

A woman weeping

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Date: 07 May 2023

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[0:00] Poor thing. Why all these tears? Where have they all come from? What's going on? Well, we're going to look into this chapter in the first book of Samuel.

There's a small-scale story about this woman and her family. There she is. Let's see what she looks like now. She's childless, as we shall see. She's barren. She's in a low, low, low condition. She has distress of heart, and we'll see more of that in a moment. And she makes a request, and in the original language, that's a sha'al.

And that becomes an important few letters as we go through this book. There she is, praying. And this prayer has an answer. She asks, and the ask is given.

And in this particular instance, it's asking for a baby. And she has a baby. And the baby grows up and becomes an important person.

[1:36] And from that important person, other things flow. So there's a small story here, but it goes on to be a big story. And the big story of barrenness and lowness of prayer, of an answer, of a lifting up of what turns out to be a prophet, and a priest, and a priest, and a king, and a kingdom.

And not just any old king. It ends up with a forever king, and a forever kingdom. Because at the end of the day, this is the story of Jesus.

He is the vocal point of the big story of which this is a little part. So what we're going to do this morning is, I haven't got anything clever to do, but just to go through the text, let's enter the world of Hannah and Elkanah and Peninnah.

Let's walk along with them through this chapter. And I've got just some lessons at the end to reflect on what's been happening. So let's look first of all at the story.

It begins in the middle of nowhere. I've got, as you know, a slightly different text to yours, but let's try not to confuse ourselves. There was a certain man from Ramathayim, a Zulfite from the hill country of Ephraim.

[3:06] So I think that's more or less in the middle of nowhere. You know, like a small village in North Wales or something like that. This is where the story begins. And we have a man whose name is Elkanah, which means something like possessed by God or God owns or something like that.

There he is. And he has a good family tree. You've noticed all these names. The son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zulf, an Ephraimite.

Well, there we are. We've got his family tree. And what a blessing that is. I'm sure you're really pleased that you came along and heard that this morning. Anyway, we know his family tree. And I think he must be well off because he can afford two wives.

There's no question that he can't afford them. He can sustain two wives. They seem to have a three-year-old bullock that they can produce later on. So I think he's a well-off man.

And he has two wives. One of them is called Hannah. And the Han part means grace. So we're in a world where you name your children things to do with God.

[4:20] Grace. And there she is. And the second wife is called Penina, which means jewel. So two lovely names for these women.

And we're told that Penina had children. There's Penina. And Penina on the scoreboard has got multiple children. And on the scoreboard of children, Hannah has scored a duck.

Zero. Zilch. Hannah has none. Now then, that's the makings of the story. There they are. There's all the children.

And year after year, verse 3, this man went up from his town to worship. If I were to ask you, what are the most used words in this chapter?

I can tell you that I think the second most used word is go up. Interesting, isn't it? It's all about what happens as from time to time they go up.

[5:34] And where do they go up to? They went up from their town to worship and sacrifice. To whom? To the Lord Almighty.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? That their family routine goes around, not so much on their trips to Spain or whatever it is. But their family life hinges around these times where they go up and they go up and they go up.

To the Lord of hosts. What a wonderful thing to do. To have your life sort of rhythmized. That's not even a word, is it?

By going up to the Lord of hosts. And that's what they do. And they're going to go up a few more times. And they go up and they worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty.

Where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Well, we're going to find out more about them. They're not such good characters, I'm afraid. But the writer flags that up for us at this early stage.

[6:42] And 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.

But to Hannah he gave a double portion. He loved her, it says. And another factor here. She didn't have kids.

But it's not put that way, is it? It's put this way. The Lord had closed her womb. It's very interesting that he puts it that way.

It wasn't bad luck. It wasn't, it's not recorded here as being a medical problem. But it's something that sort of rather mysteriously and almost inexplicably has come from this same, the Lord of hosts. He and his sovereignty has closed Hannah's womb. And it's repeated just in case we didn't notice it.

[7:45] And because the Lord had closed her womb, verse 6, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. Let's come to that moment in a minute.

So we've got the characters here. We've got the man, the wives, the children, and the Lord.

And it would be a great mistake just to look at the human characters in this. Because I think the most used name is the Lord.

He's in here 23 times. The Lord of hosts. This is actually his story. But at this point, mysteriously, inexplicably, the Lord has closed her womb.

So let's see what effect this has. Verse 6. Because the Lord has closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her to irritate her.

[8:51] And this is written very strongly. You know, in the way that Hebrew works, if you double something, you want to intensify something. You want to make it strong. You say it twice.

So, the day you eat of it, you will surely die. The day you eat of it, dying, you will die. Said twice. Provoking she provoked her.

Provoking she provoked her. I'm just packing things. I'm just bringing the buggy. You go, oh no, of course you wouldn't, would you? I've just got the nappies and everything. Are you bringing any? Oh no, of course you wouldn't, would you? Because you've got no kids, have you? And they, you know, imagine they're talking. Oh, why hasn't Auntie Hannah got any children? Oh, the Lord's closed her womb, you know.

And just being provoked and irritated. And it uses a word, provoking her to thunder. I'm not quite sure how that word works, but it's in there.

[9:55] So, whether poor Hanina feels that the dark clouds are over her head and it's just rumbling down on top of her. Why don't you just leave me alone? And she's provoked with provocation to thunder.

Boom, like that. And why is this? Oh, the Lord had closed her womb. We're told that twice, aren't we?

And this happened year after year. Verse 7. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

Whether she was sort of protesting or whether she just didn't have the heart to put anything, you know, to eat anything. I just feel sick.

Do you want to eat something? I just, I can't eat a thing. I don't feel like this at all. Poor woman. She wept and would not eat. And there she's weeping and she's weeping and she's weeping.

[11:07] Poor, poor Hannah. Now, just as following the story through, here comes Elkanah, her husband. And I think, I don't think he's being completely insensitive.

But he's doing his best. Elkanah, her husband, would say to her, Hannah, why are you weeping? Well, actually, it's fairly obvious.

But anyway, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? I can't, I feel sick. Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?

Well, I think he means well. And I think he's trying to be nice. But he can't actually make up for it that she doesn't have the son that she wants.

And I ask, what's going to happen next? Well, what would you do? Some situation is making you more and more downcast, more and more sad.

[12:16] And even the people that you thought might be able to help you, like Elkanah, can't actually do anything about it. What would you do? Well, what does she do?

She prays. It's interesting, isn't it, that the Lord of hosts, to whom they go up year by year, and who has closed her womb, is a prayer-hearing God, and a noticing God, and a listening God.

And this we shall find as we go further. She prayed. Well, where does she pray? Let's just have a look. So, verse 9. When they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up.

Now, Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple. So, let's just see what I've got this in order here. Eli the priest was sitting in the doorpost of the temple of the Lord.

Now, I've heard it suggested that whenever doorposts are mentioned in the Bible, there is a suggestion and a connection with childbearing.

[13:37] Now, I haven't had the chance to look that up, but I put that out to you and just think, when the Lord came to tell Abraham that he would have eyes off, I think Abraham was sitting in the door of his tent.

But, I'll leave that, let's hold that thought and check up. Anyway, there's Eli sitting, where is he sitting? On a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple.

Well, it wasn't the temple then, was it? It would have been a tent. But the Lord's palace, the Lord's house, where the Lord was. And he's sitting there, and in bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.

Now, let me just look what I've got here. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.

And this is another doubling. With weeping, she wept. She really is upset, isn't she? And she really does come to the Lord with this deeply on her heart, but she's coming to the Lord of hosts.

[14:49] And she prayed to the Lord. She wept with weeping, and she vowed a vow. And she said, Oh, 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, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.

No razor will ever go up on his head, is what it says. Let's take this in order then.

So Eli was keeping watch. This is in verse 12. I think I'm probably going to get ahead of myself here. Let's just go back. Yeah, so she's vowed this vow, and the thing about the razor is that there was a way of expressing dedication to the Lord.

It's called being a Nazarite. And the way of expressing this dedication to the Lord was saying there will be no hair cutting. So Nazarites would not have their hair cut.

This is what Samson was, wasn't it? That he was dedicated to the Lord. And when his hair got cut off and that dedication stopped, he lost all his spiritual strength.

[16:23] So let's see whether I'm going to get ahead of myself on this. So here's Eli in verse 12. So there she is, weeping, praying, and Eli is watching.

And he notices these outward things. Now Hannah was praying in her heart. Her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So she's praying inwardly, but she's sort of mouthing things, but you can't hear what she's saying.

And he says to her, you've been drinking. How long will you, how long will you carry on with this drink?

Put away, what does he say? How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine. Well, it's a bit direct, isn't it? But a very big misinterpretation of her.

He reckoned her to be drunk. What does it say here? He thought she was drunk. In the original it says, he counted her as a drunk woman.

[17:44] Interesting, it's the same word that's used for the Lord counting people as righteous. She wasn't drunk. He treated her as if she was, and addressed her as if she was drunk, and told her to put away her alcohol.

Well, that was not, she wasn't actually drunk. The Lord counts people righteous, even though in and of themselves they are not righteous, but he addresses them as righteous, and treats them as righteous.

And that's how come we are right in his sight, because he counts us that way. We say, Lord, I'm not righteous, you shouldn't count me that way. And the Lord says, I count the way I like to count.

And it's not to do with you, it's to do with Jesus. And because of Jesus, I count you, I reckon you, as righteous, and I deal with you as such.

That's just a comment on the use of that word. Hannah says, no, I have not been drinking wine or beer. Verse 15, I've been, I'm a woman who's deeply troubled.

[18:53] I'm troubled in spirit, she says. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I've been pouring out my soul before the Lord. There's a great, what's the word, precedent.

For burdened souls, she pours out her soul to the Lord. She pours out her soul to the Lord. Have you ever been in that situation? That you've been so troubled, so perplexed, so low maybe, that you just pour out your soul to the Lord.

Well, here's the sort of invitation to do that, isn't it? What we do with our deep troubles, our deep perplexity, our guilt, well, here is what, we can do what Hannah does, and pour out our souls to the Lord.

That's what she's saying. I'm in, I'm deeply troubled, and I'm pouring out my soul to the Lord. So intense is this, that Eli thinks it's alcohol.

I'm just reminded of the time when the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, were so moved by the new coming of the Holy Spirit, and that intense sense of certainty, assurance, gladness, communion with Jesus, that people thought they were drunk.

[20:30] And they said, no, it's only nine o'clock in the morning, but this is the work of God. I mean, we, I don't think that the New Testament, that the Bible says we should be intense all the time about everything.

I don't think we could live that way. And different ones of us are wired up differently. But there are times when we ought to feel intensely, shouldn't we? We should care.

Whether it's in joy, or whether it's in sadness, we should be moved in our souls before the Lord. Ephesians 5.18 says, don't be filled with alcohol and controlled by alcohol, but be filled with the Spirit speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and so on and so on.

The sense of the Lord being reigning in our lives in that sort of way. Anyway, she says, it's not alcohol, it's concern, which I'm pouring out before the Lord.

And she says, don't take your servant for a wicked woman. A daughter of Satan is what it actually says. A daughter of Belial.

[21:47] Don't think I'm that. Please don't think I'm that. I'm not on that side at all. I'm, I've come here to the Lord of hosts. I haven't come here for any other purpose and in allegiance to any other king than him.

And she says, I'm praying here out of my great anguish and grief. So you can't get away from, the chapter is just full of her burnedness, her concern, her tears and her prayers.

She says, I've been vexed and provoked and I'm just pouring this out to the Lord. She really was a woman who cared, wasn't she? And I think I could ask the question, would we ever pray because we really cared about things?

And what would we really care about? Would we care about the fact that the gospel seems to have so little effect these days? Would that make us pray before the Lord with this intensity?

Would we care perhaps about our unconverted family? Would we pray with intensity for them? Remember the story of Augustine whose mother prayed for him day by day, it was her Monica, wasn't it?

[23:13] And her tears and her prayers that the Lord heard and Augustine, this is the ancient teacher of the church, was converted.

Would we care enough to pray like that? I trust we have been praying, I know we've been praying about appointing a new elder and let's not forget to keep on praying because this is something we care about, isn't it?

I don't say we have to be in tears all the time but I do think we have to care. So here she is and now Eli understands what's been going on and he says in verse 17, ah I see.

Now then, Eli was not without his faults and certainly his family was as well. Excuse me. But he does discern this.

This woman's really praying and the Lord is a God who hears prayer and something has happened here. Now I don't think we're told that we can always have this sort of sudden movement from burdenedness to burdened, relieved in this exact sense but Eli says, no, something's happened here.

[24:38] This has been real prayer and you have really cast this on the Lord. Go in peace says Eli and may the God of Israel give you what you have sha'ald, what you have asked of him.

May he give you the petition, you have petitioned with him. May he give you the sha'al that you have sha'aled. And Hannah says another wonderful Old Testament word, she says, may I find grace in your eyes.

And in this chapter we're in the world where God is the God of grace. That's the world as it really is. It's not always obvious to us, is it?

But here we can see it that the Lord Almighty, the God of hosts, the Lord of hosts is a God of grace. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see. It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.

[26:00] How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed. And here Hannah says, may I find grace.

And something's changed as she's prayed, hasn't it? She went away and ate something. What about that beef burger and chips?

Yeah, I think I could fancy that. Or whatever it was. Yeah, she's got her appetite back. There you are. Well, actually, that's a loaf.

And there's a strange expression here. So, in the NIV, it says her face was no longer downcast. In the ESV, it says her face was no longer sad.

But in the original, it just says she had her face. She got her face back. Which is an interesting way of putting it. Maybe before that she just couldn't look you in the eye.

[26:59] How are you today? Are you all right? But now she's got her face back. How are you? I'm fine.

How are things? I've been praying. I think the Lord has heard my prayer. She could look you in the eye. Her face was no longer downcast. She got her face back. That's her face.

And there's an experience here, isn't there, in the New Testament for the Christian person. In the translation, I remember, in 1 Peter 5, 7, it says, cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. I'm not sure whether it's the same in the modern translations, but that works for me. Cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. There's an art to this, isn't there?

Casting our cares upon him is not just going through a list of cares and then carrying them away when we finish praying. There is a going through a list of our cares, casting them on the Lord and leaving them with him when we go away.

[28:16] Do you see what I mean? And I think there's something we have to take ourselves in hand about. You're troubled, you have cares.

Yes. What are you going to do? I'm going to pray. Okay, what's praying? It's casting cares on the Lord. Okay, cast your cares on the Lord. Have you done that? Yes. Now then, have you left them with the Lord?

No. Leave them with the Lord, leave them in his care, and you get on now. And the reason is he cares about you, which is great, isn't it?

Jesus cared about this woman in the middle of nowhere because she had no children, and she's the focus of this story. And may we believe that the Lord cares about us in the city of Brighton, in this particular year, in this particular situation, and his ears are open to our prayer, and when we've prayed, he takes that upon himself, that we can cast our cares upon him because he cares for us. Let's see what happens next. So in verse 19, early the next morning they arose and worshipped, oh yes, before the Lord.

[29:37] And then they went back to their home at Rama. It actually says they entered their home at Rama, so there's a sort of hints of what's going on here. And Elkanah lay with his wife, sorry, Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife is what your NIV says.

Elkanah knew Hannah his wife is the way the Hebrew puts it. He knew her, the sort of intimacy in sexual terms, but an intimacy expressed in personal terms, the way the Bible puts it.

He knew her. And, whoa, in the course of time, Hannah conceived.

The Hebrew word for conceive is very similar to the name for Hannah, so it's something like harachana. She conceived. She's pregnant.

And, in the course of time, approximately nine months later, she gave birth to a son. Yeah! Round of applause.

[30:47] Fantastic. Little baby has arrived. There we are. And, she names him. Now, naming is an important thing.

name. And, this naming has got these letters in it, which I said were important. There's Sha'al, of asking. And, there's a M, U, that goes in the middle.

and, so he's called Sha'al, because I asked him from the Lord. And, where are we?

Yeah, it's in verse 20, isn't it? She called his name Shamuel, because I have asked him from the Lord. I Sha'al, and he's called Sha'al.

She remembered she'd prayed. Good for her. And, she was aware of answered prayer. I just say this to remind us.

[31:49] I don't know what you do in the way of prayer. I don't know whether you have a, you just think of what you're thinking to pray about, or whether you're a bit more deliberate about it.

I do commend to you, we've got a church prayer diary, which sort of covers everything in the course of a month. If that would help you, or maybe you've got a better way of doing it.

But, she, the thing is, she remembered. I prayed about that. So, you know, maybe a prayer diary is not such a bad thing.

What did you pray for? I don't know. I can't always remember things I've prayed about, can you?

But she remembered, answered, and she is careful to thank the Lord for it.

It's sort of closing the loop, isn't it? We asked, and then we receive, and we go back and say thank you. She was aware of answered prayer, because I asked the Lord for him.

[32:54] Okay, let's bring this to a conclusion. So, in verse 21, what do they do?

They go up to the Lord. When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go.

She said to her husband, after the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always. It's an interesting way of putting it, isn't it?

Forever. He will live there, he will dwell there forever. Interesting echoes of that, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

She has her eyes on something quite large, doesn't she? She doesn't say, I'll leave him there until he's old enough to go to university. He will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[33:56] When he's weaned. Now, I'm not a technical expert on weaning ages, but I think she would have weaned him later than we do in Europe. And the little baby will grow up to be a boy with long hair because no razor will touch his head because he's dedicated to the Lord.

There he is. Elkanah says, do what seems best to you. Stay here until you've weaned him. Only may the Lord make good his word, which is an interesting insight, isn't it? May the Lord make good his word. Now, as far as I can see, there's no particular word from the Lord, but Elkanah is working on the principle that the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel will work on, that the one thing you can depend on is the word of the Lord.

And human beings are going to go off in all directions, but the word of the Lord will be established. If God said something and promised something, that will happen, and that's the one fixed thing throughout this whole, this whole narrative.

And I also notice that there are sacrifices going on all the way through this. The woman stayed at home and nursed her son till she'd weaned him, and after he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephra of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of, oh, whose house?

[35:41] The house of the Lord at Shiloh. And probably just one worth noticing that there are sacrifices going on all the way through. I'm not particularly tuned up to the Levitical sacrificial system, but it's there all the way through.

And a three-year-old bull looks like that. You wouldn't put it in your handbag to take up to Shiloh. That's a pretty hefty animal, and I think an expensive animal too.

And interesting that all the way through this there are sacrifices going on. There is blood being shed. There are offerings being made to the Lord.

Offerings which he is accepting. It's all, if you like, covered by blood. That animal gets killed and sacrificed, and this is the context in which all this story happens.

And I'm just reminded that for Christians it's no different, is it? Our lives step by step, event by event, are covered by the blood of Jesus.

[36:47] Isn't that right? Is there ever a day that goes by that you don't need the washing of the blood of Jesus? Hands up. Is there ever a day that goes by where you don't need the precious blood of the Lord Jesus?

I don't think there ever is. and yeah, we don't go around sacrificing bulls and making sure that when we come to church we sort of line up, we used to have lines of buggies and lines of sheep and oxen and things out there and when it comes to coffee time we'll slaughter them and we don't do that do we?

What we have is the blood of Jesus and we remembered his blood in communion this morning and we remember it in our souls and our prayers day by day by day by day by day by day our sacrifice and they bring the bull verse 25 brought the boy to Eli and she said as surely as you live my Lord I am the woman that stood here praying to the Lord I prayed for this child and the Lord has given me the petition I asked the Hebrew word forgiven anybody here know the Hebrew word forgiven hang on let's just see whether anybody else knows do you know Nathan Nathan it's your name the Lord has given Nathan the asking I asked the sha'al I sha'aled it's a wonderful thing about God he's a giving God and he's given the request I requested echoes through the chapter I prayed for this child and the Lord has given me what I asked of him and therefore and this is an interesting twist of logic I'm not quite sure I've quite got my head around it but the logic she has is and now I give him to the Lord and his whole life shall be given over to the Lord in my translation the other translation I have lent him to the Lord as long as he lives he lent to the Lord well the way she sees it is this all I have is something that has been given to me by the

Lord so it's in a sense not mine to keep it's on loan and with that in mind I offer back to the Lord this that he so precious has given to me and I think she's got a right insight isn't it nothing that we have from the Lord is ours to keep and it's a right thing that everything that he's given we sort of offer back to him take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee take my silver and my gold not a might would I withhold that's the right thing isn't it and then sometimes the Lord will say well I don't need it just at the moment so you hang on to that but it isn't ours to keep and she understands that and gives back to the Lord her precious little boy and he bowed down to the Lord there and he worshipped the Lord there that's the way the chapter ends of course chapters are artificial but that's

the way the chapter ends it ends up with the

[40:40] Lord and all the way through the Lord the Lord the Lord it was the Lord who closed her womb but it's the Lord who's answered her prayer so let's just draw to a conclusion with a few reflections she prayed she prayed a right prayer when I came to the railway mission all those years ago in the 1970s there were what I took to be immensely old ladies with fluffy hats they were probably in their 40s who knows but anyway and they would say young man when the outlook isn't so good try the up look which is a good way of putting it when the outlook isn't so good try the up look when things aren't going so well try praying not bad advice is it and as we were singing you know it's not a classic old hymn it's a fairly in the scheme of things fairly modern hymn but you might not believe that but it's a true hymn isn't it what a friend we have in

Jesus all our what does it say all our sins and griefs to bear what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer when there's something impossible we can bring it to the Lord in prayer because the Lord is the Lord almighty he is the Lord of hosts it's a right thing to pray J.C.

Ryle the good gospel bishop of Liverpool back in the I don't know 1800s and somethings had a leaflet thing about prayer and he quoted what is said about Saul who was the persecutor of the church and how things changed when he met Jesus and the thing that said is in the AV which is what authorised version of the Bible the old version which J.C.

Ryle would have used behold he prayeth here's somebody whose life's been changed look they're praying I mean that's the thing about Christians isn't it the real believing Christian prays I know other religions pray and I know people can pray out of superstition so just praying isn't the only mark but it is a mark isn't it Christian people pray and I just want to encourage us to be people of prayer and to be a church of prayer what a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer and in James it says about Elijah he was a man I've got this in the authorised version too subject to like passions as we are and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it rains not on the earth by the space of three years and six months and he says well you know Elijah was like us you know he was fickle and he wasn't a superhero he prayed and the

Lord answered prayer I mean there's a thing he says well you could pray too couldn't you he prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit sorry about the old version it was a right prayer it was a single prayer how interesting it began with this woman in the middle of nowhere she didn't have a baby she prayed for a baby she called his name Samuel to dwell in the presence of the Lord forever and it's echoed and I don't want to steal the thunder of next week but it's probably worth just hinting at this it's echoed and actually almost some of the words are echoed by another woman in the middle of nowhere in the hill country in Galilee and she wasn't even married and she had a baby and he had a particular name Jesus not because he'd been asked it wasn't called Samuel or anything like that he was called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins and you know

[45:03] I'm not saying that that was a one-off wasn't it but who knows what God will do from a single prayer who knows where it may lead well it was a right prayer and it was a single prayer an avalanche can be caused by a single stone and it would be worth making a point of coming to the prayer meeting because the prayer meeting you're at might be the prayer meeting where that prayer is prayed which the Lord will cause an avalanche of blessing to come in months and years to come I remember Barbara Doust praying oh I guess perhaps in the 1970s Lord may this church be filled with people it wasn't filled with people when she prayed it oh we're sort of reasonably full now aren't we I mean that was a prayer that she prayed all those years ago and here is something that's yeah a single prayer a prayer to the

Lord it's important who we're praying to as I said he's behind the whole thing he was the one who closed Hannah's womb he was the one that they went up to each year and he was the one who responded to this which I don't think I pointed out to you where she says will you look upon your servant's misery and remember me and not forget your servant will you notice God is a God who

notices he knows our frame that we are as dust he notices will you look on my affliction why oh Israel do you say my way is hidden from the Lord look at the stars he brings them out one by one so that not one of them is missing so how can you say my way is hidden from the Lord he doesn't notice he's forgotten he doesn't it's not like that the

Lord notices the Lord knows look on my afflictions he says well he did and he did remember and he didn't forget and in verse 19 it said the Lord remembered it doesn't mean that the Lord got a bad memory and he just suddenly remembered like I suddenly remember I was supposed to pay the electricity bill or something like that it didn't mean that he knew all the time but he did decide to act yeah I knew all about that and I'm going to do something about it the Lord remembered her and he gave Nathan and he answered Sha'al he is a God who gives and answers and responds and he received the sacrifices and he looked with approval on that family and he took the loan that was given to him and he honoured it and it meant something to him and this is as Dale Ralph Davis in his commentary would say something like this is vintage Yahweh this is exactly who the Lord is this is characteristic and next week

Hannah's going to say he raises the poor from the dust and makes them sit with princes and that's what he's done in every Christian isn't it he's taken us from the depths of sin and made us to sit on the throne with Jesus Christ he's raised us from the depths and made us sit with kings and princes and even King Charles in the kingdom of God has no higher place than the poorest lowest believer who also sits enthroned with Christ in his grace and of course Jesus is the one who most fully went down to the lowest point and is raised up to the highest point and even invites us to come and share his throne with him it was a prayer to the Lord he is the Lord who has the big story of redemption and puts his redemption into our little stories too he is the Lord who came as a baby to a girl in the middle of nowhere and who was the one that the world was longing for even so come Lord Jesus finish this story by your return there's the baby what have I put there and Jesus needed no priest or bull or goat but his himself the fulfillment the ultimate prophet and priest and king the one who himself knows about us as individuals and will we not end up as the chapter does by worshipping glorifying thanking the Lord Amen