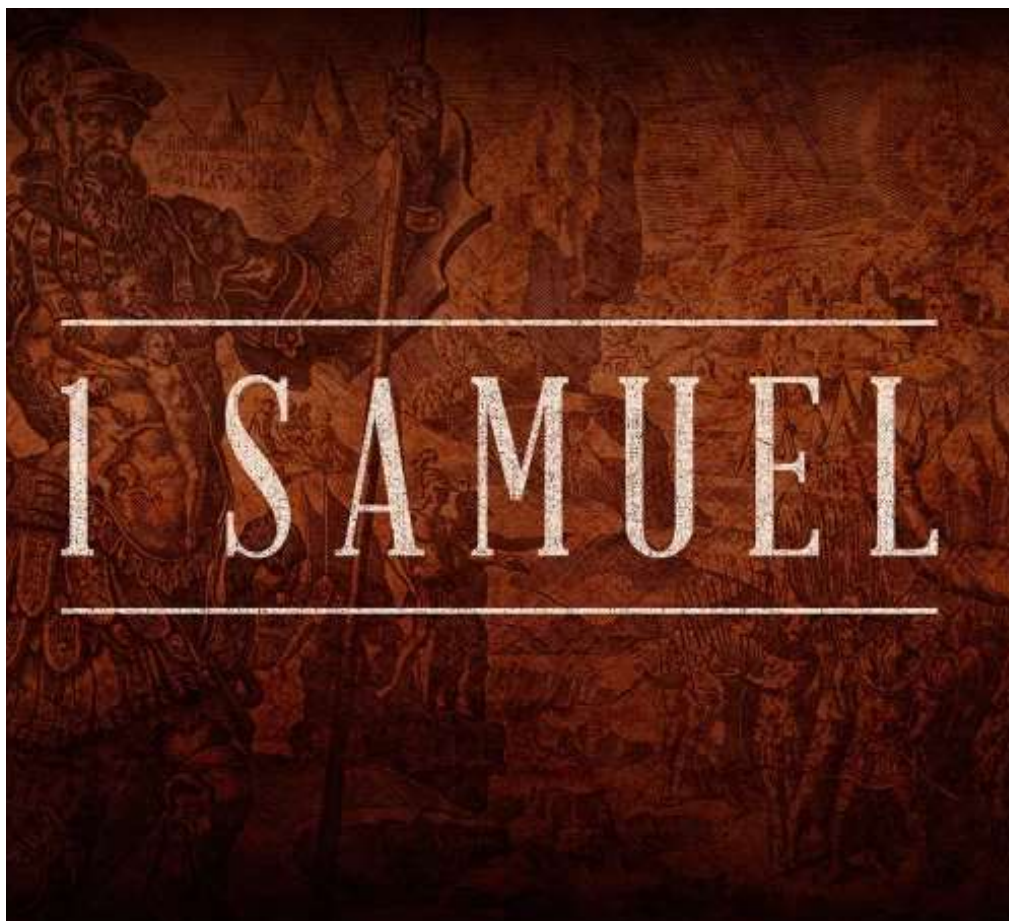


Let's Worship God

27th April - 2nd May 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 2:1-11: 1 Samuel's Theme Tune

James Bond films follow a certain formula: near-death experiences, explosions, chases, pretty girls, almost comical villains, flash cars, high tech gadgets, all-action pre-title opening scene, and the theme song with the opening credits. If you watch the title sequence closely and listen to the lyrics of the theme tune you can get an idea of the characters, themes, and direction of the film. Our passage today is a bit like that.

It is a song, or at the very least, a poetic prayer. It follows the opening scene of 1 Samuel: an ordinary family with an ordinary problem. We've seen tempers, tension, and teasing. We've felt the pain of Hannah's childlessness and the insensitivity of her family to that. Hannah has prayed in pain, and God has given a son, who she dedicated to God as she promised. The scene fades from view and the theme music starts. And like the Bond theme tune, all the themes and directions of the main story are here. If you want to get a handle on what 1 Samuel is all about, let your thoughts linger here.

As an aside, here is an important angle to consider when studying the Bible. Why is this section here? Why does the writer change style (whether it's into poetry, or parable, or prose)? What threads are here that ran through the previous section? Let the authors, and the Author, speak to you as they craft their story.

Back to the main point - why should we read of people and places we don't know, of events thousands of miles and thousands of years removed from us? Hannah's prayer shows us why. As Hannah looks at her situation and sees the help she has received, she sees it as a scale model of how God works. As a pattern of God's ways in the world, this prayer has much to teach us this week.

Questions

1. As you look over the passage again, pick out the threads that run through it from Hannah's personal story in the previous passage.
2. From what you know of the story of 1 and 2 Samuel (Samuel, Saul and David), pick out the threads in this passage that run throughout the rest of the narrative.
3. Look at all these threads and consider how you see God working in the same ways in the rest of the Bible, in history, and in your life.

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help us read the Bible as he wrote it - sensitive to the shape and form of the story.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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 honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:8

Praise: Psalm 113A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 2:1-11: The Rule of God

There are two threads that run through Hannah's prayer, and she weaves them together into one cord that sets the scene for the entire story. The first strand is the rule of God.

Hannah begins with her personal joy in God's salvation (v1) then moves to describe the God who saves. She starts with the incomparable God (v2): he is holy, on his own, one of a kind. He is unique, unparalleled, and unequalled. There is nothing and no one like him. In verse 3 she speaks of the knowing God, who weighs actions. Like a judge, scrutinising, studying, and weighing up the evidence to see if it matches the legal standard. He measures and marks our actions. He is the unrivalled judge, who intervenes in the lives of men and women. In verses 4-8 we see the extent of his rule. He rules over military forces, breaking bows and strengthening the feeble (v4). He rules over food, emptying the full and filling the empty (v5a). He rules over fertility (v5b). Here is an obvious reference to Hannah's own situation. The reference to bearing seven is not literal, but refers to completeness. The God who rules has brought Hannah to fullness of family.

Then we come to the stark and staggering words of v6-7. Every life that is taken - the LORD's doing. Every life that is given - the LORD's doing. Every penny that comes in - the LORD's doing. Every penny that does not come in - the LORD's doing. Every moment of glory - the LORD's doing. Every act that humbles - the LORD's doing. Our loved ones that are gone, who took them? "The LORD kills". The loved ones we're worried about: "the LORD brings down to Sheol (death or the grave)". The children we never had: "the LORD brings to life".

"For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world." (v8b) The whole world sits on his foundation. He built it, he put it together, he set all the rules in place. In verses 6-10 there are 58 Hebrew words. 18 of them are actions that the LORD performs. The LORD reigns. Not one bird falls from the sky apart from him. Not one cell is infected apart from his will. Not one breathe enters our body apart from him.

Questions

1. How would you explain God's holiness (verse 2) to a child?
2. Why is it a comfort that God rules over all things, "upholding, directing, disposing and governing all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest to the least, by his most wise and holy providence" (Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 5.1).

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the people in your life who need to know that God rules over them and their circumstances.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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 honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:8

Praise: Psalm 93A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 2:1-11: The Reversal of Human Fortunes

There are two threads that run through Hannah's prayer, and she weaves them together into one cord that sets the scene for the entire story. The first strand is the rule of God. The second is the reversal of human fortunes.

In v4-5 we're given three things God rules over: (military) Force, Food, and Fertility. But he's not just the great Ruler. He's the great Reverser too. On the battle field he smashes the mighty archer's bow, and the stumbling ones gird themselves up with strength. In the harvest fields, those whose bellies are full have to look for work, and those whose bellies were empty have them filled. In the family home, the barren (Hannah) cradles a beautiful boy and Peninnah, with her many children, is consumed by the misery of bitterness (revealed in her taunting of Hannah in chapter 1).

Reversing fortunes - this is God's way of working. Hannah has seen it in her life, she sees it in the world around her, and we will see it through this story. Like verse 4 declares: the mighty warrior Goliath will be felled, and David, who couldn't even wear armour will be victorious (chapter 17). As verse 5 asserts: Nabal will feast while David starves; Nabal will be struck down while God provides bread for David (chapter 25). The raised up king, Saul, will eventually be laid low. The LORD who rules is the reverser of human fortunes. This is the way he rules the world.

We get so discouraged by our weakness, as individuals and congregations. We look at the world and see power. We look at other churches and we see outward strength. We need to forget outward appearances and the way the world works - God girds the feeble and fills the hungry. "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Questions

1. From what you know of the events of 1 Samuel, can you think of other reversals of human fortune?
2. Where do you feel weak and/or laid low?

Prayer Points

1. Take your weaknesses to God in prayer and ask him to work through them in his strength.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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 honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:8

Praise: Psalm 136: 1-2, 11-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 2:1-11: The Rise of a King

There are two threads that run through Hannah's prayer. The first strand is the rule of God. The second is the reversal of human fortunes. She weaves both strands together into a thread that runs through the entire story of 1 Samuel: the Rise of a King. Her song begins and ends with similar images, though perhaps the image is blurred by our English translations. In verse 1 she says literally, "my horn rises in the Lord". In verse 10: "and raise the horn of his Messiah". The picture of a horn raised by God tops and tails her prayer. The horn is a picture of power, might, and strength: you don't mess with a horned bull.

Hannah begins by declaring in verse 1 that God has raised up, or exalted, her horn (strength) by making the weak one (barren one) strong. She finishes in verse 10 by proclaiming that he will raise up, or exalt, the horn of his anointed king (Messiah). Hannah has seen God the ruler reversing human fortunes in her life. She realises that her life is a scale model of how God deals with the world and with his people - the one who rules will reverse human fortunes.

The word "exalt" or "raised up" is the key word in her prayer, bookending it (v1, 10). It occurs again at verses 7 and 8, the heart of the song, drawing both threads together. The God who rules, the God who reverses human fortunes, is going to raise up the poor, needy, and lowly and set them with princes in the seat of honour (v7-8). He will give strength to his king, raising up, or exalting, the power of his anointed chosen King (v10).

This is the story of 1 Samuel. The people of Israel are going to reject God as ruler (8:7), seeking a human king like all the other nations (8:5). But God the King will overrule, and give them a king raised from the low place (a sheepfold), not even honoured enough to be invited to the family feast. He will be raised to sit with princes in the seat of honour. This is how God works in the world. So take heart, weak and lowly ones.

Questions

Who is the anointed one that God will exalt the horn (power) of (v10)?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for eyes to see God sovereignly working to raise the weak and needy in the world.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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 honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:8

Praise: Psalm 75 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - Luke 1:46-55: The Rise of THE King

The story of Hannah, and the story of 1 Samuel shows us that God rules by reversing human fortunes to raise his king. Hannah saw in her story a scale model of God's work in the world. We see in her story a shadow of God's greatest work.

1000 years after Hannah a young childless woman, whom God would miraculously give a child to, took up words of praise and prayer remarkably similar to Hannah's. "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour ... he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty". (v46, 52-53)

Mary understood that God rules. She understood that God is the great reverser of human fortunes. She understood that God would raise up his anointed king (Hebrew: "Messiah"; Greek: "Christ"). From dishonour, weakness, and unexpectedness, God would raise up, or exalt, the power of his anointed. This is God's way of working in the world. It was in Hannah's time, and it was in Mary's time.

And that's what we see when we look at Mary's Son, Jesus Anointed (Hebrew: "Messiah"; Greek: "Christ"). He was shamed and slandered because of his seemingly illegitimate birth (John 8:19). He was so poor he couldn't even pay a two coin temple tax (Matthew 17:24-27). He died like a rebellious slave in the most shameful way imaginable. Here is weakness, dishonour, and death.

But God raised his King. Raised him from death, dishonour, and shame to rule as King of Kings. He did this to show that "not by might shall a man prevail" (1 Samuel 2:9). The way of the cross is the way of victory. The way of the cross is the way of salvation. So don't be offended by the seeming weakness of God's King. God is ruling, saving, and blessing through the gentle and lowly one (Matthew 11:29)

Questions

1. How is Hannah a shadow outlining and a signpost pointing to Mary, and Mary's Son?

Prayer Points

1. Pray your way through Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46-55
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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 honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:8

Praise: Psalm 113A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 2:1-11: The Faithful and the Wicked

We return one last time to Hannah's prayer. It has been worth lingering here. As she considers God's rule of the world, where he reverses fortunes to raise up, exalt, and glorify his king, she presses home on the hearts of two groups of people in verse 9.

First of all, the faithful ones. Those who are faithful - faith-filled, trusting, relying, serving - are those who are guarded, and those who prevail. This was Hannah's own experience - she prevailed (v1). Look at yourself: are you mighty? No. But "not by might does man prevail" (v9). This should make us glad - it makes our work for Christ less daunting. It makes our remaining sin less daunting. "When I am weak, then I am strong, for his power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:10). His power is strong enough to keep us. We will be kept.

Secondly, she addresses "the wicked". Not just thieves and murderers, but all who reject the rule of God the King. Here's Hannah's advice: stop talking, thinking, and living like you will prevail and prosper by your own might. The bows of the mighty will be broken by God. He breaks in pieces his adversaries. Not by might will a man prevail.

The "shame" of acknowledging that you cannot prevail, admitting your own weakness, knowing that you cannot hold up the pillars of life by yourself, that is the path to the seat of honour at God's princely table. We can only get there when we realise we sit on the ash heap (rubbish dump) of self-sufficiency, and look to him who raises the needy in Christ (Ephesians 2:6). Not by might shall a man prevail. But by God's might we shall prevail.

Questions

1. Why does God "guard the feet of his faithful ones"?
2. How have you seen God guarding your ways in the last week?
2. What hope is there for the "the wicked"?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for those God has placed in your life who are still "the wicked". Ask God to show them the mercy he showed you.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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 honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:8

Praise: Psalm 20 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

If you have any queries please contact - rpchurchscotland@gmail.com