

Pastor's Message  
October 18, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hope you are all doing well!!

Harvest Home – Thank you for participating in the Harvest Home drive to support the Muhlenberg Churches Food Pantry. Thank you Jackie, Barb, Diane for organizing the event and staffing the table.

Good Shepherd Pre-School – We are planning to open the pre-school in early November. We are in need of a teacher's aide for our Monday, Wednesday and Friday class. We pay \$10 an hour and the workday is 7 hours. If you know anyone who is interested contact Becky Watson at 610-916-2533 for more information.

Our next communion Sundays will tomorrow October 18, October 25 (Reformation Sunday) and November 1 (All Saints Day).

God's Peace!

Pastor Denise	Home Phone	610-750-6432
	Cell/Text Phone	610-858-8187

## I Samuel 1:1 – 2:11

A reading from the first and second chapters of I Samuel.

There once was a man who lived in Ramathaim. ... He had two wives. The first was Hannah; the second was Peninnah. Peninnah had children; Hannah did not.

Every year this man went from his hometown up to Shiloh to worship and offer a sacrifice to God-of-the-Angel-Armies. Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, served as the priests of God there.

When Elkanah sacrificed, he passed helpings from the sacrificial meal around to his wife Peninnah and all her children, but he always gave an especially generous helping to Hannah because he loved her so much, and because God had not given her children.

But her rival wife taunted her cruelly, rubbing it in and never letting her forget that God had not given her children. This went on year after year. Every time she went to the sanctuary of God she could expect to be taunted. Hannah was reduced to tears and had no appetite.

Her husband Elkanah said, “Oh, Hannah, why are you crying? Why aren’t you eating? And why are you so upset? Am I not of more worth to you than ten sons?” So Hannah ate. Then she pulled herself together, slipped away quietly, and entered the sanctuary.

The priest Eli was on duty at the entrance to God’s Temple in the customary seat. Crushed in soul, Hannah prayed to God and

cried and cried—inconsolably.  
Then she made a vow:

Oh, God-of-the-Angel-Armies,  
If you'll take a good, hard look  
at my pain,  
If you'll quit neglecting me and  
go into action for me by giving  
me a son,  
I'll give him completely,  
unreservedly to you.  
I'll set him apart for a life of  
holy discipline.

It so happened that as she  
continued in prayer before God,  
Eli was watching her closely.  
Hannah was praying in her  
heart, silently. Her lips moved,  
but no sound was heard. Eli  
jumped to the conclusion that  
she was drunk. He approached  
her and said, "You're drunk!  
How long do you plan to keep  
this up? Sober up, woman!"

Hannah said, "Oh no, sir—  
please! I'm a woman hard used.  
I haven't been drinking. Not a

drop of wine or beer. The only  
thing I've been pouring out is  
my heart, pouring it out to God.  
Don't for a minute think I'm a  
bad woman. It's because I'm so  
desperately unhappy and in  
such pain that I've stayed here  
so long."

Eli answered her, "Go in peace.  
And may the God of Israel give  
you what you have asked of  
him." "Think well of me—and  
pray for me!" she said, and went  
her way. Then she ate heartily,  
her face radiant.

Up before dawn, they  
worshiped God and returned  
home to Ramah. Elkanah slept  
with Hannah his wife,  
and God began making the  
necessary arrangements in  
response to what she had asked.

Before the year was out,  
Hannah had conceived and  
given birth to a son. She named

him Samuel, explaining, “I asked God for him.”

When Elkanah next took his family on their annual trip to Shiloh to worship God, offering sacrifices and keeping his vow, Hannah didn’t go. She told her husband, “After the child is weaned, I’ll bring him myself and present him before God—and that’s where he’ll stay, for good.”

Elkanah said to his wife, “Do what you think is best. Stay home until you have weaned him. Yes! Let God complete what he has begun!”

So she did. She stayed home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. Then she took him up to Shiloh, bringing also the makings of a generous sacrificial meal—a prize bull, flour, and wine. The child was so young to be sent off!

They first butchered the bull, then brought the child to Eli. Hannah said, “Excuse me, sir. Would you believe that I’m the very woman who was standing before you at this very spot, praying to God? I prayed for this child, and God gave me what I asked for. And now I have dedicated him to God. He’s dedicated to God for life.” Then and there, they worshiped God.

Hannah prayed:

I’m bursting with God-news!  
I’m walking on air.  
I’m laughing at my rivals.  
I’m dancing my salvation.

Nothing and no one is holy  
like God,  
no rock mountain like our  
God.  
Don’t dare talk pretentiously—  
not a word of boasting, ever!  
For God knows what’s going on.  
He takes the measure of  
everything that happens.

The weapons of the strong are  
smashed to pieces,

while the weak are infused  
with fresh strength.

The well-fed are out begging in  
the streets for crusts,

while the hungry are getting  
second helpings.

The barren woman has a  
houseful of children,

while the mother of many is  
bereft.

God brings death  
and God brings life,  
brings down to the grave and  
raises up.

God brings poverty  
and God brings wealth;

he lowers, he also lifts up.

He puts poor people on their feet  
again;

he rekindles burned-out lives  
with fresh hope,

Restoring dignity and respect to  
their lives—

a place in the sun!

For the very structures of earth  
are God's;

he has laid out his operations  
on a firm foundation.

He protectively cares for his  
faithful friends, step by step, but  
leaves the wicked to stumble in  
the dark.

No one makes it in this life by  
sheer muscle!

God's enemies will be blasted  
out of the sky,

crashed in a heap and burned.  
God will set things right all over  
the earth,

he'll give strength to his king,  
he'll set his anointed on top of  
the world!

Elkanah (and Hannah) went  
home to Ramah. The boy stayed  
and served God in the company  
of Eli the priest.

The word of the Lord.

## Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

This morning we fast forward in our journey with the Israelites to the story of Hannah and the birth of Samuel. After wandering in the desert for 40 years, the Israelites have finally settled in the promise land, just as God had promised Abraham hundreds of years ago.

And although, the descendants of Abraham had grown into a great nation just as God had promised, they struggled to live in community with one another, they struggled with their neighbors and they struggled to be that nation that would be the light to all nations; the nation that would teach the world about the love, the mercy and the grace of the God of all nations. They believed they didn't have the kind of

leadership they needed and they pled with God to send to them a leader to be anointed as their king.

Hannah's story and the birth of Samuel is the beginning of this era of the Kings in the story of God's mission to restore God's relationship with the people and to bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

As we heard in this morning's text, Hannah and Peninnah were the wives of God's good and faithful servant Elkanah. Peninnah had given Elkanah many children, but as Hannah had none, it appeared that Hannah was barren. This weighed very heavy on Hannah's heart.

On one of their pilgrimages to Shiloh, where they would worship and present their sacrifices to God, Hannah snuck away to the sanctuary and prayed through her tears and begged God to give her a son.

In return for this blessing, she promised that she would dedicate her son to be a good and faithful servant in the service of God.

Hannah did conceive a child, and gave birth to a son, who she named Samuel. And just as she promised God, after Samuel was weaned he was given to the priest Eli, where he would be raised to be God's faithful servant.

Now as a mother and now a grandmother, I must admit, I just cannot fathom making that kind of sacrifice. After all those years of longing for a child, after

all those taunts from Penniah about her childlessness, after all those worries about who would take care of her in her old age, she does as she has promised and gives Samuel to the priest Eli so that he may be raised to do the work that God will call him to do.

Samuel must have been only a very young child when he left his mother's side to go live with the priest Eli and his family. And it was Samuel who at a very young age heard God calling and served as God's messenger as the era of Kings began for the descendants of Abraham.

And I find it even more remarkable that as she was about to leave her son Samuel with Eli, Hannah sang beautiful words of praise and thanksgiving about the God who had blessed her with this child.

This woman who wept that she was childless was now overcome with joy for the gift that God had given her to share with the world as she says:

I'm bursting with God-news!  
I'm walking on air.  
I'm laughing at my rivals.  
I'm dancing my salvation.

And then she proclaims with all her heart the good news of who this God of Israel is who has blessed her abundantly as she continues:

Nothing and no one is holy like God,  
no rock mountain like our God.  
Don't dare talk pretentiously—  
not a word of boasting, ever!  
For God knows what's going on.  
He takes the measure of everything that happens.

And she goes on to give hope to those that this world has treated

unjustly as she describes how God's world is so counter to that which our earthly world values as she states:

The weapons of the strong are smashed to pieces,  
while the weak are infused with fresh strength.  
The well-fed are out begging in the streets for crusts,  
while the hungry are getting second helpings.  
The barren woman has a houseful of children,  
while the mother of many is bereft.

God brings death  
and God brings life,  
brings down to the grave and raises up.  
God brings poverty  
and God brings wealth;  
he lowers, he also lifts up.

He puts poor people on their feet again;  
he rekindles burned-out lives with fresh hope,

Restoring dignity and respect to  
their lives—  
a place in the sun!

We hear in her prayer how God  
has lifted her out of her despair  
and hopeless and has  
transformed her into a woman  
overflowing with a confident  
hope for a better and brighter  
future.

For the very structures of earth  
are God's;

he has laid out his operations  
on a firm foundation.

He protectively cares for his  
faithful friends, step by step, but  
leaves the wicked to stumble in  
the dark.

No one makes it in this life by  
sheer muscle!

God's enemies will be blasted  
out of the sky,

crashed in a heap and burned.  
God will set things right all over  
the earth,

he'll give strength to his king,

he'll set his anointed on top of  
the world!

Obviously, Hannah has no  
regrets, as she found  
tremendous joy in the work that  
she had been called to do, she  
has found reassuring peace in  
trusting God to set things right  
over all the earth, and she is  
filled with abundant hope that  
one day God's kingdom will  
come.

In this time when a pandemic  
rages, when friends and  
neighbors are at odds with  
regard to decisions made  
nationally and locally, when our  
brothers and sisters are  
discriminated against because of  
their color or ethnicity or sexual  
orientation, when our leaders  
are paralyzed from the  
possibility of loss of power and  
support.

In these troubling times, I find  
comfort, peace and hope in

Hannah's prayer for it reminds me that God is all powerful, that God is on a mission to set things right and bring about God's kingdom here on earth, and that God chooses to work in us, through us and among us in mysterious ways.

So, in response to all that God is and all that God does; let sing

with grateful and joyful hearts our praise and thanksgiving to the one who has named us, claimed us and redeemed us as God's own - as we join together to sing the Hymn of the Day, *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation.*

Amen

### ***Blessing***

May  
God, our Guardian, protect you,  
Christ, our Healer, restore you,  
and the Holy Spirit, sustain you,  
this day and forever more.

**Amen**