

Motherhood And Faith.

Text: 1 Sam 2:18-21

1) Motherhood

Suggested Hymns:

2) Faith

621, 347, 115, 587, 616

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Samuel 2:18–21, ¹⁸ *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.* ¹⁹ *Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.* ²⁰ *And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD.” Then they would go to their own home.* ²¹ *And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

An old Spanish proverb reads: “*An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.*” This suggests the truth that the mother exerts more influence in shaping the lives and destinies of her children than any other person. She is in a position to teach and exemplify Christian precepts and faith to a much larger degree than any other representative of the church.

The mother is the first and foremost representative of God’s love to her children. The Christian heart of a mother is God’s fullest vessel for pouring out His love upon a new generation.

We can easily become sentimental about mother love unless we see the role of mother in its profound relationship with God. The story of Hannah provides an insight into the relationship between a pious mother and God. The story is a good example of *Motherhood and Faith*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Motherhood

It is quite clear from the story of Hannah that she came to a sense of the meaning of motherhood through faith. The story pictures her as praying fervently that God would bless her with a child. In her prayers she promises that if God would bless her with a son she would dedicate him to His service.

Through these prayers for God's blessing, Hannah came to understand the relationship between the Fatherhood of God and the parenthood of man. She, who had been childless for many years, who had been the rebuke of other women, was burdened with the desire to be a mother.

In spite of her hopes, she remained barren. In her emptiness she encountered the great truth which all mothers, too, must face: that the birth of a child is possible only because of the divine miracle of birth itself. Maternity and paternity are regulated only within the creative will of God.

In prayer Hannah sought to understand the truth of God's mysterious will. In prayer she attempted to regulate her lot with the way of God. Because of her faith in God, in whom rests the power of life, she petitioned Him that she might taste the sweetness of motherhood.

Finally God answered her prayer in the affirmative. She was blessed with a son. For Hannah, then, motherhood was the answer to prayer. Her son was a gift of the Lord. She named him "Samuel"—asked of God.

Her entire behaviour after the birth of her son radiates her awareness that the infant was a gracious gift of God. Her husband, Elkanah, makes a special offering of thanksgiving to the Lord. The story relates that she prepared diligently for the early date in which she would bring Samuel to the house of the Lord at Shiloh to dedicate him for service to God in remembrance of her vow.

The purpose of the story of Hannah is to make us conscious of the fact that Samuel was a rare child and that his birth bordered on the miraculous by virtue of the faith of Hannah.

However, the faith of Hannah is not unique. The heavenly Father is besieged regularly by the prayers of a myriad of Hannahs who come before His throne of grace for the gift of a child.

In whatever way those prayers are answered, they are the exercises of faith in which the Hannahs learn that they are the vessels of God's creative acts which He in His wisdom chooses to use, or not to use in His own time.

When the Lord did grant a son to Hannah and Elkanah, their reactions were exemplary. If they had any pride in that hour, it was not evident in this story. They reacted in thankfulness and obligation. These are the ingredients of good parenthood.

The mother who has felt within her own body the palpitations of another life, has nourished with her own bloodstream the child of her prayers, and has entered the valley of the shadow of death to bring it to life, can choose two directions.

She may demand that the fruit of her body live the rest of its life in thankfulness to her. Or she may thank God eternally that He has called her to bring forth life that He has redeemed as His child.

She may force the child to live in constant obligation to her. Or she may feel the obligation to devote her life to teaching the child to live to God.

The story indicates that thankfulness to God for His gift and obligation to use the gift to God's glory completely dominated the life of Hannah. We are left to imagine how tenderly she must have prepared him for the day she would present him at the house of the Lord.

One can almost see her humming hymns, a lullaby to the baby, explaining the meaning of his name to the infant, teaching him his first prayers, telling him the story of the heavenly Father and His chosen and redeemed people.

Then when he had finally outgrown his infancy, she takes him up to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. She worships with the young lad there and sings an excellent song of praise much like the song of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

After the worship service she takes him to the home of the priest Eli, kisses him goodbye, and with a final embrace leaves him to the care of the priest.

But she does not forget him. Each day she prays for him as he grows under the tutorage of the priest. Each year she makes for him with her nimble fingers a new robe and takes it to him. What joyous occasions those were for a mother and son! A happy meeting in which they could exchange the news of the year

and Hannah could be overwhelmed with the added inches and wisdom of her Samuel.

Upon her parting, Eli would give his annual blessing to Elkanah and Hannah: ***“The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD.”*** And Hannah was blessed with three more sons and two daughters.

We do not find it easy in the 21st century to tell mothers that no vocation in life matches the high calling that Hannah found in her motherhood through faith.

In an age that has invented varieties of reasons for wooing mothers out of their homes, an age that has thrust them into competition with men, an age that has made the name “housewife” a drab and uninteresting name, we must in some way find the secret of restoring the faith, the joys, the adventure, the pleasure, and the status of being a mother.

Somehow we have been deluded into believing that if we are to give glory and dignity to the role of mother, we must cover up all of the commonplace and monotonous routine that is required of motherhood. This could well be an evasion of that to which God has called mothers through their role as mothers.

Dr. Martin Luther in a sermon “On the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth” comments on Mary’s reaction upon her return home. He says, *“See how purely she leaves all to God, and claims for herself no works or reputation. She behaves just as she did before any of this was hers — seeks no greater honour, is not puffed up, vaunts not herself, calls out to no one that she is the mother of God, but goes into the house and acts just as before — milks cows, cooks, scrubs the kettles, and sweeps the house like any housemaid or housemother in the most menial tasks, as if none of these overwhelming gifts and graces were hers.”*¹

Likewise the service of our mothers to their children is unspectacular. As Mary bore in her body the gift of God’s Son, so they bear Him in their hearts. And because they have Him in their hearts, they may have the joy in knowing that in faith they have the freedom to serve their children in love.

Most certainly it does not fall to all our Christian mothers to lend their sons and daughters to the Lord in the manner in which Hannah or Mary did. However, it is for all Christian mothers to be motivated with the same faith that Hannah possessed; that their children are gifts from the Lord, who must be raised to His honour and His glory.

If the ministry of motherhood is a ministry of care and prayer, of love and sacrifice, of attention and protection for their children as was the motherhood of Hannah, there is no vocation, no profession, no calling on earth that is so well-pleasing to God.

Obviously there is much in contemporary life that blocks the spiritual efforts of mothers. The constant hammering of headlines, the insistent wooing of her children from her footstool by school and community activities, and the consistent infiltration of worldliness into the common order of living create mountains of difficulties and heartaches for the mother to surmount.

For these reasons the Christian mothers of our time need love, prayers, and co-operation of husbands and children as they have never had before. But the mother herself must by her prayers and faith work in the role of mother as one who always stands in the presence of the redeeming God. By her faith our Lord shall equip her to make her arms and her hands the cradle of His love.

2. Faith

Evidence of the faith that enveloped the motherhood of Hannah rested within the person of Samuel. The description of the boy Samuel ministering before the Lord and attending the tabernacle in the robe his mother made for him reflects the aura of love, faith, and care that his mother bestowed upon him.

One is made to feel that his mother clearly prepared him for the great role he played in the destiny of God's chosen people, Israel. Samuel himself grew to be the hope of Israel.

Samuel entered upon his young and tender years of service to Israel at a time when the people knew some dark hours. Israel had experienced great doom. The nation was defeated in battle, the ark of the covenant had been taken away, and the people had lived under the domination of the Philistines.

Then God raised Samuel to a role of spiritual leadership that was to lead the people out of their darkness. By Samuel's faithful teaching and also by his piety and devout example God brought the people of faithlessness back to faith.

Through Samuel's leadership God turned the tide in the political affairs of Israel. During the time of his leadership the ark of the covenant was returned,

peace prevailed between the Philistines and the Israelites, and the Philistines learned to fear the God of Israel.

By his own great faith Samuel was able to restore to the Children of Israel the conviction that they were a chosen people of the redeeming God, in whose history Jehovah acted with purpose and love unknown to their idolatrous neighbours.

In order to maintain this role of spiritual leadership, Samuel was to his people a prophet, a deliverer, and a judge. As a prophet he continually reminded his people of the role which God played in their Messianic history. As a deliverer he continually reminded the people of God's great redeeming promise. As a judge he ruled his people in accordance with God's rule.

In all this he behaved as one who believed implicitly the prayer which Hannah prayed in 1 Samuel 2:1, ***"My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation."***

The record of the career of this great spiritual statesman is recorded in the First Book of Samuel. It is quite significant that the record of that book prefaces it with the story of Hannah, leaving the impression that the history of the Children of Israel would have been quite different had not God used a pious mother to bring her son in faith to Shiloh.

So it is through all of history. Great leaders and champions have appeared upon the scene of life, not merely wearing the garments woven by their mothers, but also personalities of faith woven by their mothers.

On the other hand, the blackest pages of history tells the story of mothers too. How different the dark hour of history might be if the champions of evil had not been raised on selfishness, but had rather inherited the faith of Christian mothers.

But history cannot be rewritten. The story of man is and always will be the history of the conflict between the deliberate forces of evil, and the active love of God which He has revealed in Jesus Christ.

It is in the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Christian mother draws the power to do battle with those forces that threaten her

ability to love and forgive. As the demand for forgiveness, patience, and grace arise in her household, as her husband and children test her patience and provoke her, as her family daily stands in need of her love, she is driven to the God of mercy and grace for His help. And in Jesus Christ God gives the pledge that He does not fail her.

And as she brings the tokens of God's love, in grace and forgiveness, to her family, God's work is fulfilled in her, and her family is restored as His family. Thus as the faith of the Christian mother is expressed in her children, they will have good reason to thank and praise God and ***"rise up and call her blessed."***² Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ The Martin Luther Christmas Book, by Roland H. Bainton [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948], page 29

² Prov. 31:28