

Hannah More

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Preacher: Ruth Lukabyo

[0 : 00] Good morning. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak today, and especially on somebody that I really love.

Steve said I could choose whichever woman I wanted to, and it's a pleasure to choose Hannah Moore. I know you've had a series, so you've had Mary first, and I want to call her a woman of faith. Lady Jane Grey, I think she's a woman of courage, and Elizabeth Saunders, a woman of compassion. This week we're going to look at Hannah Moore, and I want to say she's a woman of words, of words.

So Hannah Moore, one of the reasons I love her was she's not like other women. She's not like the other women of her day who have children and stay at home and do embroidery and play the piano. And do some singing. She was actually really different. She was single. She was independent. And apparently it was said she had a smart pen and a smart tongue.

[1 : 10] So there are times where she could be quite sarcastic and quite brutal in what she said. Hannah was born in 1745 in England.

It was a trade town called Bristol where she was born. She was one of five sisters, and all of them remained single all of their lives. She was the sort of young one who was protected and coddled. Because she was so clever, everyone recognised that, and because her health was not good. But she wasn't just clever, she had a fantastic imagination.

And she composed her first poem, apparently, when she was four years old. Her father had been a teacher, and the sisters decided to follow his example, and they set up a school.

The older sisters were teachers, and the younger ones went to the school and grew up to be teachers as well. When Hannah was only 22, she got engaged to a landowner.

[2 : 14] His name was William Turner. It seemed that they were a good match, because they were quite good friends. She was often at his estate, and she took over the design and the gardens around the estate.

So she spent a lot of time doing that with him. And when the wedding day came closer, he put off the date. They kept on being engaged, then he put off the date again.

Then they're engaged for six years. Can you imagine? Six years. And then finally, the last wedding date, the ceremony starts, and he leaves her at the altar.

After six years. Isn't that terrible? You would think this is devastating. But there was, in that time, if you were engaged to someone, it was a really big commitment.

And he was actually legally liable to then look after his fiancée. So he gave her a generous yearly income each year for the rest of her life. And it surprised me, too, that later on they were reconciled and became very close friends.

[3 : 31] I'm not sure that I could do that. So is it? Hannah did not become bitter, even though this has happened in her life. But she really trusted God's plans for her.

And in fact, it's interesting that because she didn't get married, opportunities for her opened in a way that wouldn't have been open if she was a married woman. So Hannah moved to London. And she wanted to develop, you know, she wanted to be a woman of words to write. So she wrote plays for the theatre. And she published poetry.

And she became actually very successful. And she made some money. She started to hang out with the rich and the powerful and the educated in their salons, where they used to have, you know, evenings where they would have music and poetry.

She had grown up in an Anglican sort of traditional church. And we're not exactly sure when she was converted. But we've got a few little hints. There was, at one stage, she wrote a, she read a book, sorry, by John Newton.

[4 : 48] And she was really struck by it. So she then visited this minister's church. When she was so fascinated that she started talking to him a lot about faith.

And I think that's when she was converted. She did say that evangelicalism was a vital, experimental religion. And by that she meant it wasn't just the head, but it was the heart. Later on, John Newton, some of you might have heard of him. Have you heard of him? The most famous thing about him is that he wrote Amazing Grace, the song Amazing Grace. He became very involved in the abolition of slavery movement. And part of the reason was that he had been involved in the slave trade himself.

He had been on slave ships. He had seen the slave trade for what it was and the evil that was there. And when he became a Christian, he wrote this song, recognizing what he had done in the past, but celebrating the grace of God that had led to his forgiveness, the gospel.

[6 : 01] So Hannah became quite close to John Newton, but he also met another famous man, William Wilberforce. And again, probably some of you have heard of him, some not.

Soon they became close friends and they would work together as reformers in England. William Wilberforce was a very wealthy man. He was also a member of the English Parliament.

And like Hannah, he had a conversion experience. And I love the connections. He too had gone to John Newton. Newton became a mentor of his as well.

And Wilberforce, because he had been so struck by the gospel, he thought that perhaps he should give up his privileged position and perhaps be a minister himself.

But when he went to Newton, Newton gave him this advice. He said, Stay at your post and neither give up work nor throw away wealth. Wait and watch for occasions, sure that he who put him at his post would find him work to do.

[7 : 16] So Wilberforce's work became to begin to lead the campaign for the abolition of slavery. Wilberforce did lots of other things that Hannah got involved in too.

He, in the Parliament, put up laws and laws to try and change what was happening with the slave trade in England. He was also behind sending evangelical chaplains to New South Wales for us. So there's a connection with Australia as well. The most significant society, though, that they're involved with was the Society for Affecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

Before the slave trade, I want to tell you about...

I'm missing some slides here. Can I go back to the beginning? Stuck.

[8 : 42] Ah, thank you so much. The Sunday schools. The work that Wilberforce first encouraged Hannah to do to use her time and her wealth were Sunday schools.

This links in really well with the YouthWorks College, you know, the ad and the promotion. And I had to put this in because I love kids and youth ministry.

In 1789, Wilberforce visited Hannah at her home. And he went for a walk around the villages around her house. When he saw the poverty of the villages that were there, he was really quite distressed.

And he came home and he said, you know, we have to do something about this. The children cannot read or write. They don't know about Jesus. There were hardly any ministers there to care for their spiritual life.

And then he took Hannah and his sister, her sister Patty, to come and see what the villages were like. Hannah was troubled too. And she said, there was but one Bible in all the parish.

[9 : 52] And that was used to prop up a flower pot. So she was, you know, this didn't seem a place that knew anything about the gospel.

The women didn't know at first what to do. But they did hear about this new movement called the Sunday School Movement. And the Sunday schools, they were not like our schools.

They were actually church on a Sunday. They were real schools where the children of the lower class, who perhaps couldn't read or couldn't write, they met in the morning, sort of at the church, like we are here today.

And they learnt reading, writing, arithmetic. And then in the afternoon, they learnt to memorise the Bible and to memorise the catechism, which was kind of a summarising of what Christians believed. In the Sunday schools, the children who got good marks and were well behaved, won prizes like coins and books and Bibles and even combs and clothes.

[11 : 02] They also had picnics, Sunday school picnics. Has anyone been to a Sunday school picnic? It sort of shows my age that I went to Sunday school picnics. It's sort of, when they did it

was a big time of a feast at a rich person's house in the gardens.

And they used to feed people cake and roast beef and plum pudding. In Australia, I read somewhere that the children had been given sugared wine as well.

So, back in the day, interesting. I wouldn't do that today in your Sunday schools, Ash. These picnics were community events. So, the parents came along, friends came along, people in the community came along.

In one of Hannah and Patty's Sunday schools, 517 children came to the feast, to the picnic.

And there were 4,000 parents and friends watching on. So, these Sunday schools grew from these little villages and spread out because of the work of Hannah and her sister.

[12:11] Sunday schools. The other work that Hannah did was through her writing. She wrote many books. She was a woman of words. Early in her life, I said before, she wrote plays and poetry.

But she was encouraged by her friends to think about other ways to use this gift. And write short Christian stories instead. She wrote stories about ordinary people and their lives.

And stories that kind of had a moral at the end, a Christian moral. They were also produced very cheaply, so poor people could read them. They were called the cheap repository tracks.

And Hannah wrote over 100 stories. Stories like *The Apprentice's Monitor*, *The Carpenter*, or *The Danger of Evil Company*, *The Gin Shop*.

And her most popular book was *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*. She was trying to influence and bring the gospel to both children and their parents.

[13:19] And actually, she made a lot of money from these tracks as well. And used the money for the evangelical societies that she and her friends were setting up. And also for supporting ministers as well.

So she used her gifts to write these books and to do her writing. But also, she became very involved in the movement for the abolition of slavery with William Wilberforce.

So that's him on the screen. Now, the slave trade was an evil trade. Our slaves were transported from West Africa to the colonies.

And sold there. And many of the slave trips were British. Apparently, Britain was responsible for one-fifth of the slave trade.

Slaves also grew and produced goods like cotton and sugar and rum in the Americas and in the Caribbean. And then these goods were imported back to England.

[14:28] There were a lot of slaves in Britain itself, which I actually didn't realise until I was researching this. Between 1690 and 1807, there were around 1.8 slaves that were brought to England.

And Bristol was a big centre of slavery. The 500,000 of these slaves were brought to Bristol, where Hannah had grown up.

William Wilberforce and Hannah, they were part of a small group of evangelical friends called the Clapham sect. And it wasn't a sect like we think of a sect.

It was just a group of friends that met at the little village of Clapham. Hannah, apparently she was the only woman in this group, which shows how distinctive she was in the first place.

Wilberforce's friends convinced him that he needed to do something, and he used his position in the parliament. Meanwhile, Hannah and other friends worked really hard to shape public opinion.

[15:36] They gathered evidence about how terrible the slave trade was, evidence and testimonies, and went to different... You know, the rich and the educated went into their living spaces and explained what was happening in the slave trade, because many people just didn't know.

They didn't realise. They organised a public boycott on sugar. So people said, no, we're not having this sugar because it's produced by slaves.

I think this was really hard in England, because you know they're addicted to tea, and they had sugar in their tea. Another way is that the reformers tried to convince people of the evil of the slave trade was...

You can see this in this picture. They took this picture around to different people and showed a slave ship with 500 people packed side by side in chains.

You know, it's a really shocking picture to show this is what happens on one of those slave ships. Hannah also used her writing skills in their campaign.

[16 : 46] She wrote stories about slaves, such as *The Black Prince*, *A True Story*, and *True Stories of Two Good Negroes*.

You know, forgive the language. And *Babé*, *A True Story of a Good Negro Woman*. She also wrote a poem called *Slavery*.

In this poem, it was really powerful because it actually affected people's hearts, their emotions. She wanted them to think about, what if you were a mother and your children were taken away from you?

What if you were part of a family and the family was torn apart? What about if you experienced the suffering and the evil that these slaves feel? So I want to read the poem because it's so beautiful and so good.

This is the end of the poem. Slavery is no more.

[18 : 13] The dusky myriads crowd the sultry plain and hail that mercy long invoked in vain. This is the vision.

Victorious power, she bursts their twofold bands and faith and freedom spring from Britain's hands. And thou, great source of nature and of grace, who of one blood didst form the human race, look down in mercy in thy chosen time, with equal eye on Africa's suffering clime.

Disperse her shades of intellectual night. Repeat thy behest. Let there be light. Bring each benighted soul, great God, to thee.

And with thy wide salvation, make them free. It's beautiful, isn't it? And it was very popular. A lot of people were horrified and were shaped by this beautiful poem.

Hannah said, and she insisted, that slaves were human beings, just like white people, with families and children and dreams, and they were people made in the image of God.

[19 : 29] She called them one blood. Remember that from the poem? A really important phrase, one blood. This actually was an important phrase used by many Christians and even used in Australia.

Christians used it to, when they wanted to object to the treatment of indigenous people here in Australia. They said, these people are one blood with us.

So after all this campaigning, all the writing, all the boycotts, finally, in July 26, 1883, slavery was abolished in the British Empire.

Wilberforce's life object was achieved. He died three days later. And Hannah died two months later, after Wilberforce.

So, this is her when she's older. What can we learn from Hannah Moore? As I said before, many people have heard of William Wilberforce, but not of Hannah Moore.

[20 : 38] And like many women in history, her story is not often told, although she achieved so much, just like Wilberforce did. So what can we learn from her?

She had plans for her life that were disappointed. She had wanted to get married, and she didn't. But God had opened other ways that she could serve him.

Because she was single and financially comfortable, she was able to use the gifts that God had given her in a way that she couldn't have if she had been married. Her writing and her love of words had an incredible impact.

You know, maybe she wasn't in full-time ministry, but she was able to do good in her country and helped build the church. In the reading that we had today from Peter, the Apostle Peter encourages us to do the same.

To use your gifts to do good and to build the church. I want to read part of you, part of it. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

[21 : 56] If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised.

Through Jesus Christ, to him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. So in God's providence, where has God placed you?

Are you married? Are you single? Use your gifts. Do you have the gift of writing? Then write. Do you have the gift of speaking?

Then speak the words of God. Can you serve here at St. Paul's? Then serve. As Peter said, we should use whatever gifts we have been given to serve others, just as Hannah did, and did it for the honour and glory of God.

Amen. Let me just pray before we finish. Father God, we thank you for the life of Hannah Moore and all the other Christians who have lived before us.

[23 : 09] Thank you for the example they are to us, of people who believe the gospel and it changed their life, and they served you with a heart of passion and with perseverance through the ups and downs of their lives.

We pray that we might be like them, for your honour and glory. Amen. Thank you. Thank you.