Hannah: A Godly Mother
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-41

And for this morning, as you know, last week we finished 1 Timothy, and my wife said to me, “You’re not going to go on to 2 Timothy, are you? You really need to speak on mothers on Mother’s Day.” She always lobbies for that on Mother’s Day. And I said, “Well, I haven’t done that in a few years.” She said, “Yes, seven years ago you spoke on Hannah, and I think you ought to do that again this Mother’s Day.” And so I said, “Yes, dear, I’ll do that.” And that is what I’m going to do this morning, and I do it not with any reluctance, but joyfully and happily. Seven years ago, I did take a look at the profile of a godly mother in the life of Hannah. It’s been a long time, and I needed to refresh myself on the whole story, really, to get back into it, and I was again excited and thrilled about the prospects of what we can learn from this wonderful account.

Open your Bible to 1 Samuel, chapter 1 – 1 Samuel, chapter 1. Jay said in 1914 that Congress identified Mother’s Day as a holiday of some sort for our country, already on a Sunday, not really an official holiday, but having the stamp of government approval by formal act of the President, its observance was to be maintained. About six years before that, in 1908, Miss Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia observed the first Mother’s Day on her own, wanting to celebrate the memory of her mother. And believing that other people would like to share her feelings, she began to lobby across the nation, really a nationwide campaign to get the whole country to be alerted to the need for a Mother’s Day. And finally, six years later Congress affirmed that by signature of the President, and now it’s nationwide and it’s a tradition, a heritage. It’s reached beyond our nation to other nations of the world as well.

If you go back in our history to the earlier part of this particular century, you can read some very interesting tributes written to mother. If you happen to pick up some of the things that were written around Mother’s Day at various times, you get an insight into how people felt about motherhood in those days. I came across an interesting one by a man named W.L. Caldwell, written in 1928. Listen to what he said about mother: “Well may we pause to pay honor to her who, after Jesus Christ, is God’s best gift to men: mother. It was she who shared her life with us when as yet our members were unformed; into the valley of the shadow of death she walked, that we might have the light of life. In her arms was the garner of our food, and the soft couch for our repose. There we nestled in the hour of pain; there was the playground of our infant glee. Those same arms later became our refuge and stronghold. It was she who taught our baby feet to go, and lifted us up over the rough places. Her blessed hands plied the needle by day and by night to make our clothes. She put the book under our arm and started us off for school. But best of all, she taught our baby lips to lisp the name of Jesus,

and told us first the wondrous story of a Savior's love."

And then he went on to say, "The pride of America is its mothers. There are wicked mothers like Jezebel of old. There are unnatural mothers who sell their children into sin. There are sin-cursed, rum-soaked, and abandoned mothers, to whom their motherhood is the exposure of their shame. I am glad to believe, however, that there are comparatively few in this class," end quote. Few? Few unfaithful mothers? Few sin-stained mothers? Few shameful mothers? Maybe few in 1928, but not so few today. What is the state of motherhood in America? Are mothers still the pride of this land?

I found something else that was written as a tribute to mother in decades past. It goes like this, "The young mother set her foot on the path of life. 'Is the way long,' she asked? And her guide said, 'Yes, and the way is hard, and you will be old before you reach the end of it, but the end will be better than the beginning.' But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way, and bathed with them in the clear streams. And the sun shone on them and life was good, and the young mother cried, 'Nothing will ever be lovelier than this.' And then night came, and storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle. And the children said, 'O mother, we're not afraid, for you are near and no harm can come.' And the mother said, 'This is better than the brightness of day, for I have taught my children courage.'

"And the morning came and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary. But at all times she said to the children, 'A little patience and we'll be there.' So the children climbed, and when they reached the top they said, 'We could have not done it without you, mother.' And the mother when she lay down that night looked up at the stars and said, 'This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned strength in the face of hardness. Yesterday I gave them courage, today I have given them strength.'

"And the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth, clouds of war, and hate, and evil. And the children groped and stumbled, and the mother said, 'Look up, lift your eyes to the light.' And the children looked, and saw above the clouds an everlasting glory, and it guided them and brought them beyond the darkness. And that night, mother talked of Jesus, and said, 'This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God.'

"And the days went on, and the weeks, and the months, and the years. And the mother grew old, and she was little and bent. But the children were tall and strong, and walked with faith and courage. And when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather. And at last they came to a hill, and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. And the mother said, 'I have reached the end of my journey, and now I know that the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, for they walk with God.' And the children said, 'You will always walk

with us, mother, even when you've gone through the gates to the Savior.' And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed behind her. And they said, 'We cannot see her, but she is still with us; a mother like ours is more than a memory, she is a living presence.'"

It's a beautiful tribute, isn't it? It doesn't seem to fit with 1987 in America. It certainly doesn't fit with millions of abortions, mothers killing their children. It certainly doesn't fit with a couple million divorces, abandoning their children. It doesn't fit with nearly a quarter of all babies being born illegitimate, so that they have no home, no family, as families were meant to be. It certainly doesn't fit with millions of battered children, the victims of the anger of their mothers.

Caldwell also said, whom I quoted to you earlier, that "No nation is greater than its mothers, for they are the makers of men." He's right, you know. He's right. They are the makers of men. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Women will be saved in childbearing," 1 Timothy 2:15. What did he mean? He meant that the saving role, virtue, task, goal of women is to raise godly children. While on the one hand, woman might bear a stigma for having led in the Fall in the Garden of Eden, she reverses that stigma by leading in the producing of a godly generation through spiritual influence to her children.

But it all seems so out of date and so irrelevant to women who have decided that the real role of a woman is a career. In fact, I think the only thing that really remains of Mother's Day is commercialism. It certainly is not being perpetuated by mother-lovers, but it is being perpetuated by money-lovers. Motherhood in our day has been, frankly, devastated. It is mocked. Marriage is desecrated. Parental responsibility is shirked. Children are massacred by abortion. Mothers exercise selfishness, in their work and in their play, to fulfill their own satisfaction, with small regard for their children, whom they largely ignore.

But God's standard hasn't changed. And it is fitting that we take another look at what God intends motherhood to be: the highest calling a woman will ever know. "The godly women," Paul said to Titus, "are to teach the younger women to be lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children, chaste, pure, keepers in the home." A widow to be put on the list, according to 1 Timothy 5:10, was one who raised children, who brought up a godly generation. That's been God's standard all along. This is the design for women. It all started with Sarah, who was a gift from a God to Abram; Sarah, a model of faith, Sarah, a model of obedience, Sarah, who given a child late in life nonetheless demonstrated the faith and the sanctity of life that makes marriage and motherhood what it ought to be. There was the example of Rachel, whose last words before her life passed from her body were at the giving of birth to one of her children, whom she named Ben-Oni, a child of grief. There was Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and Miriam who fought for the life of that goodly child who was fair to God. Deborah, called by God a mother in Israel. Ruth, the gentle, sweet spirit who loved and sacrificed, and was blessed to be the mother of Obed, who bore Jesse, who bore David, of whose seed the Messiah came. And there was Elizabeth, that sweet, gracious mother of the greatest prophet who ever lived, John the Baptist. Of course there was Mary, the mother of our Lord.

But when the Bible details the honor due to a mother, no more detail is given to anyone beyond Hannah. We meet her in 1 Samuel 1. Hannah, her name speaks of her beauty; it means grace, and indeed she is the emblem of the grace of womanhood. She became a mother by faith. She first appears, as 1 Samuel opens, as a childless woman. Then she becomes a mother, the mother of one of the greatest men who ever walked the earth, Samuel. And as you see the account of the birth of Samuel, you note the profile of a godly mother.

As the book opens, it is the period of the Judges. There is no king in Israel as yet. It is a time of turmoil; it is a time of confusion. It is a time when Israel is vulnerable to the Philistines. It is a time when they are debauched morally. It is a time when their religion has grown cold. And it is a time for a great man to rise and take the leadership of the nation, a period of religious degeneracy, of political distress. With the death of Samson the country was divided and leaderless. The Philistines were hanging on the edge. The priesthood was corrupt. Moral scandals were rampant among the family of the priests. The nation was weak. The nation was impotent. And the worst of all, chapter 3, verse 1 says, “word from the Lord was rare in those days, and visions were infrequent.” God even had nothing to say. The nation needed a great leader, a great man, and God needed a great woman to shape that great man. And Samuel, one of the greatest men who ever walked the earth, was not only the product of the work of God, but the product of a godly mother. And she gave to her nation and the world the greatest legacy a woman can ever give, a godly child.

Verse 1 starts, “Now there was a certain man from Ramathaimzophim from the hill country of Ephraim,” that is around Mount Ephraim, “and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. And he had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.” He was married to two women, Peninnah and Hannah. Hannah, by the way, meaning grace, was a common Eastern name. As we are introduced to this story, I want us to note three things that profile a godly mother. She had a right husband relationship, she had a right heavenly relationship, and she had a right home relationship. Those three things stand out and profile her for us.

First of all, let’s consider her right husband relationship. And may I say that this is, at the very outset, essential for you to understand. The most important relationship in a family in raising godly children is not the relationship between the parents and the children, it’s the relationship between the mother and the father. What you communicate to your children by your relationship dominates their thinking. They are learning about human relationships from the two of you. They are learning about virtue, they are learning about sin. They are learning about love. They are learning about forgiveness. They’re learning about sympathy. They’re learning about understanding. They’re learning about compassion. They’re learning about virtue. They’re learning about honesty and integrity. They’re watching, and far more important than your relationship to your child in the long run is the relationship you have to your

spouse, that's projected to your child. And so at the very outset, the Word of God is clear to tell us the relationship between Hannah and Elkanah.

Now, first of all, let me say that it wasn't a perfect relationship; so ladies, you want to start out by realizing you're not married to a perfect man. That's a given. I want you to understand what the Scripture says. Hannah was married to a polygamist. Now, I don't know how that would sit with you as a woman, but I can guess. And I can also tell you that it didn't sit any better with Hannah than it does with you, to have a rival in the house, to have another wife in the house. And worst of all, she is producing boys and girls and Hannah has none, and so she is the unfruitful, unproductive wife who cannot give to her husband that which her heart most longs to give.

He wasn't a perfect man. The very fact that he was a polygamist indicates his imperfection. But understand this, this is a primitive time, and polygamy was a part of human culture; never God's design, never. God always designed one man, one woman, leaving their parents, joining together for life, and becoming one flesh, from Genesis on. But human society was rife with polygamy, and when the truth of God came into human society, it was so pervasive, polygamy, that it took time to root it out. Much like a missionary going today to a foreign field, giving the gospel to a civilization of people, and finding that those people turn to Christ, but are embroiled in all kinds of polygamous marriage relationships that take several generations to untangle. So it was in the ancient world.

And so Elkanah created for Hannah a very difficult situation. We don't know the details, but it may well have been that he went on to marry Peninnah because of Hannah's barrenness, and in order to produce a generation who could then possess his inheritance. And so that would even make the pain deeper, because Peninnah came to do in that union what Hannah could not do. Not a perfect relationship, but nonetheless a good one, a right one. Let me show you why.

First of all, they shared worship. Now, "this man," Elkanah, verse 3 says, "would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh." It doesn't mean he went once a year, it meant that every year he went. In Deuteronomy, chapter 16, verse 16, it explains the prescription; three times a year – yes, it was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. The man had to go to the place of worship. In this particular time, in 1 Samuel, the place of worship was at Shiloh, because that's where the Ark of the Covenant was located before it was transferred to Jerusalem. So at least those three times a year, all males had to go and do that, he did that. He was a worshiping man. And he went and offered his sacrifice to the Lord.

It notes in verse 3 that the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, who, Eli being the high priest, were also priests to the Lord there. They are evil men, and they are set in contrast to Elkanah. Elkanah was a godly man and a true worshiper, and the priest's sons, the high priest's sons themselves were evil, wicked men, as we shall see. This was a worshiping man. She had a believing husband, let's put it that way. She had a devout husband. She had a worshiper. He was not perfect. He was a

polygamist. And that was a violation of God's law, and any time that law was violated there were very negative consequences, and it always produces pain and heartache. And they had that in that family; you can believe it. And Peninnah rubbed it in that she had children and Hannah had none. But in spite of all of that, he was a man who believed in God, a man who worshiped God. To put it simply, she had a believing husband. And that's the first prerequisite for raising godly children.

I encourage you, as I always have, young ladies, when you get married, marry one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, because you need that spiritual headship. Hannah had that. And in spite of the difficulty of that polygamist relationship, she had a godly husband who was a spiritual leader. In contrast to Hophni and Phinehas, who though they were priests and sons of the high priest, were as fleshy and vile and debauched as men could be. And here is the first aspect then of a right relationship between a husband and a wife: they worship together. They worship together. Basic. Basic. Your worship is vital in projecting godliness to your children. That's why way back in the Pentateuch, the first set of books written, when God was establishing the laws for His people, in chapter 7 of Deuteronomy, He said, "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land where you're entering to possess it" – the land of Canaan – "and shall clear away many nations before you" – and He names the nations – "when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them; you'll make no covenant with them, show no favor to them." Then listen to this, verse 3, "You shall not intermarry with them, you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods." Stay away from mixed marriages.

Next to the last chapter of Joshua, in verse 11, repeating the same injunction, "Take diligent heed to yourselves to love the Lord your God; if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the Lord your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you, but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you." If you go back and intermarry, you're going to lose everything. Don't do that. That same injunction is repeated at a later time in Israel's history when they came out of captivity to rebuild, namely Ezra 9, verses 10 to 15. You come into the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians, Paul says in chapter 7, "Marry only in the Lord." In 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what concord has Christ with Satan? What fellowship has light and darkness?" And how can parents, Ephesians 6:4, raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord if one of them is an unbeliever? Now, bless God, by His grace He can overrule the fact that you have an unbelieving husband. It may well be that when you married, you weren't a Christian either, and you've been drawn to Christ and your husband has not. It may well have been that you married an unbeliever as a Christian, knowing you were doing it, and God in His grace can overrule all those circumstances. But nonetheless, His purpose is that the godly marry the godly, for the sake of the next generation.

Starting out, then, they had a shared worship; so vital. How you worship communicates volumes of information to your children. Are you faithful? Are you faithful to come and meet with God's redeemed people, week in and week out? Are you faithful to make the Word of God the priority in your life? Are you faithful that prayer should have a high place in your experience spiritually? Are you faithful to live what you affirm that you believe? In other words, the attitude of your spiritual devotion is communicating a Christianity to your children that they will have a hard time overcoming, if it in fact is less than it ought to be.

Secondly, they not only had a right relationship in their marriage because of worshiping together, but secondly, they shared love. Notice verse 4, "And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed" – one of those times when he took the trip to Shiloh – "he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and all her sons and her daughters, but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah." Stop at that point. He didn't love Peninnah. That's the implication. Peninnah was there to produce the children that Hannah couldn't have. Peninnah was there to create a future for his family, his inheritance. But Hannah was the one he loved, and he made no attempt to hide that. And when they went to offer their sacrifices, I don't know if you know how that worked, but they would go to offer peace offerings, and they would offer the offering on the altar there. The priest would take a small part, then most of it would come back to the family, and they'd have a feast. And when passing out the feast, he would give a double portion to Hannah, because she was the one he loved. This was a gesture in the East to an honored guest. She was the one who had his heart. And it was not just the love of emotion, it was the love of kindness, and the love of thoughtfulness, and the love of sacrifice, the love of honor. He loved her. And this love was her security.

Men, if you don't know it yet, you ought to know it; a woman's security is in your love for her, not in your bank account, not in a fancy house, not in new furniture, not in a retirement plan. A woman finds her security in your love, and it needs to be demonstrated so frequently that there's never a question about it. People wonder often why women tend to be suspicious of their husbands, and wondering if they might have some other attraction or be fooling around with some other person, and the reason is because it's so deeply rooted in a woman that her security is in the love of her man. And that's the way it was with Elkanah and Hannah. And she was secure in his love, because he took the time to demonstrate his love to her in very public ways, such as he had done at this feast in front of everyone. They shared love, and thus she was secure in that love; and she needed that, believe me, when he had another wife. Now, you wouldn't like that one bit, and neither did she, and she needed that security of love.

Isn't it interesting how God in His providence balanced things? Hannah had the love of Elkanah; Peninnah, who did not have his love, had the children that God allowed her to bear to receive their love. God was gracious to all of them. They shared love. Vital – vital in being a godly mother is sharing the love of your husband, so that there is a security there, there is a warmth there, a trust

there, a quietness there. There is the absence of anxiety and frustration, so that the woman can give herself to the children, and not always feel that she's got to be a beauty queen to win the affection of her husband. Once the husband with his love wraps that woman up and secures her, then she can give herself away to her children, and not have to feel that she must always fight the uphill battle to attract her husband.

Thirdly, they shared another thing. They shared feelings. Shared worship, their relationship to God was a common one. They shared love, and they shared feelings. Look at verse 6. "Her rival, however," – that's Peninnah – "would provoke her bitterly to irritate her because the Lord had closed her womb." It said that also at the end of verse 5, twice it says the Lord had closed her womb. What it's trying to say is this isn't Hannah's problem; the Lord did this. The Lord closed her womb. And this Peninnah would harass her, you know, that kind of thing, "Too bad you can't have any children, Hannah," just sticking the knife in. And it happened year after year; "as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she would provoke her so she wept and wouldn't eat."

Here she goes to the big feast. Elkanah is sympathetically, lovingly giving her a double portion. She won't eat anything, 'cause on the other side of the table, Peninnah's really rubbing it in that she has no children. The response – I would not want to be in Elkanah's position, trying to pull these two women together. But 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?" They shared feelings. Boy, he read her feelings and he didn't pontificate, he asked a question. Why are you doing this, Hannah? Haven't I been better than ten sons to you? Such a sympathetic heart; some of you women are writing this down because you want to remind your husband about that. I understand that. We can be very insensitive, very insensitive. And we can be very quick to give immediate answers to everything without hearing the heart. Not Elkanah, bless him. He knew the conflict, and he knew the conflict was intensified from Peninnah's side, and he knew that it was deep and painful and it was a hard, hard place for her to be. And so he was tender, and sympathetic, and thoughtful, and he felt her feelings in his own heart.

Why is this a godly woman? I'll tell you. The soil is right to produce a godly mother. She has a right husband relationship. They share worship, the deepest dimension of human life. They share love, maybe the next deepest dimension of human life. They share feelings, maybe the next deepest dimension of human life. They have a deep relationship. They move together in the presence of God, with one another, and over the issues of life that involve other people.

Secondly, as you profile a godly mother, she had a right heavenly relationship. Not only were things right between she and her husband – and by the way, there is no statement of any conflict in their union at all, no hint of any conflict – and a godly mother grows best in the soil of a godly, loving, supportive, sympathetic husband. But then she had a right heavenly relationship. She knew where to go with her problem –

right to the Lord, and there are several virtues that come out of this aspect. First of all, she had a passion for the Lord's best. Just use the word passion. She had a passion for the Lord's best. What do we mean by that? She wanted a child. She desperately wanted a child. She wanted a child so much that she wept and fasted. Her heart was broken over the fact that she could not have a child, but she didn't have a selfish motive, she didn't want a child to live out her unfulfilled fantasies. She didn't want a child to dress like little Lord Fauntleroy and show off. She didn't want a child to fulfill her own need for love. She wanted a child to give to God. She wanted a child because she knew that was God's best for a woman. And although God does not call all women to be married, according to 1 Corinthians 7, He gives some the gift of singleness, and although there are times when for God's own purposes He makes a woman barren, or a husband, so that no child can be born, it is still the norm, it is still the gift of God, His best gift to women to give them a child. Children are, after all, an inheritance from the Lord. And it is God who opens the womb of a mother and makes her heart rejoice.

She desired a child because she wanted God's best. She wanted to honor and glorify God, and she knew the best gift of God's love ever given to a woman is a child. And what I'm saying to you is that a truly godly mother is not a reluctant mother, not a mother who finds a child an intrusion, not a mother who will postpone the birth of a child as long as possible so that child doesn't crowd her schedule, and become upset when finding out that some contraception was ineffective. A truly godly mother, a woman with the heart of a mother as God would give a mother a heart, is one who longs to have a child – a passion for children, seeing a child as a gift from God, a special blessing of His love, a fulfillment of the divine intention for women and certainly a hope for the next generation to raise a godly seed. A godly mother longs to have a child. And has she no child, she weeps. It is not a whim. It is not an act of self-indulgence to prove her womanhood. It is that she knows this is God's best for women, and that her heart is unfulfilled.

I read the story this week of a mother who gave birth to a child, and the child died. And she was reminiscing ten years later, and said the tragedy was not the death of the child, but the tragedy was the death of motherhood. She could handle in this particular case the fact that the little one had entered the presence of God. She had a greater time trying to handle the fact that she could not be a mother. That's the heart of a woman who longs for a child. So she was characterized by passion for God's best.

Secondly, she was characterized by prayer. She knew where to go, and look at verse 9. "Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh" – obviously, she had perhaps eaten a little bit under the encouraging sympathy of her husband in verse 8. She now has completed that in Shiloh. "Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the Lord." The high priest is in the temple. She goes there. She came into the temple greatly distressed. Her soul was bitter, it literally says. And she prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. She is just crushed – crushed. And she made a promise, a vow. "O Lord," and she goes on to make her vow. But notice this about this godly woman:

she was a woman of prayer. It's a beautiful characteristic. She understood that God was the source of children. She understood that God alone could alter her sterility. Her distinctive virtue was her faith, constant faith. Verse 12, "It came about as she continued praying before the Lord" – constant. She remained there. She stayed there. Her heart was broken. She was pouring out her prayers. This is the spirit of true prayer.

It's a little bit of an aside, but, you know, we have to wonder where our compassions really are, because we pray so reluctantly. I saw an advertisement inviting me and other church leaders to come to a National Prayer Congress in Washington to pray that God would turn this nation around. And it said, "Come to the Prayer Congress. It will be held in the Hyatt Regency, featuring restaurants, theaters, a jacuzzi, a spa." I thought, "That's it. Let's go and pray in the Hyatt Regency in the spa" – really pretty sad. It just – maybe you can get a crowd to pray if the environment is first class, hmm? Where is the brokenness? Well, Hannah had no problem with that. She was not concerned about environment, her heart was breaking. She slipped into the sanctuary of God and she began to pour out her heart in honest, open faith, totally dependent on God and given to prayer. She knew it was God alone who would weave life in the womb, as Psalm 139 says. So her passion turned to prayer. This speaks of her right heavenly relationship. She knew where to go with her problems.

Thirdly, she was a woman of promise; not only of passion and prayer, but would you look at verse 11? She made a vow, a promise; said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction" – she saw childlessness as an affliction – "of Thy maidservant and remember me." It doesn't mean He didn't know who she was, but remember me in the sense of my longing for a child. "And not forget Thy maidservant, but wilt give Thy maidservant a son" – here's the promise – "then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head." That last little part was a Nazarite vow, described in Numbers 6:3 to 6. If a Jew wanted to take a vow of total consecration to God, he would not cut his hair, no concern for physical appearance, not drink the wine and the strong drink, abstaining from the banquetings and the celebrations and all of that, living an austere, consecrated, God-centered life.

Many Jews took a Nazarite vow for a short period of time. Three of them in the Scripture were lifelong Nazarites: Samson, John the Baptist, and this child, Samuel. All their life long, totally devoted and consecrated to God. No personal indulgence at all. No preoccupation with form, and looks, and fashion, at all. So she promised God, "I'll give You this child, I just want to be fulfilled as a mother, I just want to raise a godly son to give back to Your glory. And if You give him to me I'll give him back." This is her promise, to present her child to God. That's the essence of a godly mother. While praying for a child, she prays for that child not for a wrong reason but a right reason, to turn that child back to God, from where the child came. That's the essence of a godly mother – to give the child to God, to give the child to God. My mother only had one son, and I am that son. Before I was born she dedicated me to the Lord from birth, and told my father that she wanted a son who would preach the gospel. That's a wonderful legacy. And that may not be what every son is to do, it is not what every

son is to do, but every godly mother will give that child to the Lord for whatever he has; the same with a daughter. So Hannah made her promise.

The next thing we see about Hannah was her purity. Eli was the high priest, but I've got to tell you, he was really a lousy high priest. And nothing could be said about his discernment, either. "It came about when she was praying continually before the Lord, Eli was watching her mouth." Sitting off on a – he was a big, fat man. In fact, when his sons died, he was so shook he fell over, and landed on his neck and broke it and killed himself. So Eli was sitting there watching her, and she was in there pouring out her heart and weeping and crying. And she was speaking in her heart. She wasn't speaking out loud, it says in verse 13, only her lips were moving. Have you ever had that experience where you're really talking in your heart but your lips are moving, though not a sound was heard? So Eli thought she was drunk. Isn't he discerning? Now, I don't know anything about my discernment as relative to other people, or to Eli's, but I'll tell you, I think I know the difference between a drunk and a woman broken in prayer.

So Eli decided to play the spiritual role. "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you," he says to her. And Hannah is so gracious, and answered and said, "No, my lord, I'm a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. You misjudge me. Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman." That tells us a little bit about drinking wine or strong drink and its relationship to worthlessness regarding women. That's an Old Testament attitude. "Don't consider me like that. I have spoken until now out of my great concern and my provocation." Then Eli, hearing such a lucid answer, answered and said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you've asked of Him." It's sort of a mild apology. But he mistook her for being drunk. "Don't think your maidservant a worthless woman" – literally, a son of Belial, profitless. A common term, by the way, in the Old Testament, associated with idolatry, Deuteronomy 13; rebellion, 1 Samuel 2; lewd, sensuous acts in Judges 19 and 20; a term used to speak of arrogance and stupidity in 1 Samuel 25, and even murder in 1 Kings 21. "Don't think that I'm in that group. I'm not that kind of person." She was a virtuous woman, like the woman of Proverbs 12:4 and 31:10, she was a woman of virtue. She was a godly woman, she was a pure woman.

So what do we learn about this woman? She had a right heavenly relationship. She had the passion for God's best. She prayed in faith to God. She makes a promise to God and shows the motive of her heart. And now we find her purity. She is a woman who is not at all associated with people who are wicked.

The next one we see in terms of characteristics comes in verse 18 – I love this. "And she said" – responding to Eli – "'Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.' So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad." She could eat now, and she wasn't sad. You say, "Why?" I'll tell you why: because she had patient faith. She had patient faith. She gave it to God, what else could

she do? She wasn't about to remain frustrated. This is true faith. True faith doesn't pray, "O God, here's my problem, here's my problem," walk away in utter frustration. That's really doubt. Faith says, "Here it is, God," and walks away, and is no longer sad. That's trust. "I trust You." Very much the mark of a godly mother, one who totally trusts God – she casts her burden on God, and that's the end of it. She walks away. She eats. She is no longer sad.

There's another thing about this woman that I have to talk to you for a moment about, chapter 2, verses 1 to 10. She is not only a woman of passion, and prayer, and promise, and purity, and a woman of patient faith, she is also a woman – I love this – of praise. When God gave her the child, what was her response? "Hannah prayed, and said," verse 1, "'My heart exalts in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth speaks boldly against my enemies because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is no one holy like the Lord, indeed there is no one besides Thee; nor is there any rock like our God." And she goes on like that clear down through verse 10, praise, thanks, exaltation. Oh, this is a woman of praise. This is a woman with a thankful heart. When God did give her that child, she expressed that pure, unbroken praise that streams out of a thankful soul. In fact, you should read those ten verses carefully, because they are a masterpiece of praise, with all kinds of elements; much like Mary's "Magnificat," recorded in Luke 1:46 to 55, where she says, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and then goes down through those wonderful elements of praise at the prospect of the birth of her own child. A godly mother is known by her praise.

That's the pattern. She has a right relationship with her husband, they share worship, they share love, they share deep feeling. She has a right relationship with heaven. Her passions are God's passions. She is a woman of prayer. She is a woman of faith. She is a woman of purity. She is a woman of promise. She's a woman of praise. And finally, she had a right home relationship. Go back to verse 21 of chapter 1; she had a right home relationship. And this is with reference to the child in verse 21, "Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow." He's into his routine and he's a faithful guy, and he gathers the whole household and up they go. Verse 22, here we come to it, "Hannah did not go up." She didn't go. "For she said to her husband, 'I will not go up until the child is weaned.'" Now wait a minute. That's a couple of years, Hannah. Three years? I don't know exactly how long Hannah nursed little Samuel, but several years surely. "I won't go." It was only about a two or three week trip, at the longest, to go up there and be there for a week, traveling there, traveling back. It's less than 200 miles from one end of Palestine to the other. She wouldn't go, she wouldn't go at all. Why? She was dedicated to the child. When God gave the child, she was dedicated to the child. Back up to verse 19 and let's see how it all started.

"They arose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord." Husband and wife worshiping in the morning, isn't that beautiful, together worshiping the Lord? "They returned to their house in Ramah; Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. And it came about in due time after Hannah had conceived, she gave birth to a son, she named him Samuel saying, 'Because I have asked him of the Lord.'" Samuel means heard by God. And boy, once that child came, Hannah

said, “This is the child of my passion, this is the child of my vow; I will not forsake my time with this child. I won’t leave this child for several weeks. I won’t take this little child along and make it uncomfortable,” because they would necessarily walk. The child needs sleep, and the child needs the gentleness of home, the quietness of a nursing environment.

Boy, it’s a long way from what we see today, isn’t it? Women having babies, and a couple of months later slamming the baby in some care center and taking off for the job – not Hannah – totally committed to stay in the home until that little life was trained, till that little life was nursed and loved and cherished, wanting to speak to that little one of the truth of God, preparing for the time when the little one would be deposited in the temple itself. The child must have been at least three years old. Those were such important times – such important times, the little one learning from his mother and loved by his mother. No doubt she took the injunction of Deuteronomy and taught that little one all the time the things of the Lord. So necessary – give yourself to the child.

Such a child was a man named John Styles, the product of a godly mother. Listen to his sentiments. “I have worshiped in churches and chapels. I have prayed in the busy street. I have sought my God and have found Him where the waves of His ocean beat. I have knelt in the silent forest in the shade of some ancient tree, but the dearest of all my altars was at my mother’s knee. I have listened to God in His temple. I have caught His voice in the crowd. I have heard Him speak where the breakers were booming long and loud, where the winds play soft in the tree tops my God has talked to me, but I have never heard Him clearer than I did at my mother’s knee. The things in my life that are worthy were born in my mother’s breast, and breathed into mine by the wonder of the love her life expressed, the years that have brought me to manhood have taken her far from me, but memory keeps me from straying too far from my mother’s knee. God, make me the man of her vision, and purge me of selfishness. God, keep me true to her standards, and help me to live to bless. God, hallow the holy impress of the days that used to be, and keep me a pilgrim forever to the shrine at my mother’s knee.” Such was the testimony of Samuel in the years that Hannah dedicated herself to him. No higher calling on the face of the earth in human life than that kind of devotion from a mother to a child.

She not only dedicated herself to the child, but secondly, she dedicated her child to the Lord. Verse 24 – well, actually we need to read verse 23, we didn’t read it – “Elkanah, her husband, said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you, remain until you have weaned him, only may the Lord confirm His word.’ So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him.” And then at the end of verse 22, it said, “I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever.” And she dedicates the weaned child to God. So verse 24, “When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year- old bull, and one ephah of flour, and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, although the child was young. They slaughtered the bull and brought the boy to Eli, and she said, ‘O my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.’ And

he worshiped the Lord there."

What a scene. She sought nothing from him. She sought not that he have some great career in some big field and be famous, or make a lot of money so that she could brag about him. She sought not that he should be put in a situation where he could make sure he had enough to care for her in her old age. No, she gave that child away to God. Never, though, did she drop her responsibility for him. Look at chapter 2, verse 18: "Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy wearing a linen ephod." In other words, he was girded like a priest would be dressed as a little boy. His whole life was ministering before the Lord. "And his mother would make him a little robe," verse 19, "and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, 'May the Lord give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the Lord.' And they went to their own home. The Lord visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the Lord."

She never really let go of her responsibility; every time she came, she came with a new little robe for her growing Samuel. That's the result of godly mothering. And that's the insight that you never stop being mother, no matter how old they become. God blessed her. I wish we had the time to contrast the rest of the narrative, because the rest of chapter 2 into chapter 3 into chapter 4 is the sad, pathetic tragedy of the family of Eli. His sons were fornicators. They died, and he himself fell over, as I said, and died. It was a tragic, ugly scene. And the commentary of Scripture on Eli was that he could not restrain his sons from doing evil; and his wife is never mentioned. I don't know what part, if any, she had, but she was a long way from what Hannah was in producing godly Samuel. To be a godly mother involves a right husband relationship, a right heavenly relationship, and a right home relationship. Hannah had all of that. God honored it, and she gives us a model to follow.

In closing, let me ask a couple of questions. What does this say, and how do we apply this? First of all, ask yourself, are you a godly mother? Are you a godly mother? Are you preparing to be a godly mother? Are you, if you are already older, preparing younger women to be godly mothers? And to men I say, are you creating the environment in which your wife's godliness can have its best effect? And are you raising sons who will lead their wives to be godly mothers? And to you young people, I say, are you honoring your mother? Are you obeying your mother? If God has given you a godly mother, God has given you the best of gifts. None of them are perfect, but when they love the Lord Jesus Christ and have passed that on to you, they have given you the greatest thing they could give. Are you thankful? And there are some who say, "My mother was not godly." Are you praying for her? Are you praying for her and asking God's Spirit somehow to bring you under the influence of a godly woman, who can show you the things your mother never showed you? The hope for our society really rests in what happens in the next generation, and that is so much in the hands of godly women. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You this morning for what You have shared with us again through the leading of Your Spirit in the teaching of Your Word. We're refreshed. Refreshed again to see how clearly You have given us the pattern to raise a godly generation. Bless the mothers of this congregation. Forgive them, Lord, as I know You do, for their shortcomings, even as You forgive us fathers for ours. Strengthen them all. Those that desire to be mothers, keep them moving that they might be finally in that place where they can be a godly mother. Those that are presently mothers, may they look to the virtues that are exemplified in Hannah and make them their portion daily. To those who are beyond that, their children grown and gone, may they instruct the younger ones. And, God, we just pray that You will give children to godly women, children who will be raised to stand strong, to walk with faith and courage, to raise a yet second generation who will live to Your glory, if Jesus tarries. Father, to this end we pray with thanksgiving, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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