

**Series: Some Sermons Mike wants to Preach before he leaves!**

**Sermon: Women of Faith**

**I Samuel 1:1a, 2-6, 9-20**

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim...<sup>2</sup> He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

<sup>3</sup> Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup> But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup> Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.

<sup>9</sup> Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house. <sup>10</sup> In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. <sup>11</sup> And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

<sup>12</sup> As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk <sup>14</sup> and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

<sup>15</sup> "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. <sup>16</sup> Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

<sup>17</sup> Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

<sup>18</sup> She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

<sup>19</sup> Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup> So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

**Sermon**

I remember a mother who once told me, "I wish I was a bear." I said, "excuse me?" and they explained, "Yes, I wish I was a bear. You see, if you're a bear, you get to hibernate. You do nothing but sleep for six months. I could get used to that. And another thing: before you hibernate, You're supposed to eat yourself stupid. That wouldn't bother me either. If you're a mama bear, everyone knows you mean business; You swat anyone who bothers you or your cubs. If your cubs get out of line, you swat them, too. Your husband expects you to growl when you wake up. He expects you to have hairy legs and excess body fat. He likes it! I wish I were a bear."

This morning we are going to take a look at a special mother in Scripture. She doesn't get much billing in the Bible, most of you probably don't know her name, but she was the mother of Samuel, the Prophet who would establish King Saul and King David over the nation of Israel. And through the story of Hannah, I want to share with you 5 neat things about women of faith. Not that we have all five. We might have more. But I like her story, so I want to share a few of these. The first one may surprise you.

Did you know that Women of faith have real problems. It's true today, it's true 3,000 years ago when Hannah lived. It's easy to think that the heroes in the Bible were somehow different than we are. Somehow their lives were perfect because they were biblical. In all truth, women in scripture have real problems and tough lives and they face them with real faith. We have Elkanah, who had two wives. Hannah and Penninah. Chances are, because she is listed first, Hannah was the first wife. In those days, the major role of the wife was to bear children. Because she was considered barren, Elkanah probably married Penninah, who bore him kids. Hannah was looked down upon, considered cursed, and disgraced. At this point in her life, Hannah would have thought Mother's Day was just a cruel joke. Some of you probably didn't want to come to church on Mother's Day because your mother is no longer alive and you really miss her. Others of you don't care much for your mom and you're a bit turned off by all the syrupy sentiments in Hallmark cards. Some of you may have a mother who is very sick right now and you wonder how much longer she's going to be with you. Maybe you're a single dad and hurt for your kids as they struggle to find out why their mother has hurt them so much. A handful of you have experienced the devastating loss of a child's death. There are probably some mothers here this morning that wish they didn't have kids and I know there are women here who would give anything just to have a child. Now, Elkanah and his two wives made a yearly visit to Shiloh, about a twenty-mile journey, to worship the Lord and we learn a little bit about the heart of Elkanah. He gave Hannah a double portion of the "Thank Offering", telling her that she was loved. It had to be difficult for Hannah to eat the food that was associated with the "thank offering," when she probably wasn't all that thankful. Having a husband who expressed his love probably helped a lot. Fathers, the best gift you can ever give to your children is to love their mother. Hannah's problem wasn't with her husband, but with her husband's other wife. Penninah provoked and tormented Hannah. It bothered Hannah so much that she would weep and not be able to eat. This word means that she mourned deeply with so much grief that she lost her appetite. Maybe some of you know of this kind of teasing.

Did you know that Women of faith express real-life prayers. They don't have to be flowery prayers. Just real prayers. Hannah had some problems but she didn't shut down or lash out at those around her. She expressed her faith in prayer. Indeed, our problems should lead us into prayer. "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." As part of her prayer, she is making a vow that if she's given a son, he will be dedicated to the Lord for his entire life. Her son would become a Levitical priest, serving in the temple and a Nazirite. A Nazirite was bound by a vow to be set apart to the Lord's service and had to abstain from the fruit of the vine, was forbidden to cut his hair, and was not allowed to get near any dead body. Samson was another Old Testament character who had taken the Nazirite vow. At this point, Hannah now realizes a very important truth: children are not just for parents; they're for the Lord. Kids are on loan to us. It's our job to parent, to shepherd, and to train them for the Lord's work. Her quiet prayer had an unfortunate consequence when Eli, the priest, accused her of being drunk. That says a lot about the culture at that time — there were probably drunken people around the temple and Eli thought she was one of them.

When she had the opportunity to explain herself, Eli "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him." This benediction was a huge blessing to Hannah. He didn't know what she was praying about, but as high priest, gave his "amen" to her request. Her whole countenance changed "she went away and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast." This is really cool. After spending time in

prayer, her face was no longer sad. She had left her concerns with the Lord and now she's experiencing the "peace that passes all understanding." A woman of faith exhibits real problems and expresses vibrant prayers.

Did you know that Women of faith experience God's provision? They got up early the next morning and worshipped before the Lord. This was their practice, not something they did just once in awhile. Then they went back home. A short time later, Hannah conceived and give birth to a son, naming him Samuel. His name sounds like the Hebrew for "heard of God." Every time she said his name she was reminded of his origin and destiny.

I want to be careful here. Just because Hannah's prayers for a son were answered, that doesn't necessarily mean that you will be given a child because you prayed for one. But you will receive God's provision, one way or another. We might not get what we ask for, but what we need. A few years back, I was with a family at a hospital bed of some folks that were not church going type of folks. And the wife of the patient, who wasn't doing very well said, "I prayed last night and this morning, he isn't any better. So much for prayer." I wanted to say, "I did a push up last night, and I am still not buff." But that wouldn't sound very pastoral. Prayers aren't the cosmic wish list that we make it out to be sometimes. But it is the voice of our relationship with God, where we ask for blessings and understanding. God did answer Hannah's prayer but not just so she could have a baby. God needed a special prophet He could work through. What I find interesting is that without the barrenness at the beginning, she never would have dedicated him to the Lord, which means we never would have gotten Samuel the prophet, or King David or Solomon, or the rest of the line down to Jesus. God can take our brokenness and bring it to good. And our problems turned to prayers receive God's provision in our lives.

Hey, Did you know Women of faith excel at keeping their promises. After Samuel was born, Elkanah went once again to Shiloh in order to worship. Hannah decided to not go until Samuel was weaned, which would have been at around three-years-old. At three she gave him to the Temple to work and to live. I don't know if I could do that. Many people make promises to God, only to forget them once time passes. Not so with Hannah. She fully intended to keep her promise because she knew that Samuel did not really belong to her anyway. As a parent myself, I caught a little tear in my eye as I read ahead to a part of Chapter 2, "Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice." I can't imagine the joy she felt to see her little boy once again. Moms, and dads for that matter, always keep your promises. If your say it, you have to do it. The trick here is to watch out for what you promise. It is also true for discipline as well. If you threaten it, you have to follow through. If I tell my kids, "Get in the car, or I'm going to leave you." and I don't, they learn that Dad has hollow threats and they don't have to come anytime, cause I'm not going to back up my words with action. Never threaten something that you aren't willing to do. If I say, "How are you getting into the car, you walking or me carrying you?" It's going to be one way or the other, the kid just has to figure out what is in their best interest. You have to keep your promises, for that is the basis of your integrity. All discipline is founded upon you keeping your promises, as well as the foundation of love and security. Godly women, and men for that matter, keep their promises.

Women of faith exhibit real problems and express vibrant prayers. They experience God's provision and excel at keeping their promises. Last one: Did you know that Women of faith explode with praise. Much of Chapter 2 (not read today) is the song of Hannah, where she just bubbles out with thankfulness. I don't have time to go into it, but she just takes the time to say, "Thank you, God. Thank you." If you were to continue reading through the book of 1 Samuel, you'd discover that Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, were very evil and did some perversely detestable things. It's very interesting that their mother is never mentioned anywhere. We don't know if she died or if she was just not engaged as a parent. Samuel, on the other hand, was greatly impacted by his mother, and went on to become one of the most significant individuals in God's redemptive history. Moms, you matter greatly to your kids and to the very future of our nation! Someone once shared that the greatest altar they had ever known was their mother's knee.

Did you know that all of these today started with the letter P? Women of faith have Problems, which leads to Prayer which leads to Provision which leads to promises, which leads to Praise.

Thank you, to our moms on this Mother's Day. And the family of God said, AMEN!

Opening:

Good morning Oregon City United Methodist Church! And happy Mother's Day! Little stroll down historic lane here. By the 1910, Oregon City had founded two hospitals: Oregon City Hospital, located in what is now Gladstone, and Wildwood Hospital, renamed Oregon City Hospital when it relocated to Washington & 10th St. However these were general hospitals, with no staff dedicated to childbirth or infant care, and as home births were becoming less and less common there was a growing demand for specialized care to meet the needs of new and expecting mothers. In 1918 Oregon City resident Ida Hutchinson, a seamstress, was persuaded by a local doctor to open her home to meet this need and thus the Hutchinson House maternity hospital was created. With a capacity of 15 and dedicated nurses quarters, the Hutchinson House gave local mothers a place to recuperate with their newborns after the ordeal of birth. In 1924 the building was converted into a general hospital and underwent several expansions and name changes before it was deemed too small to continue operations and was sold for private use in 1962. The physicians who operated out of Hutchinson raised funds to build the Willamette Falls Community Hospital in 1961, now known as Providence Willamette Falls Medical Center. The hospital we have left in Oregon City began as a Maternity Ward. Here are this morning's announcements!

Children's Time:

Hey kids, thanks for joining me today. I'm down on Agnes Street by the river. There's a nice little walking path today. But a hundred years ago, there were a lot of kids who walked around here. There used to be an orphanage in Oregon City, where kids could go who lost their parents, or had not so nice parents. In 1897 the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The newly constructed four-story building was located about a mile north of Oregon City in Park Place on a working fifty-acre farm formerly owned by Amos L. Lovejoy. A few years later, it changed hands to the Sisters of Mercy, and they renamed it the St. Agnes Baby Home). That's why this is called Agnes street. The kids who lived here were from 2 weeks old to 14 years of age. Live-in nuns and other employees provided twenty-four hour supervision. For a couple generations, they provided love and support to kids who needed it most.

In our church, we believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity." (Trust). Families can come in many different forms. Some families have a mom and dad and kids. Some families have grandparents that take care of the children. Sometimes there's only one parent. Sometimes there's two moms, or two dads. Families come in many different shapes and sizes. Adopted kids are part of the family. Foster children are in the family. Step kids are part of the family. Old kids, young kids. Families come in different forms.

We are happy that there were places where kids could go to find their families. Our church works today to help children in need as well. We have children's home across the country where families can find love and acceptance.

Where is St. Agnes orphanage today? Underneath 205. Down by the water treatment plant.

Whatever your family looks like, just know that you are in the family of God. And that's a pretty cool thing. Thanks for stopping by!

Offering:

Welcome to the Offering, our chance to give back. As United Methodists, we support many ministries, within the church, outside the church, at home and abroad. A ministry in many different United Methodist Churches is called The Caring People, helping single moms find support and strength and resources. It was spearheaded by Hershand Family Entertainment out of Missouri, but has grown to many UMC's. Here's a quick video of how they responded to a tragedy a few years back:

Thank you, OCUMC. Your gifts matter. As a connected church, we are all in this together!

Prayer:

This day we gather with eager hearts, hungry for your Word, yearning for the joy you promise in love. O God, together we hold a vision of your kingdom, a people of prayer and open hearts, a loving Body of Christ eager to learn and eager to share. You bless us, O God, and shine upon us with the mercy of your salvation. And your Good Earth has yielded its increase through those who have brought us great blessing.

On this day of celebrating your love, we lift to you those who have given us life, those who have loved us, those who have blessed us, and those who have taught us, our mothers. May your blessing pour out upon the woman who gave us birth, and those beautiful, strong women of faith who have been mothers to us along our journey.

We praise you, O God, for your gift of motherly love, both gentle and fierce, both strong and humble, both kind and true. Where we have been so blessed, we give our grateful praise, for you have provided loving hands that have worked so hard in raising us, cared enough to correct us, blessed us in ways we cannot have fully known as children.

We call forth your compassion upon every mother who has unknowingly caused pain and suffering. And, so we lift to you our mothers, so imperfect, also so wounded by this world.

We bless our mothers this day, no matter what they have done or left undone. We do this because we believe in your healing, and we believe in your love and we believe that you love every mother, good or bad; and we stand together with all mothers in solidarity, for we all are in need of your grace. Where we have failed because we did not know better, help us to forgive ourselves. Where we have seen your face in any woman who has been to us a mother, in her face we have seen your light and your love and we give thanks -- for where they have loved, they have kept your word and blessed us.

We lift to you our Mother Earth. We lift to you our Mother Church. We lift to you, O God, your mother's heart; and although we cannot fully express our gratitude, help each one of us to be your blessing of love, a blessing straight from your heart. Amen.

Closing:

Oregon City UMC, you have heard who our next pastor is. As we are taping this early in the week, I have not heard myself who it is. But I do these things: You will be blessed by their ministry. And You will be a blessing to them. We are a church that loves others and values everyone. I know that you will show your next pastor the same grace and love and support that you have given me and our family over these years. Over the next few weeks, we will show little clips about your new pastor that you may get to know them a little more before they begin July 1<sup>st</sup>. Thanks for being the church that you are, and Go in peace. Amen!