

Worship Material
What song shall we sing?
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 17th November

Begin with an opening prayer

Father God,
whether our hearts are full of songs of joy,
or songs of sadness,
we come before you this day,
offering you all that we are,
that our whole lives may become a song of praise to you.
Amen.

Read 1 Samuel 1:4-20; 2:1-10

Bible Notes

A new chapter in Israel's story opens with the birth of Samuel, who goes on to anoint Saul and then David as Israel's first kings (1 Samuel 10:1ff, 16:1ff). In an unstable and anarchic world, the tribes have no king to lead them against their Philistine enemies (Judges 21:25), and the shrine at Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant has been housed since Joshua's time (Joshua 18:1), is corrupted by Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:12ff). Yet here we find a devout family with a husband devoted to a wife unable to bear children. Hannah's inability to conceive is a common Old Testament theme – Abraham's wife Sarah and Jacob's wife Rachel are both childless for many years (Genesis 16:1, 30:2) – as is rivalry among wives for their husband's favour (e.g. Sarah and Hagar in Gen 16:1ff, 21:8ff). In Hannah's world a woman's infertility is more than a medical issue. It is seen as God's withholding the gift of sharing his creative power (v.6; cf Genesis 1:22), ample reason for mockery and humiliation. Elkanah's well-meaning compassion can't compensate for Hannah's lack of a son (1:5, 8). She has to endure Peninnah's persistent provocation, which is aggravated by the annual pilgrimage to a festival that celebrates the earth's God-given fertility. It has become an occasion for rehearsing her woe.

We can imagine Hannah's silent song as she worships – lamentation tinged with hopeful petition and promise. If only God would remember her by removing her shame, she would willingly dedicate her son to God's service (on the Nazirite vow of dedication see Numbers 6:1ff). She is empowered as she

prays, enough to correct the venerable priest Eli's misreading of her silent prayer and win his blessing (1:12-18). Her final act of worship is no doubt filled with songs of joy and thanksgiving. She leaves for home a transformed woman (v.18), and later conceives as a result of Elkanah's 'knowing her' and God's 'remembering her' (1:19-20). Surprisingly for modern readers, once Samuel is weaned, his parents leave him at Shiloh with Eli, his life an offering to God's service (1:21-28).

Prayer

We praise you, Living God,
for showing us in Scripture and in the world, that:
trust can triumph; longings can be fulfilled;
wounds can be healed; circumstances can change;
dreams can come true;
the light of your kingdom can overcome
the destructiveness of darkness
and your song of redemption will never be silenced.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Based on 1 Samuel 2:2

Lord, as we go into this week,
may we be confident that our lives
are built on the sure foundation
of you, our Rock.

Amen.