

## Heard by God

Advent Midweek #3 – 12/17/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: 1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11 Pastor Keith Besel

### **Introduction**

✧ Listen again to Hannah's prayer to Yahweh as she presents her only son into Yahweh's service: (1 Samuel 2:1-10)

➔ "My heart exults in Yahweh; my horn is exalted in Yahweh. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.

➔ "There is none holy like Yahweh: for there is none besides You; there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.

Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.

The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.

Yahweh kills and brings to life; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Yahweh makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and He exalts.

He raises up the poor from the dust; He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.

For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's, and on them He has set the world.

He will guard the feet of His faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.

The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces; against them He will thunder in heaven.

Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth; He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed."

✧ Christmas is not always a happy time. Just as Hannah expresses the coming of God in her day, it depends on who you are and what your circumstances may be.

➔ For some, it is a dark and depressing time of year. Feelings of loss or discontentment or inadequacy can quickly become amplified when it seems like everyone else is filled with joy. All the music and gifts and get-togethers actually leave many people feeling left out and isolated, or just plain tired and down.

### **I. God's people cry out to him in sadness/emptiness.**

✧ That may have been something like how Hannah felt at the beginning of today's Old Testament Reading. Every year, Elkanah went up to Shiloh with his two wives to worship and sacrifice to God - "Yahweh of armies" is how the Hebrew literally identifies Him in verse three.

➔ But this annual event, that should have been a time of praise and celebration, only seemed to remind Hannah that she was childless to this point. Yahweh had closed her womb. And it didn't help things that Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, had several children. When Elkanah made his sacrifice, he would give portions of the food to Peninnah and her children. But because he loved Hannah deeply, he would give her a double portion; as if she also had a child to feed.

➔ That only seemed to make Hannah weep and refuse to eat. To her, it felt like she was cursed; not blessed by God because at that time every faithful Israelite woman, hoped and prayed that she would be the one, blessed to bear the much-awaited Messiah whose coming had long ago been promised by God. So, the fact that she had no children made her feel as if

she was outside of that divine promise. Add to that the fact that, Peninnah would “provoke” and “irritate her” because of her closed womb.

- ✘ You and I can also feel like Hannah because of our earthly circumstances, can't we? We may even be tempted to think that we are cursed or not blessed by God. It's a trap that Satan sets for us all – to think that God's promises only apply to somebody else and not us.

➔ “Oh sure, I know what the Bible says about God's love,” you might say in the mirror, “but just look at all the things that are happening in my life. How could God possibly love or forgive someone like me?” That's the devil's deceptive ploy at work, folks – trying to lead us into ignoring God's promises so that we lose faith; so that we sink into despair.

- ✘ But Elkanah, in typical male ignorance, tried to comfort Hannah by saying, “Hey, you've got me honey.” Verse 8, “Am I not more to you than ten sons?” Many a husband, throughout the centuries, has struggled to understand the unique longing toward motherhood that exists within many wives' hearts. We might even offer encouragement to those struggling with this, not wrongly so, but still in ignorance, “Isn't the love and the provision of your heavenly Father enough; all that you need?” Which of course, it should be for all of us.

➔ But in the end, only the birth of a son could truly comfort Hannah at that point. And so it is, properly true throughout the ages – it is only the birth of the Son of God that brings real comfort to us all!

## **II. The Lord heard Hannah's cry**

- ✘ Still we see that in spite of her sorrow, even in the bitterness of her soul Hannah still looked to Yahweh in faith and called upon His name. She prayed and made a vow to Yahweh at the tabernacle, that if He would see it fit to grant her a son, she would dedicate that son to Yahweh; she would give him over into Yahweh's service for all the days of his life.

➔ But don't misunderstand Hannah here. This wasn't her just bargaining with God. Hannah was entrusting her entire situation into God's hands. When she made this vow, she was acknowledging that Yahweh is entirely in control of all things; that it would exclusively be a gift of grace if she were to bear a son. So also you and I come before the Lord in prayer, not attempting to manipulate His actions, but so that we might commit our entire lives and all that we need into His hands; the hands of Him who alone can help and save us. Though we may be weak in our faith, we believe and confess with Psalm 124:8, “Our help is in the name of Yahweh, who made heaven and earth.”

- ✘ As Hannah prayed, Eli, the priest thought she was drunk because she only moved her lips and made no sound. So he scolds her, but Hannah explains that she's simply pouring out her soul to God in grief, to which Eli then offers her this blessing, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to Him” (1:17). With that blessing from God, she did receive true peace, so that she ate, and verse 18 says that “her face was no longer sad.”

➔ We're told in verse 19 that “Yahweh remembered” Hannah, and she conceived and bore a son by her husband, Elkanah. She called him Samuel, which literally means “heard by God”, a comforting truth that she could celebrate every time she thought about or said her son's name.

## **III. The Lord says yes to us in the birth/death of Jesus.**

- ✘ So, how does this apply to you and me here tonight? Well, as the birth of Samuel brought peace and joy to Hannah; in a far greater sense, the birth of Jesus brings peace and joy to us today. Why? because in Jesus, God has answered your prayers and mine in a most profound way. In Jesus, all of our deepest needs are fully met. Every faithful prayer receives God's perfect “yes” in Jesus. This holiday we are celebrating one week from tonight – Christmas, is living proof that we are blessed and not cursed by God; that God does in fact love and forgive you and me.

➔ That's the very reason that the Son of God took on our nature; our flesh and blood, so that He would be able to go to the cross and redeem us from all that brings us bitterness and sorrow and weariness in this earthly life. He saw you; He heard you in your isolation and sorrow and that's why He became like you – to rescue you from it all; to bring you into His everlasting fellowship.

- ✘ The birth of Jesus is God's direct sign that He is for you; He is on your side. As Paul said in tonight's Epistle Reading, "If God is for us, who can be against us? ... Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised to life – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" ... "No", Paul concludes, "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:31, 34–35, 38–39).

➔ Having that certain victory over anything and everything that this world can throw at us, we can be like Hannah, with a face that is no longer sad, but now is eager and able to eat and drink in the strength and fellowship of His Holy Supper.

- ✘ You see, Jesus is our Samuel; the daily evidence that we have been "heard by God," even before we offer our prayers in faith. As God says in Isaiah 65:24, "Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear." Just as Samuel entered into the tabernacle to appear before God and remain there all his days, so also Jesus entered into the tabernacle of our human body and soul, forever to intercede for us before the Father in His heavenly tabernacle.

➔ Once Samuel was weaned, he assisted Eli in offering sacrifices to Yahweh in God's holy house. In a far greater way, Jesus served His Father by becoming both priest and sacrifice; offering up His own body to atone for the sins of us all.

#### **IV. The Lord exalts those who trust in Him.**

- ✘ Hannah's prayer praises God for turning the things of this world upside down. Jesus reversed this world's understanding of true glory. Humbling Himself to endure the shame of the cross, in order to reverse and defeat all the Peninnahs of this world, including the devil himself.

➔ Then through His resurrection, Jesus lifted up and exalted all those who trust solely in Him. Notice how in Hannah's prayer the exalted are humbled and the humble are exalted. "The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren [woman] has borne seven [children], but she who has many children is forlorn. Yahweh kills and brings to life; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Yahweh makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and He exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor" (2:4–8).

- ✘ This is God's gracious way of working; turning the thinking of our world upside down; taking down those who trust in themselves and raising up the weak and the needy who trust solely in Him. Peninnah is put to shame in the end while Hannah rejoices. The LORD opened her womb to have five more children after Samuel, just as He opens the womb of His Church to bring new life to all who believe and are baptized into Jesus.

➔ Yes, God uses what is humble to bring about His greatest victories. So, we look to the humility of the manger and the cross; the humility of the font and the altar; each one His means to pour out and fill us with His grace.

- ✘ So, just as Hannah was heard by God, so the LORD listens and hears you and me today. He hears our prayers when our souls are bitter and filled with sorrow; when we are provoked and

irritated by Satan; when we are grieving and struggling, and in the birth of Jesus He comforts, strengthens and exalts us as only He can do.

➔ Now, as this Advent season draws to its close, let us continue humbly to place our trust in God, our Father, knowing that He will, in the fullness of His time, exalt us in the peace and joy of His Son, Jesus! Amen.