

1 Samuel 1-3

Today we continue our Advent series entitled, “**When God breaks in.**” Historically, God breaking in has twin peaks, *if you will* – the 1st was the incarnation of the Jesus Christ the Son of God, born in Bethlehem 2000 yrs. ago to be our savior. The 2nd is yet to come, it will occur when God breaks into this world at the return of Jesus Christ with great glory and power.

Now that said, God has broken into history & people’s lives throughout history. Last week we looked at Moses as God broke into his life in a dramatic way at the burning bush. Today, we’re going to focus on Samuel. God broke into his life as a child and called him to life-long service. But in order to lay a foundation for his story, we first need to look at the story of his mother, Hannah...

So please open your bibles to 1 Samuel, ch. 1.. Hannah is one of two wives to a man named **Elkanah**. Polygamy was not God’s pattern or plan, but it was widely practiced in the ancient world. And no surprise, it caused problems.... it was messy and fraught w/ pit falls. [I’m like “go figure,” I can barely keep up with one wife]. Well, let’s refresh our memories about Hannah & Elkanah.

[1 Sam. 1:1-2][Read]

This is a common theme in the bible. The pain of childlessness. And this was particularly painful in the ancient world – [Abraham & Sarah/Zechariah & Elizabeth] The expectation and importance of carrying on the family name was enormous. Hannah couldn’t do it **and it hurt!**

We can sympathize w/ her pain in the following verses...**[vv. 3-8]**
[READ]

What was Hannah to do? What are we to do in the pains of life?

Well, Hannah prayed. She cried out to the Lord.....

And specifically, she prayed that God would break into her life.

She knew that she was powerless to change her circumstances, but she also knew that God cared about her circumstances.

Just like He cared about the circumstances of His people enslaved in Egypt in the time of Moses. And just like He cares for your circumstances. Whatever you're going through today, Whatever that dark cloud is... God cares about you.. your fears, your anxieties, your pain..... **Here's 1 Peter 5, vv. 6-7.....**

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties upon him because he cares for you.

How can you know that? -Look how he broke into Moses' life

-We're about to see how God broke into Hannah's life

And isn't Christmas about God breaking into this world and into your life?

In love, God sent His only Son to be born and then to die for our sins on the cross. Christmas and the Cross, anchored in history, and along w/ the resurrection they speak to us of God's love every day [3 living monuments]. God cares. God breaks in. He cares about you body & soul, every detail, every pain. So look to Him in prayer! That's precisely what Hannah did

She cried out to God... here are some of the descriptions:

v. 10 she was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly

v. 15 [to Eli the priest] but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD

v. 16 I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.

So if you are going through a difficult time, cry out to God with great sincerity and dependence, believe that He knows & cares

& has the power to act in His perfect time. I prayed for a wife for 12 yrs.. I prayed for my dad's salvation for 15 yrs.

Hannah went up to the tabernacle at Shiloh year after year, but up to that point God closed her womb [v. 6]. So we need to persevere in prayer. *[God doesn't always work like McDonalds where you order and then pick-up it up at the window].*

But in time, God answered her prayer and Samuel was born. In fact, she would go on to have other children. So God broke into Hannah's life in a big way. What joy, but even before God answered Hannah's prayer she made a promise.. **[look at v. 11]**

And that's exactly what Hannah did. She sacrificially gave her son for service in the tabernacle. That's astounding!!!!

*But when God answers our prayers the proper response is to thank Him and to tangibly serve Him with our time, talents and treasures. We are to **sync** our lives to the God who loves us and serves us and breaks into our lives. The God who so loved the world that He gave His only Son. The Son who suffered and died on a cross for us. The Spirit who dwells in us and comforts us. When that Triune God breaks into your life it should elicit a response, it should result in service & sacrifice.*

How are you serving Him in this church? How are you serving your neighbor? How are you serving this community? How are you serving God's purposes and God's kingdom? It's a great time of the year to

serve and to give, and it's a great time of the year to **invite!**

Which actually serves God's purpose and reflects His character – God is a giver and we can give the greatest gift of all by inviting others to hear about the gift of His Son.

So invite someone to the Ladies Christmas Dinner and help w/

the meal. Invite someone to our Christmas Concert and bake some cookies. And invite to our Christmas Eve service. [W+2]

There are so many more things to glean from Hannah – *her song in ch. 2 mirrors Mary's Magnificat in Lk. 1 [there's some real Christmas connections in 1 Sam.]*. But let me quickly mention a contrast that begins to take shape in ch. 2....

-God broke into Hannah's life

-God broke into the lives of Eli & his sons

Simply put, Eli's sons were evil. They were the opposite of Hannah who humbly and sacrificially served God. They were haughty/not humble, selfish/not servants. Hannah cried out to the Lord in genuine relationship, the sons of Eli [though they were priests], did not have a relationship w/ God. It's stunning!

[Turn over to ch. 2, v. 12][read vv. 12-17]

Their barbeque & their stomachs were more important than the word of God that regulated the offerings. They were pigs, not priests. In stark contrast to them is Samuel [vv. 18-21] [read]

Then back to Eli's sons – [read v. 22]

Eli tries to rebuke them, but v. 25 [...they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.]

Eli should have done more than merely rebuke them, he should have relieved them. **Regardless, the die was cast, their fate was sealed.**

-They are contrasted again w/ Samuel in v. 26 [read]

-These same words are used to describe Jesus in Lk. 2.

So Samuel was a foreshadowing of Jesus, Eli's sons were not. And it's a sober reminder to us that God breaks into this world in different ways. He breaks in to help & save & set free, but sometimes He breaks in to judge – like the flood, like the tumors

that come upon the Philistines a few chapters later in **1 Sam. 5&6** – And ultimately God will break in with a final judgment. He's loving, but He is also just and he will punish sin... and so these sons were going to die on the same day.

Friend, don't trifle w/ God's judgment It's real! Eli's sons were religious, but also selfish, decadent, lustful, didn't listen to their dad & they didn't fear God. **How about you?**

You cannot live a double life and escape God's judgment.

But let's return to the contrast – Samuel. We're going to see how **God broke into Samuel's life one night.** [show all 3 pts.]

But before we do that notice that a *dilemma* has been created by Eli's sons. Unfaithful priests are working in the tabernacle, handling the sacrifices. So what God desired was **a faithful priest** who would serve Him and His people.

We see this in the prophecy Eli receives from a prophet in ch. 2. **[vv. 34 & 35][read]**

So the solution to this *dilemma* of unfaithful priests is **a faithful priest**....in the near term that's Samuel [a priestly figure who prefigures Christ], he will be a **bridge** to the priest in David's reign, but that **bridge** will one day span the years to Jesus - the perfect prophet, priest & king **forever!**

Like Christ, Samuel was born thru divine intervention & became a light in the midst of darkness. His were the days of Judges when everyone did what was right in their own eyes.....

Not surprising, this was also a time of little prophetic activity, God's word was rare in those days – **look at ch. 3, v. 1 [read]**

This leads into the night when God breaks into Samuel's life...

[let me read vv. 4-7].

Isn't that fascinating? Samuel didn't yet know the Lord, the word of the Lord hadn't yet broken into his young life.

It's a reminder that no one is born already knowing the Lord. Today that means that no one is born a Christian. We all need a 2nd birth. We all need a transformation// God breaking in// a personal relationship with the Lord.

But how does that happen? It happens when God's word breaks into your life. Romans 10 – *faith comes thru hearing and hearing thru the word of God.* Specifically the gospel, the good news of God's Son... and typically that takes multiple hearings. I began to hear it in Jr. High, but I was 20 when God's word finally broke thru my hard head and my hard heart. [Paul/Damascus] *Samuel wasn't hard headed or hard hearted, but it took multiple hearings. And then when he did hear, it was not an easy message he was called to accept and deliver. [read vv. 8-14]*

Who is going to fill the void after these sons depart and Eli passes away – which happens in ch. 4? It's Samuel! Samuel begins to speak God's word as a prophet [vv. 19-20 - read].

In time, Samuel begins to lead Israel, serving God & His people. *And I think Samuel gives us some valuable insights into Jesus Christ and God's calling on our lives...*

-First, God's initiative in calling Samuel to know Him. God's word came to Samuel. He called Samuel to Himself. In Rom 1, Paul refers to Christians as those who are "called to belong to Jesus Christ." It's a saving, effective, decisive, personal calling into a right relationship w/ God. **Have you experienced that?**

But it doesn't end there... God called Samuel to Himself and then He called him to obedience & service... but it wasn't easy. He had a hard message to deliver to Eli – *your house is about to fall under the judgment of God*. Regardless, Samuel obeyed & served the Lord. **Did you know the Christmas message is not really an easy message? What?**

...the baby Jesus in the manger, shepherds in their fields, the star of Bethlehem... “come on, what's so hard about that?”

But John Piper says that Christmas is an indictment – **why?** Because this world is disfigured by sin [including yours & mine] and that's why Christmas was necessary. That's why Jesus had to come.... but it wasn't easy –

See that manger? So peaceful. But now look above it. There's the cross. God's plan of redemption wasn't easy from Samuel to King David to Jesus [the perfect prophet, priest & anointed king who made a perfect sacrifice for our sins.] Light in the darkness! His obedience & service & message wasn't easy// neither is ours
[1 Pe. 2:9-12]

Just like Samuel & Christ, God calls us for life to obedience & service & to bear witness to His word..... but it isn't easy.

I heard a story on the radio this week. The host said there was some snow where she lived. She grabbed her 2 boys and started shoveling driveways to show loving service to her neighbors. But then she came to the home of the woman who had said some degrading things about her kids and their skin color. She said, “Lord, not doing that one.” But then the Lord began to work on her – do you only love those who love you? do you love your neighbor? She started shoveling and joy began to well up inside of her and that neighbor came out to thank her with tears in her eyes.

God called Samuel in times of darkness to Himself and then to obedience & service. God called His Son to be a faithful priest, in obedience & service to offer his life. A light in the darkness. And now God is calling us during this Christmas season and beyond to obedience & service. It isn't easy, but it is glorious!