

“Jesus’ Lordship”

14 November 2021: 26nd Sunday after Pentecost

SUMC—Salado, TX 76571

Preaching Text: 1 Samuel 1:4-20

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“Jesus Christ is not valued at all until he is valued above all”

—(Augustine).

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[1:1] 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 favor 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 worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her (1 Samuel 1:1-19).

This story begins with an excess of names. Nine proper names dominate the first three verses and reminds us that this is a story that oozes details of particular places and specific people. Elkanah heads a respected family. But if we pay close attention, we know that even in the best of families trouble lurks—polygamy in this case. Wife Peninnah has children, but wife

Hannah does not. This detail is where the difficulty begins. Like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and later Elizabeth, to be childless in biblical culture appears as a curse. Yet, in biblical terms, the curse of barrenness/infertility becomes an avenue for a blessing. Thus, Hannah's painful story of desiring a child, but having none, will later be off-set by the joy of divine intervention and human conception.

The scene shifts to Shiloh, a sacred Hebrew temple. At Shiloh we see the traits of the story's principal characters. Elkanah is generous and gives Hannah a double portion for her sacrifice. The story reveals Peninnah, Elkanah's fertile wife, as mean-spirited and detestable; a woman who "provokes" Hannah and mocks her barrenness.

Yet, Hannah's husband's compassion did not console her. Instead, she returned to the temple and prays to God for a child. Hannah prays so intently that Eli, the temple's priest, supposes her drunk and scolds her. But Hannah defends herself by sharing her painful dilemma with him. Do you remember Eli's words to her? "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him."

Our lesson's last verse tells how the Lord granted Hannah's petition and grants Israel a leader for the nation's subsequent trials. The narrator tells us that Elkanah and Hannah were going to have a baby! You might be asking "What does Hannah have to do with Lordship?" Lordship is simply the accepting of the sovereignty of God. Let's illustrate this principle of Lordship using Hannah's prayer life as a model.

Hannah's prayer begins like many heartfelt prayers. It begins in tears. Hannah, despite having a loving husband, turns to the final refuge of the faithful—she prays to God. But notice while her prayer begins in tears, it does not end there. Rather it ends in a vow. She not only

asks something of God, but she also pledges to God something of herself. She offers her unborn as a living sacrifice.

This prayer and pledge are the essence of understanding Lordship. To know God as Lord is to both ask God for God's sovereign protection and God's mercy. Simultaneously, yielding to God's Lordship is to pledge allegiance to God and God's kingdom. This Hannah does. She becomes a model of faith for Lordship.

C. S. Lewis, a literary critic came late in life to Christianity, wrote metaphorically about our attraction as well as our frightening grasp of God's demand and promise:

I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel (although we may not put it into words) that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted him to do, and we should be obliged if he would now just leave us alone. But the question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what God intended us to be when he made us Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you understand what God is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on. You knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently God starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts terribly and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is God up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage, but he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself [C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: William Collins, 1970), p. 172.].

Those who can endure the Lordship of God and Christ will inherit a life that is more like a castle than a hovel. It is a difficult thing for us to stand—letting God take a hold of us and do with us what God will. But in the end, there is no faithfulness without trust. God’s promise holds out to each of us the assurance of eternal and abundant life. But without Lordship, we cruise along for an entire lifetime making less of ourselves than God would do for us in an instant of faithful discipleship.

Our life is in God’s hands. God’s Lordship is in our hearts. Amen.

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From Hans Kung’s *The Church: The Church as Pilgrimage*

If the Church really sees itself as the people of God, it is obvious that it can never be a static and supra-historical phenomenon, which exists undisturbed by earthly space and historical time. The Church is always and everywhere a living people, gathered together from the peoples of this world and journeying through the midst of time. The Church is essentially en route, on a journey, a pilgrimage. A Church which pitches its tents without looking out constantly for new horizons, which does not continually strike camp, is being untrue to its calling.