burdens we still hold on to. Then, if you wish, pray the following prayer:

God of all truth and all integrity,
may those in the shadows of despair
be blessed with the light of hope;
may those in the shadows of exhaustion
be blessed with the light of rest;
may those in the shadows of slavery
be blessed with the light of empowerment;

May those in the shadows of loneliness
be blessed with the light of companionship;
may those in the shadows of grief
be blessed with the light of comfort;
and may all your people, tempted by the
shadows of pride,
be blessed with the light of humility.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

Hymn/Song – Light of the World (Lauren Daigle)

<https://youtu.be/OhumxpITH9I>

The world waits for a miracle
The heart longs for a little bit of hope
O come, O come, Emmanuel
A child prays for peace on earth
And she's calling out from a sea of hurt
O come, O come, Emmanuel
And can you hear the angels singing

Glory to the Light of the World
Glory, the Light of the World is here

The drought breaks with the tears of a mother
A baby's cry is the sound of love
Come down, come down, Emmanuel
He is the song for the suffering

He is Messiah, the Prince of Peace has come
He has come, Emmanuel

Glory to the Light of the World
Glory, the Light of the World is here

For all who wait, for all who hunger
For all who've prayed, for all who wonder
Behold your King, behold Messiah
Emmanuel, Emmanuel

Glory to the Light of the World
Glory to the Light of the World
Glory to the Light of the World
Glory, the Light of the World is here

Songwriters: Paul Mabury, Paul Duncan, Lauren Ashley Daigle

Closing Prayer

Gathered in, Lord, we have been nurtured by your Spirit of Life.
Now, sent out, we go in the assurance that your Word lasts for ever,
and your promises are true.
Let the lowly be lifted up.
Let the hungry be fed.
Let the mighty listen:
God, who is merciful, hears all.
Come, let us go in the blessed joy of God's kindness.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Dismissal

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore,
Amen.

God bless us as we



watch and wait

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