Getting Your Own Gift

1 Sam. 1:1-28
(preached 2/25/15; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

Introduction

At Christmas time, we go to 3 family gatherings, and for the past few years, 2 of those groups have decided to do Chinese Christmas.

Though it also goes by other names, the principle of this gift exchange is fairly simple.

In order to save money, each person brings a gift under $10.

The gift can be wrapped or in a bag and all the gifts are gathered into the center of the room.

Each person then draws a number which determines the order of how the gifts are chosen.

The first person goes and picks a gift, unwraps it and is able to keep it unless the next person comes and takes it.

And then the game progresses and everyone has either exchanged for or opened a present.

Once the last person has gone, the game is over and you take home whatever you have at the end.

Well what Tonya and I noticed the first few times we played this is that we ended up with a gift that we stuck in a drawer and never used.

So this year, we used a different strategy.

We went and purchased items that we wanted, and then we wrapped them up and took them to the Chinese Gift Exchange.

And the plan was simple.

Pick your own gift if possible.

And if I remember right, it worked at both places this past Christmas.

I think we both left with what we brought, and that is better than leaving with a multi tool that breaks after the first use.

Or the picture frame that had been on sale for a month because no one would buy it either.

So, we brought gifts that we would like to have as our own, and this year it worked.

Tonight we are going to look at 1 Samuel chapter 1, and the summary of it is this…

In the middle of the chapter, God brings the gift of a son…

But when the chapter ends, God gets to take the gift that he gave.

Now, as we move into a new portion of the OT, I need to catch us up to speed on what is happening.

If you have been here on Sunday night, this will all sound very familiar.

Because this Sunday night, we will also be looking at an overview of 1 Samuel.

But let me quickly remind us of the setting of 1 Samuel.

Israel is a nation that is now in the Promised Land.

They arrived there in the book of Joshua, which is a few book back in the OT.

Before they arrived in the Promised Land, they had been in slavery in Egypt.

And before Egypt, they really weren't much a nation.

They were simply made up of 70 people who were the branches of the family tree that began with Abraham.

And when the book of Genesis ends, these 70 people go to Egypt and explode in size to 2 million plus.

While in Egypt, God raises up a leader named Moses to help them escape Egypt…

Which they eventually do, and in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy..

They make a long road trip to the Promised Land to the northeast.

God goes before them in the book of Joshua and gives them the land..

Yet in the book of Judges, Israel takes a turn for the worst.

They follow after the false gods of the ungodly people that remain in the land.

They sin and disobey God and judgment falls upon the nation.

So, God sends judges, who are simply leaders that deliver Israel from their disobedience for a time…

Only to watch the people fall back into their sinful ways over and over…

So, it is with that background that we come to 1 Samuel…

In the original Hebrew text, this would simply be entitled Samuel.

It was originally one book, but later divided into two books, 1 and 2 Samuel.

The message and point of 1 & 2 Samuel is the change from judges leading Israel to a king leading Israel.

It is an important shift in the history of the nation.

In Judges, they are a loose group of tribes spread throughout the land and governed by a series of judges.

But now they will become a united nation under one king.

We will talk about whether or not this was a good idea in the weeks ahead.

However, 1 and 2 Samuel are the story of how Israel united under an earthly king….

And it all starts in chapter 1 of 1 Samuel with the birth of Samuel, who was the last judge of Israel before they got a king.

I have divided this first chapter into 3 sections…

And instead of reading the chapter at once, let's move through the story as it goes along…

Beginning in verse 1…

I. God Works When Things Seem Unimaginable (1-8)

Verse 1…

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

In these first two verses, we find our main players in this chapter…

WE have Elkanah, who is a Jew with two wives.

In this time in Israel's history, there was widespread disobedience to God's Word.

God had designed marriage to be between one man and one woman, yet we see here that Elkanah had disobeyed God and in fact had two wives…

One was named Hannah and the other Penninah.

Though they were both his wives, there was one very important difference…

Peninnah was able to bear children, but Hannah's womb was barren.

And we find out why she was barren in the next set of verses.

Verses 3-5…

3 Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the Lord there. 4 When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; 5 but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the Lord had closed her womb.

According to verse 5, the Lord had closed the womb of Hannah.

Now, we see a couple more important parts of our story here…

First, Elkanah would take his family up to the tabernacle of God to offer sacrifices to the Lord in Shiloh.

Now, here is a map of Israel in the book of Samuel.

Elkanah and his family lived in Ramah, a town only a few miles north of Jerusalem.

So, the family would depart and walk to Shiloh where the tabernacle was located.

All Jewish were required to go the tabernacle at least 3 times a year.

Most likely, this trip to the tabernacle at Shiloh was for the feast of Tabernacles, which would occur in late Sep or early Oct.

So, it is the fall of the year, and the family sets out for Shiloh on foot.

It would be a 15-20 mile walk…

Once they arrive there…

Elkanah offers a sacrifice to God, and his family sits down to eat what is left from the sacrifice.

Now, you could not eat leftovers of all sacrifices.

However, if it was a peace offering, you were allowed to eat what was left.

And when Elkanah divides up the food among his family..

He gave Hannah a double portion of it.

Now, that is true love.

The saying is…

A way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

But in this case, the way to Hannah's heart was through 2 ribeyes instead of one.

And that is what Elkanah gave to her in verse 5…

Because he loved her more…

But it isn't all roses for Hannah…

Look at verse 6…

6 Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. 7 It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat. 8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Here comes trouble for Hannah, and it is in the form of Elkanah's other wife.

It was probably obvious that Elkanah loved Hannah more…

I mean…How could you not notice?....

She had a double portion of food on her plate.

So, Peninnah became a thorn in her side.

She was that nagging voice that constantly reminded Hannah that she was barren.

Penninah was the fingernails on the chalkboard.

She was the fly in Hannah's soup.

She was the thorn in her flesh.

Can you imagine the conversation as the family walked to Shiloh?

"Hannah, can you help me keep up with all these kids along the way."

“Since, you don’t have any children, you should plenty of time to help me watch all mine.”

“I don’t think I’ll be able to come next year. I usually get pregnant every other year. So, I bet I will be with child this time next year.”

“Do you remember two years ago when I walked up her pregnant.”

“My back was killing me.”

“Do you know how that feels, Hannah.”

“Oh, never mind. You have never been pregnant.”

“Maybe you need to pray harder like me.”

“You must be under some type of judgment from God.”

On and on, Penninah would poke and prod.

It is one thing to be barren, it is another thing to have someone constantly reminding you of it.

Penninah was the alcohol that is poured on the open cut.

And eventually, it would drive Hannah to tears.

It would keep you from eating all together.

You ever been so upset that you had no desire to eat?

Well, that is Hannah right here in verses 7-8.

And let me close this section by saying this…

As bad as it seems from Hannah's perspective, she is exactly where God wants her to be.

In fact, as a woman with no children, she is in great company.

Remember Sarah? Abraham's wife?

She was barren late in life until God opened her womb and she gave birth to Isaac.

Remember Elizabeth in the NT?

She was barren before God opened her womb and she gave birth to John the Baptist, who was the forerunner to Jesus.

And what is the principle that we need to see here?

What is the lesson for us?

I love how one commentator puts it..

"God's tendency is to make our inability his starting point….When His people are without strength, without resources, without hope, without any ability or skill of their own….then God loves to stretch forth his hand from heaven (and be the sole source of help)"

And why is that?

Why does God love to show his strength in our weaknesses?

So, that no man may boast in his own abilities.

2 Corinthians 12:9-11

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast [a]about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with [b]insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Cor 1:26

26 For [r]consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to [s]the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no [t]man may boast before God. 30 But [u]by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, [v]and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

It needs to look impossible to us before we realize that it is only possible if God does it.

That is why God needs to empty our pride in ourselves before we can be of any use to Him.

When you know that you can't do it on your own, that is when it becomes possible for you to do it on your own through God's strength.

Hannah was barren and broken, and she could never imagine ever having children…

But God works when it all seems unimaginable…

And it is also true that….

II. God Listens When Things Seem Unbearable (9-18)

Verse 9…

9 Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. 10 She, [a]greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. 11 She made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a [b]son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

History is full of important turning points.

In 1961, the outbreak of nuclear war seemed like a real possibility.

Russia had nuclear missiles in Cuba that could easily reach America.

American has nuclear missiles in Europe that could easily reach Russia.

President Kennedy and Russian leader Nikita Krushchev were ready at the buttons to fire..

But both resisted the urge to plunge the entire world into war and on Oct 27, 1962, the crisis was avoided and an agreement was reached.

Now that is an obvious turning point in world history, but in verse 10, we see an incredible turning point in Hannah's life.

We all know that she was a barren and broken woman.

But look how she responded to her situation in verse 10…

"She greatly distressed…"

Came up with a plan to hurt Penninah.

Decided to take matters into her own hands.

No, she didn't do either of those..

Instead in the second half of verse 10, she "prayed to the Lord."

Hannah had been picked on…

She had been poked fun at…

She had suffered shame from others…

Yet, she doesn't let that irritation and stress drive her to revenge or jealously…

She let it drive her to her knees.

She doesn't lose her cool…

She finds the throne of grace, where God hears the prayers of His people.

What an incredible turning point in this story.

Penninah is poking at Hannah…

But instead of poking her back, Hannah prays to God.

And in her prayer, she makes a vow in verse 11..

If God will give her a son, she will give him back to God.

He will become a Nazirite, which is why Hannah promises never to cut his hair with a razor in verse 11.

He was to be an individual who served God with his whole heart…

And that is the vow that Hannah made in her prayer, which was noticed by Eli in verse 12…

12 Now it came about, as she [c]continued praying before the Lord, that Eli was watching her mouth. 13 As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. 14 Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you." 15 But Hannah replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman [d]oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. 16 Do not [e]consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and [f]provocation." 17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant

your petition that you have asked of Him.” [18] ***She said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.” So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.***

Eli the priest assumed that Hannah was drunk when she was praying to God.

Most prayers were usually said out loud near the tabernacle, yet Hannah was praying silently in her heart while she mouthed the words silently.

However, Hannah assured Eli that wasn’t drunk, she was simply distressed.

One simple observation here…

Notice the end of verse 18….

She went away and ate and was no longer sad…

What was her mood before going to the Lord?

No appetite and tears.

After a time with the Lord, she leaves hungry and happy.

The interesting aspect of that is she hasn’t heard a word from God yet.

Eli responded, but God hasn’t said a word.

That is the wonder of prayer.

We don’t always need an answer; sometimes, we simply need an ear.

And God is listening at all times to the cries of His people…

Even when the situation is almost unbearable.

The lesson is to go to the Lord in prayer.

Though he may not answer immediately, there is simply comfort in sharing your distress.

And that brings us to the final section of chapter 1…

III. God Is Honored When Things Seem Unusual (19-28)

Verse 19…

19 Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah [g]had relations with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. 20 It came about [h]in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord."

Once the family makes it way back from Shiloh, God opens the womb of Hannah and gives her and Elkanah a son…

Hannah names him Samuel.

The Lord has answered the prayer of the barren woman and she now has a son.

And the time comes for her to keep her vow to the Lord…

Verse 21…

21 Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever." 23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best [i]to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the Lord confirm His word." So the

woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. [24] Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, although the child was young. [25] Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. [26] She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord. [27] For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. [28] So I have also [j]dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is [k]dedicated to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there.

Most likely, Elkanah had vowed along with his wife to give the son back to the Lord.

And he heads up to the tabernacle after Samuel's birth, but Hannah will not take Samuel there until he is able to stay there on his own.

So, she weans him, and in this culture, that may happen until the boy was 2 or most likely 3.

And in verse 24, the family heads to the tabernacle with Samuel and their sacrifices of a bull, flour and wine.

They offer their sacrifices and they give the boy Samuel to Eli, who was the same priest that Hannah had prayed beside a few years earlier.

And Hannah honors her vow to the Lord and hands the boy over to the priest and worships the Lord.

What an incredible turn of events.

Like a Chinese Christmas, God gives her a son, but the gift comes back to God in that He will serve the Lord the rest of his life.

Couple things to remember here…

Samuel is not going to be some ordinary boy.

He is going to become the last judge of Israel.

Though many of the judges are corrupt and disobedient at times…

Samuel will be a righteous judge, and more importantly, he will be the one to anoint Israel's first king, Saul…

But Samuel will also be the one who anoint Israel's greatest king, David.

He is a key person in the unfolding plan of God.

Samuel is far from an ordinary figure in the Bible.

And what is the lesson…

God takes a woman who was shamed by the world, and makes her son a blessing to the world..

But what even hits closer to home is the idea of Hannah giving her son back to God.

Trust me, I love my children.

They are gifts from God who bring great joy to us as parents.

Our hearts are filled with more love since they came into our lives…

But I constantly remind myself that I need to parent with an open hand and not a closed fist..

And here is what I mean by that…

My job is to speak the gospel into the ears of my kids..

My responsibility is to give them the truth of the Bible as much as possible…

My purpose is to shape them into responsible people who can think and have discernment..

But the end goal is not to hold on to them with a tight gripped fist.

My goal is to have an open hand where they can go and serve the Lord with the gifts that He has given them.

I love the idea and picture of shepherding my kids.

As opposed to fencing them in.

And the goal is to hand them over to the Great Shepherd to finish his work once they leave my fields.

And Hannah is a great picture of that, even though she may begin a little early here..

She knows that God has a purpose for her son in His kingdom and she puts him in a position to serve the Lord.

Our children are a gift to us that must be given back to God.

Samuel was Hannah's son but he really belonged to the Lord.

May we be parents and grandparents of the same mindset.

May we see God's gift of children as just that..- a gift..

And may they be gifts that we don't hide in a closet.

May they be gifts that we give back to God, while begging that He uses them for His glory.

Conclusion

As I look back over this chapter…

It begins with a woman with a problem.

She has no children.

Yet, how does she go about solving that problem?

Just think in our day.

How does the world try to solve problems?

Well, simply put, most people in the world turn to their own strength and resources to find an answer.

You need a job?

You take advantage of people who may help you get a job?

You want a child?

You exhaust all the medical technology available?

You want a spouse?

You turn to an internet dating service?

You need some money?

You go to your family and friends and ask.

And look none of those are bad.

In fact, God may use some of those means to meet your need and solve your problem.

But I think we learn a lot from Hannah here.

She didn't turn to human wisdom first, she turned to heavenly wisdom.

And on top of that is something that we can also learn from.

She prayed for a solution with God in mind.

God, give a job where I can have an opportunity to share the gospel with a lot of people.

God give me a baby and I will use it as a testimony to your goodness.

God provide me a spouse who will help me know and love you more.

God give me money so I am able to give more back to you.

Pray in your despair, but pray with God's glory in mind rather than your own.

That was the nature of Hannah's prayer and God answered it.

Amen.