

Holiness for the Holidays

1 Samuel 1:1-18

November 17, 2024

As the holidays are fast approaching, my think Lowe's has had their Christmas stuff out since August now. But the, the holidays are upon us now again already. My kids, they decorated our basement with Christmas stuff last week. The students they wanted to decorate down in the, the big room down in the student center last week. Thanksgiving is only 11 days away now. Christmas is coming and with the holidays approaching, I thought it would be a good idea to look at scripture and learn from someone in scripture who had a very difficult time during the holidays, but handled it in a very righteous way. This person's holidays were marked by being provoked by wicked family members who did it just to get a rise out of them. They found joy in provoking this person. This person's holidays were filled with reminders of who wasn't there, the empty seat at the table. This person felt the sadness that attended such absences. And to add insult to injury, there was slander, false accusations, and public humiliation to boot. And in the face of this external adversity, coupled with great internal sadness, this person's response is impressive and instructive.

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For us, beloved, it's instructive and imminently important, because who among us doesn't have at least one of these holiday adversities? Who among us does not have at least one of those family members who just likes to pick fights? Who among us doesn't have an empty seat at that table that we would like to be filled by someone who was in times past now gone, or someone that we would have hoped would be by now? Who among us doesn't deal with false assumptions, disappointments, embarrassments, or just family difficulty during the holidays? I think all of us deal with at least one, if not more of these aspects of holiday difficulties, and it is important for us to prepare our minds and hearts ahead of time for it, putting on the armor of God over our hearts, so to speak, as we enter into the season so we can be prepared to respond righteously.

So with that, as a bit of an introduction, turn with me to the book of 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel Chapter 1, I have titled this message Holiness for the Holidays. How to respond righteously amid holiday adversity. What we're going to see is a godly woman, Hannah, respond righteously to much sin against her. And it will be instructive for us to learn how to do so ourselves.

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Let me give you the outline up front. Then we'll read the passage and, and jump into our outline.

So in this message on holiness for the holidays, five points for you. The holiday practice, the holiday provocation, the holiday absence, the holiday accusation, and the holiday theology. The holiday practice, provocation, absence, accusation, and theology. Let's read the passage, 1 Samuel, chapter 1; we're going to read 1 through 18. "Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim, from the Hill Country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. Now he had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

"Now that man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to Yahweh of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were priests to Yahweh there. And the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, and he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; but

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to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but Yahweh had closed her womb. Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her because Yahweh had closed her womb. And so it would happen year after year, as often as she went up to the House of Yahweh, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat. Then Elkanah her husband said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?'

"Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of Yahweh. And she, bitter of soul, prayed to Yahweh and wept despondently. And she made a vow and said, 'O Yahweh of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a seed amongst men, then I will give him to Yahweh all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.' Now it happened, as she multiplied her praying before Yahweh, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart; only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.

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“So Eli thought she was drunk. Then Eli said to her, ‘How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.’ But Hannah answered and said, ‘No, my Lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before Yahweh. Do not consider your maidservant as a vile woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great complaint and provocation.’ Then Eli answered and said, ‘Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him. And she said, ‘Let your servant woman find favor in your sight.’ So the woman went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad.”

So we're going to jump right into our first point in our outline. Again, that first point is the holiday practice. The holiday practice in the first five verses is really just setting the scene, introducing the characters to us. It informs us of this holiday setting. The man of the family is Elkanah, and he lives in Ephraim, but his lineage is actually through Levi. His name, Elkanah, means created by God. He has married a woman named Hannah. Hannah's name meaning grace, the Hebrew word for grace.

Hannah, however, was barren. She had no children, and many commentators imply or presume that because Hannah was barren, Elkanah took a second wife to perpetuate his lineage. We don't know the reason for sure of his taking a second wife, but the text seems to imply that fact that Peninnah was second because she is the other wife. She's listed second and the word other here in the text. Often places refer to the second in a series. So the second floor in the ark, first, second, third floor, the second of many sons in other places.

Peninnah was the second wife. Penina's name, it means poofy hair or possibly fruitful. Maybe she was born with a full head of hair; that's what they, they named her. Now, while this man, Elkanah, he definitely erred and sinned in taking a second wife, which obviously created all kinds of family difficulties. He does seem, in the text, to seek to honor the Lord by obeying the law, to go up at least once a year to worship at the Tabernacle. Just to remind you, this is a day and age, the time of the judges, where everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes.

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There was grave moral rebellion across the country. But Elkanah seems concerned with keeping the law and being obedient to the Lord, worshipping the true God. In fact, this is the first place this name, Yahweh of hosts is used in Scripture. They're concerned with worshipping the true God. Elkanah went up at least on a yearly basis to worship the Lord, present offering before the Lord at the altar at the Tabernacle; presumably during the appointed holy days of Israel.

In Israel, all males were required, in the Law, to appear for worship before the Lord for Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Also two other times in the year, the Feast of Weeks and the Festival of Booths. This word translated in the LSB as yearly, in the Hebrew, it's the literal translation, from days to days. This exact phraseology is used only five times in Scripture, the first of which is in Exodus 13:10, where God commands them to observe the Passover and the Feast from year to year or from days to days.

Perhaps the author invokes this rare phraseology to tell us that Elkanah was faithful to go up and worship at the appointed

holy days designated by the law. And possibly it uses that language to indicate it's not just yearly, but he goes up for all the appointed days of worship. Whether or not he went up for the three appointed times a year, maybe all three himself, and once with his entire family, we can't know for sure. But overall, the text indicates to us that he makes the time to go worship the Lord regularly as the law indicates or requires.

But overall, the view of Elkanah that we get early on in the text is that he is concerned with observing holy days. He's concerned with obeying God's commands. He seems concerned with righteousness before God. But he, like Abraham, he greatly complicated his family dynamics by taking a second wife to produce offspring. So that is just a bit of the introduction to the family. Next we see in the text here one of their typical holiday dinners. Look again with me at verses 4 and 5. "And the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, and he would give portions to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters; but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but Yahweh had closed her womb."

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So while Elkanah was taking his sacrifice to the Tabernacle to be slaughtered, the priests would then take care of the animal, cutting it up, and they would repackage some of that to hand it back to Elkanah for him to take back to his family dinner. So while he's doing that, the ladies would be at home preparing the rest of the dinner, setting the table, getting everything ready. Elkanah would come home. The meat would be prepared. They would all gather around the table. And then Elkanah, and in modern parlance, he'd carve the turkey. He'd dish out the pieces.

He'd dish out all the different portions. He would give some to Peninnah and her entire gaggle of children there at the table. It says sons and daughters, so at least four, maybe more, possibly ten. But to Hannah, he would give a double portion, the prized portion to indicate that he loved her dearly. Even though God had closed her womb, even though she had borne him no children, he loved her dearly.

What we really have here in, in this text and what we're going to see is two women who both had what the other wanted.

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Peninnah, she had all the kids. She had been the fruitful wife and to her dismay and disdain, Elkanah still loves Hannah, even though in Peninnah's eyes, she's quite worthless as a wife.

Peninnah has all the kids, but Hannah has Elkanah's love and his favor. Peninnah probably thought, how could he love Hannah more than me? Look at all the children I have given him and she has given him none. Yet Hannah had her husband's love, even though Yahweh had closed her womb.

So this is kind of the setting of the scene, the typical holiday dinner in the Elkanah family. It's really an emotionally charged scene, and it would really take only the smallest spark just to light the forest on fire. But that brings us to point two: the holiday provocation. The holiday provocation. Look at verse 6, "Her rival, however," that is Hannah's rival, Peninnah, however, "would provoke her bitterly to irritate her because Yahweh had closed her womb, and so it would happen year after year. As often as she went up to the House of Yahweh, she would provoke her, so she wept and would not eat."

This word for rival can also refer to a second wife or a concubine. The word is most prominently used in the Psalms of, to indicate someone that you're in a relationship with, yet you're at enmity with. That's obviously the case here, because this woman, Peninnah would provoke Hannah bitterly. She would provoke her to maybe, possibly anger, but to tears. And it was really all for the sake of irritating her. That little in, in our English translation, that little preposition, to, in the Hebrew, it's a preposition meaning for the sake of.

So she, Peninnah, would provoke Hannah for the sake of irritating her, just to get a rise out of her. And the point that she would always provoke her with was the fact that she didn't have any children. We've probably all known at some point in our lives other young couples who are trying to have kids, maybe struggling to get pregnant. It's one of the most sensitive subjects. It's, it's heartbreaking to hear.

But Peninnah was so wicked, so hard hearted, that she would mock Hannah relentlessly for failing to produce children. Just imagine someone you know being mocked, let's say after a

miscarriage. The person willing to do such a wicked and heartless thing is among the most callous and cruel of peoples. This was Peninnah, and look at verse 7 again, "And so it would happen year after year. As long as she went up to the House of Yahweh, she would provoke her. So Hannah wept and would not eat."

The text here seems to indicate that this was a holiday tradition for Peninnah. Perhaps Elkanah was able to keep them separate the rest of the time. Separate living quarters maybe. But this unique time of year where the whole family came together, Peninnah would seize the opportunity to provoke Hannah to tears over this issue. Dale Ralph Davis, in his commentary, he writes up a little dramatic scene of what this might look like just to help us understand. We are to imagine maybe the family, they're together on the road. This is a 10-hour trip from where they live to Shiloh.

During this long trip, we can imagine one of Peninnah's little children, one of the naive children, who maybe this naive child innocently says, along the way, and we kind of all know

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those children who have no filter. They just say whatever comes to their mind. We're to imagine one of the little children saying, mommy, Miss Hannah doesn't have any children. What did you say, dear? As they're all walking together along the way, I said Miss Hannah doesn't have any children. Miss Hannah? Oh, yes, that's right. She doesn't have any children. Well, Mommy, doesn't she want children? Oh, yes, she wants children very, very much. Wouldn't you say so, Hannah?

Doesn't Daddy want Miss Hannah to have children? Oh, certainly he does, but Miss Hannah keeps disappointing him; she just can't have kids. Well, why not, Mommy? Why? Because God won't let her. Well, does God not like Miss Hannah? Well, I don't know. What do you think? Oh, by the way, Hannah, did I tell you that I'm pregnant again? Do you ever think that you will be pregnant, Hannah?

And year after year, baiting Hannah, irritating her, winding her up until the sobs broke out, Peninnah would do this every year. This is how Hannah spent her holidays. This was what the Christmas dinner was like for her, so to speak. Because this

whole scene is framed around the dinner table. There is this little interjection to let us know to fill in the details of Peninnah's unrelenting wickedness. But the scene is really around the dinner table. And when Elkanah would give Hannah that double portion of meat to indicate his love, it would just fuel the rage inside of Peninnah. It would just burn her that Elkanah loved her and gave her the prized portion of meat even though she had not produced any children.

And so, with that fire of envy in her belly, Peninnah would provoke Hannah at the tables, at the dinner table, and until the tears broke out. Hannah might have received that double portion of meat from Elkanah, but she was going to get a double portion of scorn from Peninnah there as well. Put yourself in Hannah's shoes at the holiday dinner table. How would you respond to such vile treatment? Let's look at how Hannah responds at the end of verse 7, "She wept and would not eat."

I'm sure most of us, if we were in her position, we'd, It'd take a whole lot to restrain us from going over the table at the other person, right? Hannah's response though, it's a

response marked by godly restraint. This reminds me, you don't have to turn there, but this reminds me of 1 Peter chapter 2. Peter writes this in 21, "For to this you have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. Who did no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth. Who being reviled, was not reviling in return. While suffering, He was uttering no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." We see the same kind of godly restraint here from Hannah. She's uttering no threat. She's not reviling in return, which leads us to think she is entrusting yourself to God who judges righteously.

Peninnah's holiday provocations were met by Hannah's godly restraint, and this is instructive for us when we are provoked by other family members who just want to get a rise out of us, how do we respond? We need to respond with a godly restraint like Hannah here. Now, there's one step further you can take in righteousness and that is heaping coals on their head with kindness in return, speaking kindly to their provocations. And we'll actually see Hannah reacting this way a little bit later. But here we see a godly restraint.

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Hannah is a woman of great faith with a remarkable level of restraint. Christ like restraint. How much more so should we who are empowered by the Holy Spirit and Christ as our example? How much more so should we endure holiday hostilities with the same kind of grace that Hannah did? So the holy response to holiday provocations should be a godly restraint, refraining from uttering threats and reviling in return. When provocations come, beloved, we should be marked by a godly restraint.

But now we come to point three: the holiday absence. Look at verse 8. But while the table is full of food, the seats are all filled with family members; there's a double portion on her plate. For Hannah, in spite of all of these things, there is still a gaping hole at the holiday table. She does not have one seat filled by one of her own children. That is why she is sad, why she cannot eat, because her heart is filled with the grief that she doesn't have a child, so she can't take in any food.

Peninnah's wicked comments, they only make it worse. But the sadness was already there. And such grief and sadness, it's understandable, isn't it? I think we read this, all of our

hearts really feel for this dear woman who wants children so badly but has been blessed by none. And absences in the family, whether loved ones lost, loved ones left, loved ones just not able to be there, or ones that we hoped would be. Like Elkanah here, these absences are acutely felt during the holidays, are they not? So many memories of those who are gone, hopes of those who might be. And such sadness is so very understandable.

And it's particularly because this kind of sadness is understandable, I think we're tempted just to let it go and maybe cover over it and let it be, not talk about it; take the hands-off approach to family sadness. Maybe Elkanah, maybe that thought went through his head. Just let her have some time to work it out on her own. Take the hands-off approach. But this year, maybe he had done that in years past, but this year he knows better than that, and he seeks to shepherd his wife ever so gently to correct her feelings. Look at verse 8, "Then Elkanah, her husband, said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

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Many people, even a few commentators, take Elkanah here to be an insensitive husband who really just doesn't get it, doesn't really care about his wife. But actually his words are very careful and they're gently corrective. And just to defend Elkanah a bit more here, Travis read from Psalm 42. Elkanah is also of the sons of Korah, and it's possibly his lineage that wrote Psalm 42, possibly his great grandson Heman.

But in Psalm 42, the psalmist uses similar language, a similar question, to counsel his own heart in verse 5, "Why are you in despair, oh my soul? And why are you disturbed within me?" And repeats the refrain in 11. And then in chapter tw, 43 verse 5, when we read Psalm 42, do we think, oh, how insensitive is that? No, that's how the psalmist counseled his own heart. It's because that's something that the family knew how to do.

Now, I think it is safe to assume that if Elkanah loves Hannah enough to gently correct her feelings, that he has then already resoundingly rebuked Peninnah for her wickedness. The text doesn't tell us that, but righteousness demands it. And if

he shepherded Hannah well, as we see here, we can assume that he shepherded Peninnah as well, silencing her.

So after silencing Peninnah, Elkanah gently confronts Hannah's wrong emotions. Elkanah asks Hannah a series of questions here, all getting to the heart of the issue. The heart of the issue is sadness of heart. Why is your heart sad? Elkanah asks Hannah. The word translated here as, sad, is actually the common word that's normally translated as bad or evil, the Hebrew word *yāra*.

But there are a couple of places where this word is used to refer to discontentedness, Deuteronomy 15:10, Nehemiah 2:2, other places that this word refers to discontentedness, and that really is the heart of the issue is she is discontented. She was sad or discontented regarding what God had not given her. And with this language, we see Hannah's sadness is wrong, it's unrighteous.

Now this doesn't even compare with the blatant unrighteousness of Peninnah's venomous lips. But

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discontentedness is sin, and Elkanah seeks to gently correct this in his wife. He didn't harshly rebuke her for crying. He didn't send her away from the dinner table because he was sick of listening to her cry, didn't want to deal with it anymore. What does he do? Gets to the heart of the issue, discontentment, and then gently points out to Hannah what she does have to be thankful for.

Hannah looked around the dinner table and all she could see was who wasn't there. She had no children there, that's all she could see, and that's really all Peninnah could talk about and remind her of, so that's all she could see. That's what the entire conversation was so focused on so far at the dinner table, and Elkanah gently takes her eyes off the absence of what is not and reminds her of what she does have.

I picture him as he's sitting at the head of the table with Hannah on one side and (Elkanah) Peninnah on the other. I picture him gently grabbing her hand or even turning her face towards his as her eyes are full of tears and gently looking at her and saying, "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" Dear

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Hannah, fix your eyes on what God has given you, not on what he has withheld from you. That's what He's telling her here; gently shepherding her wrong emotions at the dinner table. Men, that's shepherding right there, that is what gently correcting your wife's erring emotions looks like.

This is the kind of gentle shepherding that we need to exhibit all the time, but we have to especially be on game for emotionally charged holidays. Some people need to be rebuked for their loud provocations and wickedness, while others need to be gently corrected, having their eyes refocused on what God has blessed them with rather than what they do not have.

So men, you have to be ready to shepherd in emotionally charged situations. Be prepared ahead of time what you plan to do. Probably took Elkanah a few years to figure this out, but he was there, ready, planning, ready to respond. He shepherded Peninnah, silencing her provocation and then he gently shepherded Hannah so they could all finish the meal, which was an act of worship. This meal wasn't about the empty seat at the table. This meal was about worshipping God. If it was for the

Passover, the salvation that they had, Israel had been brought out of Egypt, rejoicing in God's salvation.

But nonetheless, it wasn't about the empty chair. It was about the blessings of God. Elkanah made sure to refocus Hannah on that. So Elkanah's righteous response here is to shepherd his family, gently shepherd the hurting heart through the situation by gently correcting wrong emotions. That's Elkanah's response. Now let's look at how Hannah responded to the whole situation. Then verse 9, "Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorposts of the temple of Yahweh."

So it seems as though Hannah received Elkanah's gentle correction. She composed herself and her heart for the dinner table. She stayed at the dinner table until it was over, out of respect for her husband, out of worship for God and then she left at an appropriate time after the eating and the drinking. The scene, you know, if you're watching a movie, it kind of dims out on the scene as we see Hannah get up from the table. It dims

and then it comes back. Eli is sitting in a chair outside the temple.

Then we come to verse 10 where Hannah comes back into the picture. She's there, verse 10, 'And she, bitter of soul, prayed to Yahweh and wept despondently." Hannah's soul had been filled with the sadness of having no child at the dinner table. It had been filled with the bitter provocations of Peninnah. Her heart was full of anguish and sadness and instead of pouring it all out on her husband, who could do nothing about it, she does the righteous thing and she goes and she takes it to God.

And I imagine Hannah, as she was waiting patiently as she composes herself for dinner. I imagine her there waiting at the table, just waiting for it to be over so she could run and pour her heart out to the Lord. I imagine her feeling much as the psalmist does in Psalm 42, "As the deer pants for the water brooks. My soul pants for you, oh God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before you? Oh God, my tears have been my food day and night."

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She gets there to the Tabernacle, and the floodgates open; she wept despondently. This is a Hebrew construction of verbs called a cognate infinitive absolute. It's a strong intensification of the verbs. It literally translates to weep. She wept. My paraphrase of that intensification is she absolutely bawled her eyes out. This is a good and righteous response to pour your tears out before the Lord. She has a problem that she knows only God can fix.

So she takes all of her grief, all of her sorrow, to the only one who can take her grief and sorrow away. She empties all of her tears out and the text tells us that she does what Paul tells us to do in Philippians 4:6 to 8, that "we should just let our requests be made known to God." And so in verse 11 says, she made a vow and said, "O Yahweh of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant through and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a seed among men, then I will give him to Yahweh all the days of his life. And a razor shall never come upon his head."

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Beloved, when your heart is full of grief and sorrow over only a problem God can fix, take your requests before him and let them be made known to him. Pour your heart out to him, for he loves and cares for you. This is the righteous response to holiday discontentment in our own hearts, seeking the good hand of God by asking him for our requests, and then our entrusting ourselves to him by being content with what he has already given us. And beloved, when you go to the Lord in prayer, you will be quickly comforted and reminded of what you have.

As the Lord often comforts us, as Elkanah comforted his wife. We'll often be reminded, in prayer, as we pour our heart out to God: Is He not more to us than ten sons? Whatever you are discontented over, when you go to the Lord in prayer, be reminded that you are his son, his daughter, his bride. Is he not more to you than whatever you are discontented over? You have him. What else could you need?

Again, we already read that, but the psalmist counsels his own heart with such truths when he says, "Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why are you disturbed within me? Wait

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for God, for I shall still praise him for the salvation of his presence." These are the righteous responses to holiday discontentment. Any discontentment, any sorrows that we face, we ought to engage in the gentle shepherding of others this way and our own souls.

Remind ourselves and others, often, of what we have to be thankful for; fixing our eyes on those things, namely God himself, but the many other blessings that we have, and take our eyes off of what we do not have, and chief among all of our possessions is Christ. He is ours, and we are his, that ought to bring us such great comfort.

And that brings us to the fourth point, the holiday accusation. Now if we think this night couldn't get any worse for Hannah, she gets falsely accused and publicly embarrassed to top off her holiday evening. Look at verses 12 and I'll read through 14, "Now it happened as she multiplied her praying before Yahweh, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Then Eli

said to her, 'How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away for your wine from you?'"

Until I was looking at this passage again for this sermon, I kind of always imagined in my mind's eye that this was a private conversation. Eli came over to address her quietly. I think you just read that it with a sense because of Elkanah's gentle care, but the text doesn't say that. The text previously says that Eli was sitting by the doorposts of the temple. And I remembered as I was studying this that later the text tells us that Eli is a very, very large old man who can't move very well. So this means he probably didn't get up to quietly talk to her. He was sitting speaking to her from wherever he was and wherever she was. This means he probably spoke from sitting in his chair, at a distance, of accusing her of being a drunk.

It's also important to remember that this is during a busy feast time. There would have been others there praying. So just imagine coming in here, we don't have prayer services like this, but you might be somewhat familiar where that's just a prayer service and you come in at will and pray for a while and leave.

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Imagine coming in for a prayer service, you're really upset about something. You're pouring your heart out to the Lord. After the tears have been soaked up, you're there praying quietly. Your lips are moving, but you aren't making any noise.

The Lord has soaked up all your tears by this point. And while your eyes are closed and you're there praying you hear, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put your wine away from you." And you look up and you look around to see who the drunkard is and to your horror, you look up and the pastor's talking to you. He's looking right at you. He's just called you a drunkard and now everybody else is looking at you. That alone would make most women burst into tears and run out the door from embarrassment.

But for this woman who is already emotionally raw, you would also expect her just to burst into tears and run out of the room. But in the midst of even this holiday embarrassment and false accusations, this woman shows her godly character. It shines like the noonday sun against Eli's pastoral malpractice. Look how she responds in verses 15 and 16. "But Hannah answered

and said, 'No, my Lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before Yahweh. Do not consider your maid servant as a vile woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great complaint and provocation.'"

She responds to this incredulous embarrassment with the greatest degree of politeness and respect. "No, my Lord", the greatest degree of respect. And then, with calmness and composure befitting a queen, she explains herself clearly and calmly, which really put any embarrassment back on Eli for his brash accusation. She clearly was no drunk woman, that was obvious. Everyone could see that with her clear and concise speech, her calmness, her composure.

But this is an absolutely remarkable response on the part of Hannah. And it is instructive for us that even in the midst of an emotionally charged holiday gone wrong, finishing a bad day with false accusations and embarrassments, they can still be met with Christlike kindness, composure, calmness. This is nothing less than the meekness of Christ on display right here.

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Beloved, this is really how we all ought to aspire to respond to such things. We ought to ask the Lord for this kind of meekness all the time, but particularly during the holiday season.

Let's seek to seek the Lord for the, the strength to respond this way with the meekness of Christ. But just to recap, the righteous response to holiday provocations is to utter no threats, not to revile in return when reviled against, but also in that case, respond with this kind of kindness and politeness and meekness. The right response to holiday discontentedness is to recognize it as a sin, confess it, and put on thankfulness by fixing our eyes on what is at the dinner table rather than what we do not have; what salvation we do have, not what we do not have.

The right response to holiday embarrassment, false accusations, is meekness, kind calmness that's under control in the midst of confrontation. But that brings us to a final point, the holiday theology. The holiday theology verses 17 and 18, "Then Eli answered and said, 'Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of him.' And she

said, 'Let your servant woman find favor in your sight. So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.'

If you look at the very end of that section, the very end of verse 18, if you have an LSB translation, you'll notice that little word *sad* is italicized. That means that it is supplied by the translators to help the sentence to make sense. That's because the literal translation of the Hebrew here is. "And her face was hers no longer," meaning that she went out with a very different face than she came in with. Her countenance had totally changed. She came in looking like a depressed drunk, that's how despondent she was, but she went out with a totally different face, implying a happy countenance, a contented countenance.

Hannah went away happy, but none of her circumstances had changed. By all worldly standards, this is impossible, and it ought to make you stop and ask, how could this woman walk away happy? What explains this woman? How could she endure so much in one evening for so many years and go home happy? And for all of us, we should wonder about this, because if we want to respond

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the same way to adversities as she did, we need to know the answer. We need to know how this was possible.

The author of 1 Samuel, I love, he does this all the time in 1 Samuel, he lets you wonder about that for the next nine verses and then he puts on display for us how Hannah could endure such treatment with Christlike meekness. Hannah could handle the holidays in such a way because of her theology. Look over at chapter 2 with me where her theology is put on display. This is her prayer. Mind you, this is after Samuel is born, but this was her theology before.

This is how she counseled her own heart. This is how she thought before. I'll read verses 1 through 10 in chapter 2. "Then Hannah prayed and said, 'My heart exalts in Yahweh, My horn is exalted in Yahweh, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I am glad in your salvation. There is no one holy like Yahweh. Indeed there is no one beside you. There is none, nor is there any rock like our God. Do not multiply speaking so very proudly.

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“Let arrogance not come out of your mouth, for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are shattered, but those who stumble gird on strength. Those who are full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, but she who has many children languishes. Yahweh puts to death and makes alive. He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Yahweh makes poor and rich. He brings low, He exalts, He praises, He raises the poor from the dust, He exalts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles and inherit a seat of glory.’

“For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's, and He set the world on them. He keeps the feet of His holy ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness, for not by power shall a man prevail. Those who contend with Yahweh will be dismayed. Against them He will thunder in the heavens. Yahweh will render justice to the ends of the earth, and He will give strength to His King. And He will exalt in the horn of His anointed.’”

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As we look at this Psalm, there's such rich theology in this prayer of Hannah. Even if we look back at the first verse, "My heart exalts in Yahweh. My horn is exalted in Yahweh. My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I am glad in your salvation." Hannah could walk away that day happy because her happiness was not rooted in her life circumstances. Her happiness was rooted in the salvation she had in the Lord.

When her, when things were bad in her life, her strength was in Yahweh, her unchanging God. This is what she could remind herself of when she became discontented, when her heart was filled with bitterness from Peninnah, when she thought with her emotions that God was not enough for her, she could remind herself of this, counsel her own heart. "Why are you downcast, O my soul, be glad in your salvation." She would think; she would go on, there is no one holy like Yahweh. Indeed, there is no one besides you. Nor is there any rock like our God. When things got really bad in Hannah's life, she knew she could stand with feet firmly fixed on the rock of her salvation. He would sustain her. He would keep her.

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She would trust in that, she would think, "Do not multiply speaking so very proudly. Let arrogance not come out of your mouth, for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, and with him actions are weighed." When Peninnah would boast before her about all her kids, when she would speak so very proudly against Hannah, Hannah would remind herself that God knows all, that he would weigh all of these things one day and make them right. She goes on, "The bows of the mighty are shattered, but those who stumble gird on strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven. But she who has many children languish."

She knows that God holds the power to reverse fortunes. He lifts some up, he humbles others, he gives children, he feeds the hungry. Perhaps she's referring here now to Peninnah, who languishes because Hannah has a child now. Now she does not have the love of her husband, and nor the only one with children. God gives children. He causes the wicked to languish in their sin. Verses 6 to 8, "Yahweh puts to death and makes alive. He brings down to Sheol. He raises up. Yahweh makes poor and rich. He brings low. He also exalts. He raises the poor from the dust. He exalts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles

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and inherit a seat of glory. For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's, and He set the world on them."

God is sovereign over all things. When there's a loss of life, the Lord's in control. He set the earth on its pillars. If he can do that, can he not order the affairs of your life? Hannah would look to him for comfort. She would trust in him and his sovereign design for her life. She would keep her trust in him, not losing hope. When she did lose hope, she would remind herself of these things. Verse 9, "He keeps the feet of His holy ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness, for not by power shall a man prevail."

Hannah knew that it was God who kept her from stumbling into sin. She knew it was by the power of God that she restrained herself from coming across the table at Peninnah. She trusted that the Lord would keep her and she would continue to look to him to sustain her, to give her strength to go on the next day, and trust that the Lord would continue to do so even if he never gave her children. And then verse 10, which is chock full of messianic hope, "Those who contend with Yahweh will be

dismayed. Against them He will thunder in the heavens. Yahweh will render justice to the ends of the earth, and He will give strength to His King, and He will exalt the horn of His salvation.”

Hannah knew that one day the Lord would make all things right. Those who contend with Yahweh by contending with his holy ones, his servants, they would be dismayed. He will one day bring justice upon the whole earth and give his King to rule in justice. He will lift the horn of his strength, the horn of the Messiah, the horn of the Anointed, to make all things right and to bring justice on the face of the earth.

Beloved, this is the same theology we need to know deeply, to be closely acquainted with, if we are to respond righteously in adversities, any adversities, holiday adversities, and the rest. You would do well to memorize this prayer, to meditate on it leading up to the holidays, to arm yourself, gird your mind with these same truths. This is a deep seated theology that Hannah had in her heart that allowed her to respond so graciously, so righteously in the face of such great adversity.

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Men, be prepared to shepherd your families with this theology this holiday season. Some may need to be rebuked; some may need gentle correction. But don't shrink back. It's your responsibility to shepherd your family in this way. Let us all respond with a godly restraint, with thankfulness, focusing on God and worshiping him with the meekness of Christ in the midst of this holiday season. And if we do so, we imbibe this theology, we know it well, we take it in our hearts, practice it. We can respond in this same way. So prepare yourselves for that and let's do this well together. Let's pray.

Father, I am so amazed as I read the Old Testament, the godliness of some of the Old Testament Saints. Lord, even in this example that we have of Elkanah shepherding his family, Hannah's righteous response to so much adversity, Lord, we know it's possibly because of all of the adversity Hannah faced that she was the godly woman she was. We know that trials perfect us. They put us through the fire and refine us. And she may not have responded this way on year one, but by the time we see her, she is responding this way.

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I pray that you would help us all to learn from her life, from her trials, to be diligent, to take in the theology that we know, but help us to memorize and meditate on these truths of your sovereignty, your goodness. Help us to be thankful for what you have blessed us with, taking our eyes off of the emptiness that might be there and putting it on all the fullness that is, namely in your son Jesus Christ and the salvation we have in Him.

I pray for the men, that you help us all shepherd our families well during this season. Really, every day leading up to it, as practice and every day afterward just gives us an opportunity to talk about this, but help us to be faithful to do that. I pray for all the women who maybe think their husband's gentle shepherding is insensitive, intruding upon their emotions and that they think are right. Lord, I pray that they would humble themselves and be gently corrected, that they would take that correction as Hannah did, that they would respond righteously to that; that they'd respond righteously to any holiday adversity. Lord, give us all the meekness of Christ

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today and tomorrow and through the rest of our lives. We pray in
Jesus' name, Amen.