

## eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, November 15, 2009

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas

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### The Lectionary Readings for the week:

1 Samuel 1:4-20

1 Samuel 2:1-10

Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18) 19-25

Mark 13:1-8

The passages for the week are centered on “places of worship” and have a common thread of “Where do I find God?” Well, where do WE find God? Hannah found God in prayer and its answer, Samuel. Those in the Book of Hebrews found God by encouraging each other to good deeds and fellowship as they lived lives of service. Jesus used the Temple and “current events” to show the presence and power of God in “everyday happenings”. Can we “see” God in our daily lives? Can we sense the presence of God in daily life? How can the God of Creation have the “time” to be involved in each of our lives? Is God somewhere “beyond the blue” or is God’s Spirit present with us. Jesus came as “Emmanuel”, “God with us” and has left us “His Holy Spirit” as a “mark”, a “place-keeper” to teach us, comfort us and to guide us into all righteousness. IF we can sense the very presence of God “looking over our shoulders”, does that encourage us to “sin” or to “do good things”? Do we see the Holy Spirit that we have “received from God” as a burden or a blessing? It all depends on our “attitude” does it not? The Jews worshipped in the Tabernacle and at the Temple where they encountered the presence of God. The Tabernacle and the Temple were a “symbol” of the Jewish theology as they portrayed a transition from the “world” in the courtyards and progressed into the “Holy of Holies” which only the High Priest could enter to repeatedly offer sacrifices for the people and HIMSELF. The Holy of Holies represented the presence of God at the “Mercy Seat” of the Ark of the Covenant. Can you see the same imagery portrayed in “modern church buildings”? Every day, well, almost every day, I pray, “God, you have given me this perfect day. Help me to not muck it up.”

### 1 Samuel 1:4-20

***On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"***

***After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazarite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head." As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer. They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."***

The two "books" of Samuel were originally one book. Its author is "unknown" but its "theme" is the establishment of the line of Kings from the birth of Samuel, the selection of Saul, the selection of David and until well after the Kingdom was divided. The Books of Samuel span the time from the Judges to the "theocracy" of the Kings of Israel. The books are important because they delineate the changes from a decentralized government to a central government with God as the "titular" head of the People of Israel. Governments and God have always been an admixture likened to "oil and water". In reality, there has never been a government "under GOD's sovereignty" despite what we print on our money or our monuments because humans LOVE control and power. Samuel's role as the instigator of "king rule" could be likened to the role of Moses in the establishment of the "People of Israel" under the Torah. The birth of Samuel is described but the birth story of Saul and David are not. The author obviously thought that the "main character" of the books was Samuel and gave him the prominence he felt Samuel deserved. Samuel was born about 1100 B.C.E. and David was born around 1040 B.C.E. for those of you who require a time line of events.

At the time of Samuel's birth, the Israelites "worshipped" God at Shiloh, a city about 5 miles north of Jerusalem, where the Tabernacle was erected. Male Jews were required to worship at Shiloh three times a year. This story probably

describes Elkanah's visit to Shiloh to commemorate the Feast of Tabernacles. Elkanah had two wives who he loved "equally". One wife, Peninnah, had children but the other wife, Hannah, did not because "God had closed her womb". Because Hannah was barren, Peninnah continually disabused her and caused her great grief. Out of her grief and remorse for being childless, Hannah prayed to God for a child. In repayment of the gift of a male child, Hannah promised God that the child would be raised a Nazarite who would not drink intoxicants or cut his hair. So, Hannah gave up the right to tell her son to "get your hair cut, or else"? Hannah prayed over and over for a son. She was seen in the place of worship praying without audible words coming from her mouth and Eli, the priest in attendance, thought her "drunk" and rebuked her. Once Eli understood the circumstances, he added his approval to the prayer request and asked that it be granted. (Little did Eli realize the importance of the son for whom Hannah prayed. Eli would be a central character and mentor in the rearing and training of Samuel.) Hannah ate, felt better and went home to get pregnant. But, it did not happen immediately. Sometimes, in our haste, we give up on God when we don't see immediate results from our prayers. Hannah went on with her life and trusted God to answer in "due time". The result of her patience and faith was the son, Samuel, who changed Jewish history and OUR history. "Mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow."

### **1 Samuel 2:1-10**

***Hannah prayed and said,  
"My heart exults in the LORD;  
my strength is exalted in my God.***

***"There is no Holy One like the LORD,  
no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.  
Talk no more so very proudly,  
let not arrogance come from your mouth;  
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,  
and by him actions are weighed.  
The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the feeble gird on strength.  
Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,  
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.  
The barren has borne seven,  
but she who has many children is forlorn.  
The LORD kills and brings to life;  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.  
The LORD makes poor and makes rich;  
he brings low, he also exalts.  
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 honor.  
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,  
and on them he has set the world.**

**"He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;  
for not by might does one prevail.  
The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered;  
the Most High will thunder in heaven.  
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;  
he will give strength to his king,  
and exalt the power of his anointed."**

This passage could be called "The Song of Hannah" or the "Magnificat of the Old Testament" in the same genre as "Mary's Song" and "The Song of Zechariah" in the New Testament. When Samuel was weaned, Hannah took him to Eli at Shiloh along with a "redemptive" offering as was customary for male children. After she dedicated Samuel to the Lord, she prayed the prayer recorded above. It is a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessed birth of Samuel in answer to the fervent requests of Hannah. Hannah's JOY is not in the child as much as it is in the God who has granted Hannah the child of promise. Worship is true worship when it contains the elements of PRAISE and THANKFULNESS. How better to express JOY, PRAISE and THANKFULNESS than in our SONGS? Little did Eli realize that his own sons would sin against God and Samuel would become HIS SON of promise. Isn't that just like our God? God puts blessings into our lives when we least expect them. How many of us have been given a "Samuel" in answer to someone else's prayer?

**Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18) 19-25**

**Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. [And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,**

**"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord:**

**I will put my laws in their hearts,  
and I will write them on their minds,"**

**he also adds,**

**"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."**

**Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.]  
THEREFORE, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary**

***by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

The phrase, “**Every priest STANDS day after day at his service,**” is idiomatic and meant to imply that a priest’s “work is never done” because their sacrifices do not remove or forgive sin, rather, they only “put them off” to another time and place. ONLY the sacrifice of Jesus, a blood sacrifice, freely given, willfully given, can forgive or “cover over” our sins. That is what makes Jesus our true High Priest and “worthy of our praise and worship” and the title of “Lord”. The author (it was NOT Paul) was obviously a scholar of scripture in that he freely quotes from ancient writings to support his thesis. In the field of logic, that “**therefore**” is a “linking word” that ties a substantiated truth to a “conclusion” or “proof” that restates the idea being “proven”. The first part of the scripture validates the priesthood of Jesus, his personal sacrifice that entitles him to enter the presence of God and it, also, ties our “sanctification” to our faith and obedience to the call of Jesus as “Lord”. THEREFORE, because of the lordship of Jesus, we can have confidence in the salvation we may attain through the “blood of the Lamb”. Why are we confident in our salvation? WE are confident because, “**he who has promised is faithful.**” I suppose that the words, “**with our hearts SPRINKLED CLEAN from an evil conscience**” also refers to Baptism? Or, do the words “**and our bodies washed with pure water**” refer to baptism? I’ll let the reader “chew that fat” and form their own opinions. I HAVE my opinion so, you form yours. The last sentence has often been quoted as the reason for our gathering together on a regular basis: ***to provoke one another to love and good deeds, encouraging one another and all the more as we see the DAY approaching.*** What “day”? The “Day” in this passage refers to the “Day of the Lord”, the “Lord’s Day” or does it refer to Sunday? Scholars tell me that it refers to the Day of our Lord’s RETURN or the “Second coming”. Our hearts must LONG for the return of our Lord to “redeem” us and to “take us home to be with Him” a la “**I go to prepare a place for you so that, where I am, you may be also.**” All who ARE alive, and, all who have lived, earnestly look forward to that glorious morning. Why would any of us “forsake” gathering with those who are also “awaiting our Lord”? WE have a three-fold purpose for meeting: to worship our Lord AND to provoke each other to love and good deeds AND to encourage one another to keep the faith by LIVING while we are ALIVE. Christ came to give us LIFE and LIFE ABUNDANTLY. In our nervous anticipation of the Day of the Lord, some of us have neglected to LIVE FOR CHRIST. “**THIS is the DAY that the LORD has made. I will REJOICE and be GLAD IN IT.**” We all have

“good days” and “bad days”. So, at the end of one of our “horrific” days, we should take heart that, live or die, we are ONE DAY closer to Heaven. That is, indeed, GOOD NEWS.

### **Mark 13:1-8**

***As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."***

***When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs."***

These verses are part of what the “God squad” refers to as “the Olivet Discourse” in which Jesus gives an enigmatic prophesy of future events in the lives of the Believers. Notice that the three Apostles asked Jesus PRIVATELY. Jesus foretold the destruction of the Temple, false teachers, social upheavals, natural disasters and parts of the events that would occur BEFORE His Return. He did not list HOW MANY or WHEN they would occur. He was merely telling them to be looking for His return. He intimates that it would be a LONG TIME so they should not be anxious. Early disciples falsely interpreted his Second Coming as imminent and withdrew from the world. Jesus was trying to give them HOPE that He would eventually return BUT they were to continue living, teaching, and exhibiting LOVE to those around them. We cannot be LIGHT, SALT and LEAVEN if we withdraw from society or “hide” in church buildings. We are to be “in the world” without being “of the world”. The “Great Commission” told us this important mission: “GO into ALL the WORLD and PREACH the GOOD NEWS of salvation...” Have we accomplished our “mission”? The Gospel message does not require that we journey to foreign lands or varied continents. The “mission” is to live lives of “examples” that show the Love of God to everyone around us. We must “grow where we are planted.” Living lives of purpose and service will cause the world to “see our ‘good works’ and glorify the Father, which is in Heaven.” Will we fail or succeed? As Paul said, “**To LIVE IS CHRIST, to die is gain.**” Do we truly believe in Jesus? Then, we are compelled to LIVE like we believe it. A “good” life is one lived with purpose and reflects the Lord of our lives. Every day has its challenges. Only by the GRACE of God can we have HOPE of eternity. Hear this: There is nothing we can do to EARN salvation or the love of God AND there is nothing we can do to LOSE the love of God. WE should live Godly lives because we are GRATEFUL for the

GIFT of Jesus and the GRACE, LOVE and MERCY shown to us through the SACRIFICE He made for each of us. ***“Have a NICE day.”***