

Good morning and welcome to our podcast

We've been reading mainly gospel passages recently

Over the next few weeks we will be reading through the first half of the first book of Samuel.

We continue today with chapter 1.19 to chapter 2.8, the story of Samuel being dedicated to the Lord,

and coming to live full time in the Temple.

(pause)

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, you have made each of us unique!

And, what's more, you've joined us together in unique churches and communities!

We join in worship now and ask that you will meet each of us in a unique and special way,

helping to form us into the people you want us to be.

(pause)

Lord God, you made each of us unique and beloved.

You accept us just as we are, and want us to find our true identity.

In you, we can discover who we really are.

(pause)

We come to give thanks in all things;

to seek new perspective,

to find new strength.

(pause)

Jesus Christ,

Son of God,

help us today to find our hearts burning with a
fiery love and devotion to you,

So that, kneeling at your feet, we hear the
tender whisper of your call.

(pause)

Holy Spirit,

Wind of God,

open our minds to learn from Jesus,

That in listening we might hear,

And in hearing we might respond,

(pause)

Eternal God,

Creator,

Redeemer

and Comforter,

hear us as we confess our wrongdoings.

(pause)

Forgive us when the cross ceases to be the central focus of our faith and becomes a mere symbol, with little power to challenge.

And forgive us when we do all we can to avoid walking in your footsteps.

(pause)

In Jesus name we pray who taught us to pray saying

Our Father

Who art in Heaven

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation.

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever. **Amen**

1 Samuel 1.19 – 2.8 - The next morning Elkanah and his family got up early, and after worshiping the Lord, they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and the Lord answered her prayer. **20** So it was that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, and explained, "I asked the Lord for him." **21** The time came again for Elkanah and his family to go to Shiloh and offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and the special sacrifice he had promised. **22** But this time Hannah did not go. She told her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will take him to the house of the Lord, where he will stay all his life." **23** Elkanah answered, "All right, do whatever you think best; stay at home until you have weaned him. And may the Lord make your promise come true." So Hannah stayed at home and nursed her child. **24** After she had weaned him, she took him to Shiloh, taking along a three-year-old bull, a bushel of flour, and a leather bag full of wine. She took Samuel, young as he was,

to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. **25** After they had killed the bull, they took the child to Eli. **26** Hannah said to him, "Excuse me, sir. Do you remember me? I am the woman you saw standing here, praying to the Lord. **27** I asked him for this child, and he gave me what I asked for. **28** So I am dedicating him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he will belong to the Lord." Then they worshiped the Lord there.

Chapter 2 Hannah prayed: "The Lord has filled my heart with joy; how happy I am because of what he has done! I laugh at my enemies; how joyful I am because God has helped me! **2** "No one is holy like the Lord; there is none like him, no protector like our God. **3** Stop your loud boasting; silence your proud words. For the Lord is a God who knows, and he judges all that people do. **4** The bows of strong soldiers are broken, but the weak grow strong. **5** The people who once were well fed now hire themselves out to get food, but the hungry are hungry no more. The childless wife has borne seven children, but the mother of many is left with none. **6** The Lord kills and restores to life; he sends people to the world of the dead and brings them back again.

7 He makes some people poor and others rich; he humbles some and makes others great. **8** He lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from their misery. He makes them companions of princes and puts them in places of honor. The foundations of the earth belong to the Lord; on them he has built the world.

Sermon

What do you do when you get the thing you have wanted for so many years.

What does it feel like to at last own that possession.

Or be in the job you've always wanted

Or live in the place that you've always dreamed of.

Can you remember wanting something for ever and how you responded when you got it.

(pause)

Sometimes we respond badly.

It was enough just desiring the thing.

Having it is not always as good as wanting it.

Hannah had wanted a son for so long.

And shortly into this reading we hear of her planning to give him away.

"As soon as the child is weaned, I will take him to the house of the Lord, where he will stay all his life."

She is going to sacrifice the longed for son to service in God's house,

The house of the Lord.

(pause)

It really is quite shocking for us to read.

She was going to give up her precious son to God at such a young age.

And when we read the passage that comes before this we may even be wondering why she is doing this.

(pause)

That's not what is coming across in her promise to God.

She promises that she will dedicate her first born child to God his whole life.

She promises that he will never have his haircut –

That he will become a Nazarite – like Samson,

And all that that entails.

But nothing of what she says makes us think she will be giving him up to live in the temple basically his whole life.

(pause)

And when we think of it did she really have the right to make these promises on behalf of someone else.

Was it right that she in effect forces her son to live this austere life of a priest,

Separated at such a young age from his brothers and sisters.

Foregoing the love and care of his loving mother and father.

Only seeing them once a year when they bring him some new clothes.

‘Each year his mother would make a little robe and take it to him when she accompanied her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.’ **I Samuel 2.19**

(pause)

Earlier in chapter 1 we read of how Hannah prayed for a son.

Prayed that God would bless her with a longed for child.

And how she came to believe that prayer would be answered when Eli the priest blessed her.

"Go in peace,"

Eli said,

"and may the God of Israel give you what you have asked him for."

(pause)

Now we see her prayer being answered.

'So it was that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.'

And I'm sure that there was much rejoicing at the birth of this son.

Certainly a great deal of rejoicing on Hannah's part.

Maybe not so much by Peninnah.

She wouldn't be able to mock her co-wife anymore.

(pause)

God had answered Hannah's prayer and so she named him Samuel,

Meaning - "I asked the Lord for him."

(pause)

Hannah was given what she wanted.

And she promised to do what she had said she would,

To give her son back to the Lord who had given him to her.

"As soon as the child is weaned, I will take him to the house of the Lord, where he will stay all his life." **1 Samuel 1.22**

(pause)

She gave her son up as a living sacrifice.

She gave her son to become a worker in the Temple.

Not knowing that he would become a great and famous priest.

Not knowing that he would save the whole nation of Israel.

Save it from the useless family of Eli, whose sons amounted to nothing.

(pause)

Samuel grew up to become the leader of Israel,

Grew up to be a saviour of his people.

(pause)

As we read this story of Hannah and Samuel we cannot help but read parallels and contrasts in the story of Mary and Jesus.

See God at work in different ways in the two stories.

(pause)

Hannah childless eventually blessed with a child.

Mary,

Unmarried,

given a child by the Holy Spirit before she was even married.

(pause)

Hannah sacrificing her child,

Giving him up to become a priest.

Mary given no choice in the matter.

Her son is taken from her by God.

Sacrificed on a cross to save all people.

(pause)

Hannah's son Samuel becoming a great High Priest who unites the nation of Israel.

Saves the nation of Israel.

Mary's son Jesus becoming the one, true High Priest.

Who makes it possible for all people to come into Gods presence and worship Him.

(pause)

As so often we see God working in the lives of women.

See God working through the willingness of women to serve Him.

To be His servants.

(pause)

Hannah bargained with God,

Do this for me and I will do this.

But she had a willing, faithful heart.

She believed in and trusted in her loving heavenly Father.

Trusted Him not to desert her.

"Lord Almighty, look at me, your servant!

See my trouble and remember me!

Don't forget me!"

She was God's servant.

She willingly gave her life to the Lord Almighty.

(pause)

"I am the Lord's servant," said Mary;

"may it happen to me as you have said." **Luke 1.38**

Mary willingly gave her life to the Lord.

She saw herself as the Lord's servant.

That her life was to be lived for him.

Serving Him.

She was willing to give birth to this unique child.

This holy child who was to be called the Son of God.

“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you.

For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God.” **Luke 1.35**

(pause)

Are we willing to serve as these two women did?

Are we going to live our lives as faithfully as they did?

Whatever it costs us.

The loss of our firstborn son even.

(pause)

So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.

That's how Paul tells us we are to live in
Romans 12.1

Paul calls us to be a living sacrifice.

Just as Samuel was.

Just as Jesus became.

'Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God,'

(pause)

Can you do that?

What will it mean for you in your life to be a living sacrifice to God.

What might it mean for this congregation in light of the decision at the General Assembly to reduce the paid staff in the church by 40%

(pause)

You can't ignore what Paul says.

Can't ignore the great example of Hannah and Mary.

How are you going to live as a living sacrifice?

(pause)

‘Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion.’

Romans 12.11

Serve the Lord.

So often we just ignore messages like that.

We ignore what this means.

We think it can't mean what it says.

Serve the Lord.

Serve the Lord like Hannah did.

Giving up to God what she wanted most in all the world.

A son.

Giving up what she had always longed for,

A child of her own.

Giving him up to serve in the Lord's temple.

(pause)

Yes she was blessed with more children after Samuel was born.

But she didn't know that was going to happen.

Samuel might have been her one and only child.

But she was still willing to give him up in God's service.

(pause)

What are we willing to give up in God's service.

And are we willing even to serve God.

To be God's servant,

To do whatever he wants us to do.

To go wherever he wants us to go.

(pause)

Mary was willing.

An angel came and gave her the most amazing news.

Told her a crazy story.

But she willingly listened.

She tried not to be scared.

Mary offered her life up to God.

Gave herself heart and soul to God.

Offered herself as a living sacrifice for God to do with as He wished.

"I am the Lord's servant," said Mary; "may it happen to me as you have said." **Luke 1.38**

Can we say that.

Will we say that.

I am the Lord's servant.

Do with me as you will.

Can we say that as a church.

Will we say that as a church

We are the Lord's servant

Do with us as you will.

(pause)

Eli the priest didn't exactly live like that.

And his sons certainly didn't.

His sons,

though brought up as Priests,

brought up to serve the Lord in the Temple,

served only themselves.

Took whatever they wanted.

(pause)

They didn't care about serving the Lord,

They cared only about serving themselves.

And God ultimately punished them for the selfish, greedy lives they lived.

Killing all the young men in Eli's family,

As none of them willingly

Or honourably served Him.

(pause)

Samuel honourably served Him

Samuel grew up to willingly serve the Lord.

'As he grew he gained favour with both the Lord and with the people,'

We read in **1 Samuel 2.26**

Samuel willingly lived a life of service to God,

Even though that choice had been made for him by his mother, Hannah.

(pause)

‘Do not be proud, but accept humble duties.’

Romans 12.16

That’s what service is all about.

Not being proud,

But accepting humble duties.

Doing the most basic things to serve and care for others.

(pause)

Can we serve by doing humble duties.

Not wanting to be the boss and hold onto that position for as long as we can.

But instead be the servant.

Be the one who does all the real work.

And maybe doesn't get much thanks for it.

(pause)

We're not going to read out loud all the rest of chapter 2 of 1 Samuel in our service next week.

But it would be worth reading it before next Sunday.

As so much of it speaks to what we've thought about this morning.

Sacrificial service.

Samuel may not have chosen this life for himself but he willingly served.

He didn't live as Eli's sons did.

He didn't learn from their bad example.

He served the Lord faithfully

And did everything God wanted Him to do.

God chose Samuel to be his faithful servant.
'I will choose a priest who will be faithful to me
and do everything I want him to.'

1 Samuel 2.35

(pause)

God chooses us to be his faithful servants.

God has called us to serve him.

Are we willing to do it.

Will we listen to his call to us.

Will we respond like Samuel did.

Like Mary did.

As Hannah did.

Will we live the lives that Paul tells us is the
Christian way of living,

'Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God,

dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.

This is the true worship that you should offer.'

Amen.

Let us pray.

Father we want to live lives of service.

But we find it so hard.

(pause)

We want to live like Hannah.

Sacrificing the thing that was most important to her.

Her son Samuel.

Sacrificing him in your service.

(pause)

We want to live like Mary did.

Willingly serving you,

Willingly doing what you call us to do.

But we find it hard Father.

We learn from the world that it's best to serve ourselves,

To look out for number one,

To take care of ourselves not those who are in need.

(pause)

Help us Father to be your servants.

Help us Father to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to you.

(long pause)

Father we pray now for those that you want us to serve.

Show us who you want us to care for and support.

Help us to see those who need our love and our time. **(long pause)**

Father in this coming week help us to live lives of sacrifice.

May we put the needs of others before ourselves.

And may we rejoice in the opportunities that you give us to serve you.

(pause)

In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go into your week with your ears open to the sound of God's voice calling your name.

Go into your week with your eyes open to see the face of Jesus in unexpected places.

Go into your week with your heart open to receive the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Peace.