

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Expository Sermon

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THE MODEL OF MOTHERHOOD

Scripture Reading – 1 Samuel 1:4-18. 20, 24-28.

Introduction

At this time of the year we give our attention our mothers and the impact they have had upon our lives and express our gratitude to them. Mother's day is set aside to honor our mothers. We recognize that the sacrifice and love which we have received from them is incalculable. There is a mysterious intangible something about the word mother which registers a positive response in the heart of the child. One has said so well that the "Mother is the heartbeat of the home, and without her there seems to be no heart throb. She is the pulse in the home and when she is gone the life current is weak. She is the light of the home and when the light goes out a shadow falls over it. She is the life of the home and when she dies the house seems dead." A little boy forgot his lines In a Sunday school presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips but it did not help. Her son's memory was blank. Finally she leaned forward and whispered the cue, "I am the light of the world. The child's face lit up and with great feeling and in aloud clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world." There is truth in that statement. The mother is to be the light of the home.

In the First Book of Samuel and the first chapter we are introduced to Hannah who conducts herself as a model mother. Hannah is a simple quiet figure that graces the honor roll of the outstanding personalities the scriptures. In human terms there was nothing really spectacular about her. She was gracious and unassuming. The picture the Bible paints of her is that she was humble, quiet and a deeply spiritual woman. She gave indication of an intense faith, sincere devotion with a constant spirit of prayer. Her name, Hannah, fits her spirit and attitude, for it means **gracious or graciousness**. What is so striking about her was that she was not just gracious in name only. She was gracious in her attitude toward life and those about her. This quality of attitude and spirit permeated the whole of her personality and pervaded

all of her living. She was married to a wealthy man whose name was Elkanah. She was one of two wives who was her husband's favorite. Hannah, however, had not given birth to any children and it was a source of constant pain to her. Peninnah was the other wife and she had given birth to children, and the scriptures indicate that she kept provoking and lauding it over Hannah in order to irritate her. Her constant cruelty, provocations and her meanness often drove Hannah to tears. Alexander Whyte, comments, "the sacred writer does not keeps us long in Peninnah's company, he hastens past her to tell us about Hannah." There are very few who want to stay around people who are bitter, critical, always finding fault showing a sour miserable spirit. This was Peninnah whose cruelty Hannah endured, but through it all she never became bitter. Her attitude and her spirit remained gracious.

In this story you discover qualities in Hannah which deservedly make her an excellent model of motherhood. She revealed significant and distinctive qualities in and through her trial. Her trial then was twofold.

i. She didn't have children. That was a source of pain to her.

The second trial was

ii. The cruel and mean attitude of Peninnah toward her in her barrenness. Yet in this trial, under pressure she exemplified the qualities that made her a model mother. What were they? Note first of all,

1. THE DISCERNMENT IN THE CHOICE OF HER PRIORITIES. 1 Samuel 1:7, 10-11. The story clearly reveals,

a. She Established Spiritual Foundations in her life. 1 Samuel 1:3, 10, 12. They were her personal foundations upon which she ad built her life, and that were integrated into her home and family. Hannah was a devout Jew, committed to God and the values laid down by the laws of God. Year after year she accompanied her husband to Shiloh to worship in the House of the Lord. She kept in constant contact and communion with her faith and the ordinances of her nation. Her devotion to God was not based on legalistic duty for it was of the heart. In 1 Samuel 1:13 the scripture indicates that Hannah was praying in her

heart. And again 1 Samuel 2:1 Hannah prayed and said "My heart rejoices in the Lord." Her devotion and worship were from the heart and the focus of Hannah's life was God, and as result the foundations of her home were grounded in an allegiance to Jehovah God, and an adherence to the teaching and instruction of the laws of God. Her Husband Elkanah, was a Levite of Ramathaim Zophim who belonged to one of most honorable families of the priestly portion of Jacob's descendents called the Kohathites (Herbert Lockyer – Women of the Bible P.64.) Consequently Hannah would know and be involved with the worship and faith of Judaism. And so the values of the Jewish faith and the law with God at the center, would be the spiritual and moral foundations of their home. And it naturally follows that the children born into that home would be impacted and influenced by the value system of that family. God was the

sovereign priority in her home and faith was at the core of her family life. She was a woman of devotion and piety. It is quite clear that from this story described in the opening chapters of the 1 Samuel, that Hannah and her husband had established a godly home. The value of such a priority is incalculable. Abraham Lincoln said, "That no man is poor who has a godly mother." This value should be established as a priority in every family. The home is God's institution and the family is God's idea. It was first in time before the church, the schools and the state. God intended the home to be a depository of faith, the channel of grace, the instrument of God's mercy, the place of God's presence. The home is where the perpetuation of Godly values is maintained. David in Psalm 145:3-4 cries out, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, His greatness no one can fathom. V.4 One generation will commend your works to another, they will tell of your mighty works." The transmission of spiritual values and moral values from one generation to another is largely dependent on the home. In the present society of disintegrating values and the perversion of moral standards and the commitment to relative principles, the establishment of the home with Godly values has become imperative, if our children are going to survive morally and spiritually. The children of the home where Godly principles are taught and lived will never be able to escape the impact of those early influences. They may wander away for God, distance themselves from the church, make foolish decisions, but I firmly believe they will not be able to escape the seed planted in their young minds and hearts. Biblical teaching will shadow them for the rest of their lives. The word of God does not return empty. The Christian home then, should be a haven of the holiness of God, a place where God is honored and where his way, will and purposes are important. It should also be a place where vision is imparted, a vision of all that is of true, noble, righteous and holy and where God is always honored. This can only happen when true Biblical foundations are established.

In Vermont a well-known rural pastor and author, Arthur W. Hewitt, says that one day after church he took a high school girl to her home. The road skirted a beautiful lake. "Presently," he says, "at her request I stopped before what appeared to be little more than a shack. Seeing the look of surprise on my face, she said rather apologetically and yet defensively: 'I know it's not much to look at, but it is a wonderful place to see from!' That's what our homes ought to be! They ought to be wonderful places to see from. Indeed they should give us a vision of who God is, and what he can mean to life. How He can transform and sustain us in the crises of life. A vision of what is of lasting worth in life. There must be a vision which goes beyond the material and sensual to that which is of permanent and eternal value - a vision of eternity and the importance of preparing for it. All of this will give a true perspective of what genuine life is all about. Let us, then, give our families a vision of all of this. Make it a wonderful place to see from. Hannah whose life was centered in God and whose home revered and honored the Lord was that kind of place. She established spiritual foundations for her family. Note too that,

b. She Exemplified Spiritual Distinction in her life. 1 Samuel 1:3, 10-12. This story is vivid in its description of the spirit of this woman Hannah. It describes how Hannah was clearly troubled, her heart was burdened. The maternal instincts within her yearned for a child, but the passing years accentuated her barrenness. The pain she felt was intensified by the mean taunts and cruel comments of the second wife. Hannah was perpetually hurt by Peninnah's cruelty. It easy to be gracious and kind in the sun, but what about those days in the midst of the storms of pain, pressure and injustice? Hannah could have taken the road of bitterness and rebelliousness against God. Her barren womb could have driven a wedge between her and her God. She could have turned bitter against Peninnah. She could have allowed her hurt to become a grudge. She could have permitted her pain fester and become gangrenous. But that is always self-defeating and self-destructive. It is always counter-productive. The tragedy is that if this spirit is allowed to infiltrate the home, the children will never embrace a bitter faith. Hannah kept in step with the meaning of her name "gracious" or "graciousness." She refused to allow her bitter circumstances to make her bitter. She refused to permit her hurt to fester into a fever. Instead we discover her steady and sensitive to her God. This is the test of a genuine faith and true righteousness and authentic holiness. Her steady spirit reveals that her priorities were founded on true values and rooted in Godly principles. She exemplified spiritual distinction in her life. Clearly there is discernment in her choice of priorities. Notice secondly,

2. HER DETERMINATION TO PRAY IN HER DILEMMA. 1 Samuel 1:12. The scriptures say in 1 Samuel 1:12 that she "kept on praying." She was persistent in her plight. She kept on praying to the Lord. There were two basic essentials in her persistence. Notice her

a. Her Dependency on God. 1 Samuel 1:12. She prayed to the Lord. This is a testimony to her dependence on God in her dilemma. "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord." Note where her values lay and what her priorities were. In her personal crisis she deliberately ventured into the presence of God. She took time to come into God's presence. Her problem did not drive her from God. Her difficulty drove her to God. It seemed like an impossible problem, yet it did not deter her from finding the place of prayer. It is in those moments of desperate encounter with God that the light comes. She deliberately went to her knees before God. Do you recall how the prophet Isaiah was devastated by the death of his King - King Uzziah. (Isaiah 6) King Uzziah had been a prosperous effective king. But now he was dead and God's people were being threatened by his enemies. It seemed like the sun which had shined so brightly on the nation had now set in the west, and a disturbing blackness covered the nation. They looked for a promising ray of light, but everything was shrouded in darkness. While it is true that he had grievously sinned against God he had been a great leader. He had brought prosperity and security to the nation. Where were they going to find a leader as great as Uzziah? How were they going to overcome the threatening armies? It was at that

point the Prophet Isaiah ventured into the presence of God. The scripture records in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet's encounter with a Holy God. He had a vision of who God is. He saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted and the train of His Robe filled the temple. He saw the Lord but he also heard a song. It was a song of the Seraph's – "Holy! Holy! Holy! Is the Lord Almighty the whole earth is full of His glory." In his crisis he ventured into God's presence, and in the moment of the death of an earthly King, he saw the radiant glory and awesome power of a heavenly King. The light came when He had a vision of God. When that vision came, the death of his earthly King seemed insignificant. The threat of invasion by the nation's enemies seemed unimportant. Fear was transformed into faith, for now He knew that earthly Kings may come and go, but there is an eternal King whose glory fills the earth. He transcends or is above time and is not affected by its relentless march. This King is not touched by death, or deterred by impossibilities. He is seated on His eternal throne - high and exalted. No one has dethroned Him. No one has snatched His power from Him and certainly no one has defeated Him. He is still in control over the affairs of men. Isaiah ventured into God's presence and somehow that glorious vision put everything into perspective. His dependence was transferred from an earthly King to a heavenly King. The intensity and enormity of the crises disappeared on the light of God's Omnipotence and greatness. You remember the old chorus we used sing. "Got any rivers you think are uncrossable, got any mountains you can't tunnel through. God specializes in things thought impossible. He can do what none other can do." When we depend on His power and greatness, the inevitable loses its inevitability - the impossible loses its impossibility, for all things are possible with God. Prayer is the recognition of His unlimited wisdom, His Sovereign will and His awesome power. Hannah in her pain, sorrow and personal crises went to God with her burden. "She prayed to the Lord." This was the power not only in her life but the influence in her home.

Lorne Sanny of the Navigators once wrote of His mother: "My mother gave birth to me in a frontier house on a Midwestern prairie. On the kitchen table she placed a list of ingredients necessary for my formula. At the top of the list was 'prayer,' and that remained at the top of her list for me throughout her life....I have her to thank for firmly establishing my spiritual roots." Prayer establishes the family in God for it reveals a total dependence on God. Hannah was a praying mother completely dependent on God. But this not only indicates her dependence on the Lord but it also reveals an,

b. Intimacy with God. 1 Samuel 1:10-13. v. 10. "Hannah wept very much and prayed to the Lord" v.12. "She kept on praying to the Lord." v. 13. Hannah was praying in her heart. v.15. "I was pouring out my heart to the Lord." There was passion in Hannah's praying. It was characterized by faith and intensity. It revealed a close relationship with God confirmed by the fact she prayed in her heart. Her prayers were born within her. That is where genuine prayer starts. It is certainly not on street corners parading its piety before men and women. The essence of true praying is not so much revealed in the words

expressed on the lips, but in the desires and passion born in the heart. James Montgomery wrote in his hymn of prayer;

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,

Uttered or unexpressed.

The motion of a hidden fire,

That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,

The falling of a tear.

The upward glancing of an eye,

When none but God is near.

“With Hannah there was no whining and no complaint. One has said, “ if some Christians spent as much time in praying as they do in complaining, they would have nothing to complain about.” Hannah’s relationship with God was such that she could share her deepest anguish with Him and pray from the heart. A.W. Tozer “It requires a serious mind and a determined heart to pray past the ordinary into the unusual.” One has written so well, “God respects not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are. Not the rhetoric of our prayers, or how eloquent they are. Not music of our prayers how melodic they are. Not the logic of our prayers, how methodical they are, but the sincerity of our prayers, how heartfelt they are.” Stanley Jones wrote, “In the heart of man a cry; in the heart of God supply.” Hannah knew God so she prayed from her heart and poured out her soul to Him. Hannah was a model of motherhood because of the discernment in the choice of her priorities and her determination in her dilemma but also because,

3. HER DEVOTION TO KEEPING HER PROMISES TO GOD. 1 Samuel 1:27-28. Her prayer is simple and sincere. Note her words in verses 27-28. I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. V.28. so now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will given over to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.” The concern of Hannah’s prayer was her barrenness. The focus of her prayer was that she would have a child. The promise of her prayer was to return the child to God, and the genuineness of her

prayer was confirmed when she took him to God’s house and gave him to the Lord a left him there. Only a mother would know the cost entailed in this action. There are two outstanding qualities in Hannah’s character. Firstly there was,

a. Integrity of Character. 1 Samuel 1:27-28. Her words confirm this. “I prayed for a child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord.” This attitude and response to God reveals her transparent integrity. She made God a promise – “Lord” she prayed, “if you will only give your servant a son then I will give him to the Lord.” The integrity of Hannah was of such a character that a promise made was a promise kept. This must have been extremely difficult for her. When her son was

born there was no guarantee that she would have any more children. There was no reason for her to be sure of that. She could have rationalized within herself that it would be legitimate and reasonable to keep him, until she was sure that she would give birth to other children. After all God was understanding, patient and loving. Surely He would not take her first born son, and at that time, her only son. She would not know that hundreds of years later that God Himself would send His one and only Son to die for the salvation of the world. That was His choice and it was His promise, and He fulfilled it and He paid high price for it. But God's goodness and perfect integrity bound Him to the promise to send His one and only Son to pay the supreme and perfect sacrifice for sin. God would not do anything incompatible with His love, holiness, faithfulness, goodness and integrity. That is who He is. Hannah might have also reasoned that Samuel could stay at home and still belong to God. But Hannah's word was her bond. To betray it would be to betray her self, her God and destroy her integrity of character. It is the keeping of those promises made to God in the secret silent moments of life that illumine the genuine nature of character. If a mother should exhibit any attribute at all before her children, it should be integrity. It is this distinctive quality that breeds trust and impacts the children.

The second quality which shines through Hannah's life is in this passage of scripture,

b. The Totality of Her Commitment. 1 Samuel 1:28. God had given her a son, and she said in v. 28. "So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given to the Lord." She had promised him to the Lord, and that promise in its entirety must be kept no matter what it might cost her in her loneliness. God honored her surrender and Samuel became a great prophet in Israel. As he matured he reflected his mother's godliness. Samuel means "asked of God," and like his mother he became a man of prayer and intercession all of his life. He was God's gift to Hannah, but was also Hannah's gift to the Lord. That was evidence of the absoluteness of her commitment. It is so easy in the hours of desperation to make commitments to God. It is relatively simple to make promises to the Lord in moments of pain. It is not difficult in the intense hours of darkness to promise God everything we have and to strike a bargain with Him. It is sad when He keeps His part of it, He often has to wait in vain for us to keep faith with it. Hannah was the ideal mother because she kept her transaction with God.

Conclusion

It appears that there was no guile in Hannah. The worship of God and the exaltation of righteousness were her priorities. That was the inner secret of her strength and her faith. Solomon in his proverbs confirmed this in the words "wicked men are overthrown and are no more but the house of the righteous stands firm." Prayer was paramount in her life.

My parents challenged me in this exercise by word and example. They were missionaries who exemplified the priority of prayer. They believed with the Poet Alfred Tennyson that "more things are wrought by prayer that this world dreams of." I think they realized with Martin Luther when he wrote, "If I

should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.” Prayer is the intangible power in our Christian lives. It is the unseen influence on those with whom we come in contact. It makes us invincible to the powers of darkness. Mary Queen of Scotland said “I fear John Knox’s prayers more than any army of ten thousand men.” It is prayer that fortresses and buttresses the home. It is prayer that will establish, maintain and nurture righteousness in the family. John Bunyon made clear that “Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.” The exemplary home is founded on prayer. The praying mother will be able to guide and direct the child in a life that values scriptural truths as priorities. There is unexplained power in the life of a mother, who influences and impacts the life of her children in the ways of God. “When Robert Ingersoll, the notorious skeptic, was in his heyday, two college students went to hear him lecture. As they walked down the street after the lecture, one said to the other, ‘Well I guess he knocked the props out from Christianity, didn’t he? The other said, “No, I don’t think he did. Ingersoll did not explain my mother’s life, and until he can explain my mother’s life I will stand by my Mother’s God. The exemplary Christ-like life can refute even the most intellectual arguments against the existence of God. More importantly it can equip our children to face a wicked world.