

Well, good morning.

If you don't know me, my name is Jerry Conner.

I've been with your church a number of times over the last while, but I'm the executive director for the Kansas City, Kansas Baptist Association.

It's the local association of churches that your church is a part of.

We have about 80 churches that are spread in the region that I try to keep my arms around in some form or fashion.

And it is a delight.

to be able to do that and it's a delight to be with you this morning.

Thank you for letting me be here.

Rob, I don't know where you ran off to, but I just wanted to tell you I really appreciated you listening to the Lord this last week and picking out the songs because the songs go really well with this message.

So, you know, he and I didn't coordinate this at all.

but that's just evidence that the Holy Spirit does what the Holy Spirit can do when he's arranging a service like this.

particular message, I'm not using slides.

We're going old school.

I'm old.

So we can do that.

But primarily because I want you to listen.

I just want you to listen to this one.

I think the Lord has something

He's done something in my heart as I prepared this message and my prayer has been he'll do something in your heart.

The sermon is titled Hannah's Hope.

And I think hope is something we all can use some of these days.

This is a message from 1 Samuel.

If you remember your Old Testament,

Hannah was the mother of Samuel, our prophet, Samuel.

And so this is an important story.

Hannah was an important woman.

Where would we be if we didn't have Samuel?

Well, if we didn't have Samuel, we wouldn't have David.

If we wouldn't have David, we would have all kinds of problems.

So this is really a very interesting and poignant and important story for us to be aware of.

This is Hannah's hope.

I'm going to read from 1 Samuel.

I'm going to read the first 20 verses from 1 Samuel.

There was a certain man from Ramathan, a Zephite, from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, son of Jeroam, the son of Elu, the son of Tohu, the son of Juph, an Ephraimite.

He had two wives.

One was called Hannah and the other Piniah.

Piniah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year, this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord.

Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife, Peniah, and to all of her sons and daughters.

But to Hannah, he gave a double portion because he loved her.

and the Lord had closed her womb.

Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.

This went on year after year.

Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

Her husband Elkanah would say to her, Hannah,

Why are you weeping?

Why don't you eat?

Why are you so downhearted?

Don't I mean more to you than 10 sons?

Once, when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up.

Now Eli, the priest, was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house.

In her deep anguish, Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly.

And she made a vow saying, Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me and not forget your servant, but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life and no razor will ever be used on his head.

As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth.

Hannah was praying in her heart and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.

And Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, how long are you going to stay drunk?

Put away your wine.

Not so, my Lord, Hannah replied.

I am a woman who is deeply troubled.

I've not been drinking wine or beer.

I was pouring out my soul to the Lord.

Do not take your servant for a wicked woman.

I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.

Eli answered, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.

And she said, May your servant find favor in your eyes.

And then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

Early the next morning, they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home in Ramah.

Elkanah made love to his wife, Hannah, and the Lord remembered her.

So in the course of time, Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

She named him Samuel, saying, Because I ask the Lord for him.

Let's pray together.

Father, we are grateful that we can come into this place.

And in this time, we pray that you would set this space and this time apart and make it sacred, a place where you meet with your people.

Pray that your word would be alive and active, sharper than a double-edged sword.

Father I pray that you would speak into our hearts and minds in a way that we know that you have spoken to each of us.

Father I pray that you would bring your message of hope and life to each of us in the places where each of us need to hear that today.

Father I pray that

you would allow me to say the words that you want me to say in the ways that you would want me to say them so that your people can hear from you and respond by faith to you.

And so, Father, we set this time apart for your purpose.

In Jesus' name, amen.

So,

What do you do when things haven't turned out the way you thought they would or should?

You see others and they seem to be doing so much better than you are and you have no way to change the circumstances of your life.

Or maybe you've been told, you know, you just aren't good enough.

You don't measure up.

Or maybe you feel forgotten by friends or family or maybe even by God.

We begin to believe that we're not important.

And there's this voice inside of our heads that says, You have no real purpose here.

And then you begin down this long, dark path that seems to be hopeless.

And you ask yourself,

Why am I here?

Hannah knew precisely what that voice sounded like.

The feelings of desperation and hopelessness that path leads to.

In Hannah, we have a woman who discovered a key to moving forward with hope.

And the Lord vindicated Hannah.

He validated her.

He proved himself to her.

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah.

Elkanah was apparently a man of some means and some standing in the community because it was somewhat uncommon for a common man to have more than one wife, and he had two.

He had Hannah, his first and his true love.

And she was, however, unable to have children.

which was a shameful thing in the ancient times.

Children, particularly sons, were a sign of God's blessing.

Elkanah would want a son to carry on the family line and to have an heir to pass on an inheritance onto.

And Hannah, his love, was unable to produce.

Perhaps he married Pinia for the purpose of having children.

the situation like Abraham and Sarah and Hagar.

Pinia no doubt knew Hannah was the favored wife.

But she had one thing over on Hannah.

Children.

She had produced.

Her life had meant something.

Hannah's, however, had not.

Elkanah was a devout man, a man destined to carry on the ways and practices of the worshipper of Yahweh.

Year after year he would make this pilgrimage to make sacrifices.

Year after year Hannah's grief would grow.

They knew that the Lord had closed her womb and the situation never changed and her despair became more and more bitter.

Pinea became known as the rival.

No longer known in this text by her real name, she was just called the rival, the adversary, the evil enemy, the one who provokes, the one who prods, the one who stirs up bitterness.

Hannah's name means grace.

And the gracious Hannah stored up all this despair inside of her.

Elkanah had taken his family to worship and to sacrifice.

Most likely commentators believe that this was probably the Feast of the Tabernacles that they would go to.

It was one of the three major feasts in the Jewish tradition.

Now he saw the grief of his wife and there was nothing he could say or do that would encourage her.

Hannah could take it no longer.

After the feast, in desperation, she stood up and she went into the temple, and in the bitterness of her soul, she poured out her heart with many tears, it says.

In her prayer, we find the real point of her pain.

It was not just that she had not born a son to her husband, but that she felt overlooked, cheated, forgotten.

rejected by God.

She had no reason to be, no purpose to her life.

Being the favored wife was not sufficient because in her heart she knew that she was not complete.

Her purpose was not fulfilled and she had no way to fulfill it on her own.

There was nothing that she

or Elkanah or anyone else could do.

She was at a loss.

She was not who she was supposed to be and she could not change a thing.

So how does Hannah find hope?

In desperation she cries out to the Lord for his attention.

Hannah pursues the Lord with passion.

And it was all that she had left of herself.

She was not playing games here anymore.

It was now or nothing.

Everything was at stake for her.

This was not a casual prayer, or this wasn't even a If it's in Your will, God sort of prayer.

This was everything in her heart laid out before Him.

In bitterness, it said, of soul.

Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.

This was a cry of desperation.

She had already determined her greatest need was not a son, but that her greatest need was to be made whole by God.

She needed God and God alone to complete her.

And so Hannah

makes a vow.

Not a deal.

A deal is where you take a risk that you hope will improve your life situation.

A vow is a commitment that you make that alters your life.

We don't make deals with God.

We open our life up to be altered

and to be permanently changed by Him.

And so in verse 11 it says, She made a vow saying, 'O Lord Almighty, if You will only look upon Your servant's misery and remember me and not forget Your servant, but give her a son, I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life.' Her need was for much more than a son.

She needed to know that God was real.

The same God who had led her people for many years is still on the throne.

She needs to know Him, that He has not forgotten her, but remembers her.

She says, Look upon your servant's misery.

Will you really look at my life?

Look at me, see me, meet me here and now, notice me, see my heart, see the long
the longing to be made whole and right and full.

See my discouragement.

See my pain.

You can see me like no one else can see me.

Do you see me, God?

Look and understand my pain completely, my hopeless condition.

I am lost without you.

Appear here and now.

Show up.

Stand in this gap.

You see, it was God's actions, they believed, that caused her pain.

He had closed her womb.

But she didn't accuse Him of anything.

She only wanted Him to see her misery.

And she says, Remember me.

The Hebrew word there for remember is zakar.

It's an interesting word.

It means

to mark so as to be recognized.

And she's saying, mark me, distinguish me from all the rest so that you can come back to me because I am going to need you again and again in my life.

Be my strength, value me as yours, make me yours and mark me as yours.

And don't forget your servant, she says.

Don't hide yourself from me.

Don't put me aside.

Give me a purpose that only you can restore to me.

There's a sense of future in this prayer because Hannah needs this ongoing relationship that she's entering into with her God.

And she's saying, Don't forget me because I am staking my future on you.

Hannah needed God to vindicate her, to clear her of all the shame and any blame.

She needed God to remove the doubt of her value.

She was not the point, but he was the point.

She was looking to him.

He alone brought her value as a person, and because of that,

She has hope in Him.

She didn't need God to prove Himself to her.

She needed God to be Himself through her, to her rival, to the rest of the world, that He was God and she belonged to Him.

That's where her hope

lie.

She can find her purpose fulfilled in him alone.

That's the only reason she can ask for a son that she's going to give back to him.

It's not about providing her husband with a son for his inheritance, but it was the strength of knowing the God who was her inheritance.

He was her future and her hope and no one else.

If only God would show himself to her, she would give it all back to him.

Now this was not some commitment of nobility.

You know, we sometimes pray these prayers.

If you'll do this, we'll give you all the praise.

If you'll do this, we'll give this back to you.

This was not that kind of a nobility sort of prayer.

She had gained more from him than that.

This was an honest commitment of trust.

She had gained more from him than she could possibly ever give back.

And so to give a son back

was only a small part of what she truly gained by having hope again.

Now, Eli the priest, he thought she was drunk.

Now, it was not uncommon to get drunk at a feast, and Eli was getting onto her.

But you know, there are many people who have drowned their pains in alcohol or other substances,

but not now.

Not Hannah.

She was pressing into the Lord with the passion of her whole heart.

She was pursuing him with all that she had left.

And so she said, not so, my Lord.

I am a woman who is deeply troubled.

I've not been drinking wine or beer.

I'm pouring out my soul to the Lord.

So do not take your servant as a wicked woman.

I have been here praying out of my great anguish and grief.

Folks, that is some serious kind of prayer.

That's the kind of prayer that we pray when we have nothing left.

And if God did not meet her, she was indeed hopeless.

She

empty without him.

Now Eli answered her.

He says, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you whatever you have asked of him.

When Eli answered, God's Spirit satisfied her heart.

It was in a moment, an instant, and it was complete.

There were no big bells.

There was no singing in the heavens.

There was no special circumstances that happened.

There was no flashes of light.

But things changed dramatically for Hannah in that moment in her heart and in her mind.

She viewed herself and her life completely differently from that point forward.

She said, May your servant find favor in your eyes.

And then she went her way, it says, and she ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

You see, by faith, her heart became alive, and she moved forward in faith.

This is where everything changed for Hannah.

It's in this moment that her hope was restored.

A hope that endured because something changed inside of her heart.

Her circumstances had not changed.

She had not received a child.

She had not even received the idea of when or if or might she have a child.

There was no mention of a child by God in any of this.

But her trust in the Lord changed, and she moved forward in faith of her hope.

And you see, that's what hope is.

Hope is the yet-to-be-realized reality.

Hope is the yet-to-be-realized reality.

It's really seeing

what's coming.

And for her what's coming wasn't a child.

For her what's coming was God Himself.

And that's where she could find hope.

Hannah's hope was restored before her circumstances ever changed.

The miracle that Hannah needed and hoped for

happened in verse 18, not in verse 20 where she becomes pregnant.

Her circumstances didn't change at the altar, but she went into the presence of God carrying

hopelessness and she came out of the presence of God carrying hope.

Hope is not found in getting the circumstances that we want.

Hope is found when we discover that God has not forgotten us.

Hope is found when God has not forgotten you.

Biblical hope is not the positive expectation that if I press into God enough, if I pray hard enough, long enough, with so much emotional passion,

that my circumstances might change, that is not biblical hope.

That is not what the story of Hannah teaches us.

Biblical hope is the confidence that God will be with me.

God has not forgotten me.

He is my future, and I am secure in Him come what may.

Even when I don't know what he's going to do, I'm secure.

I have hope.

Hannah had no idea if anything God was going to do about her situation, but she left God's presence knowing that he was with her and that she could trust him, that she could trust him.

That's what faith does.

Faith doesn't always change our circumstances immediately.

Sometimes faith changes how we walk through our circumstances that haven't changed.

That's faith.

Verse 19, it says, Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then they went back

to their home at Ramah, Elkanah lay with his wife and the Lord remembered her.

So in the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son.

She named him Samuel, saying,

because I asked the Lord for him.

Sometime down the road, the circumstances that Hannah needed arrived, and she became pregnant.

But her heart was already and was always full.

She had stopped worrying about it.

She had stopped fretting it.

She had stopped seeing herself as lacking, deficient, insufficient.

She walked through each day with the hope and in the faith of the God who met her and brought her back to life in her heart.

God brought a woman's dead heart back to life again and

He gave her a son to which she gave back to him.

Now, I don't know about all your women in here, mothers in here, but I know the mother that I'm married to.

She's not likely to leave a child at church permanently.

And you all probably ought to be glad about that.

We don't give up children readily, easily, normally.

And as hard and as sacrificial as that might seem, that was nothing compared to what she had gained.

And that's hard for us to even imagine, to get our minds wrapped around how good God is.

How great He is for our hearts and minds and lives.

How full He can make our souls.

We're used to managing life pretty well on our own.

We're used to managing our resources on our own.

We're used to managing our families on our own.

So we don't have a real good capacity to understand the greatness of what God is offering each of us as followers of Jesus.

But Hannah discovered that.

Hannah gave Samuel back to God and he grew up in the temple.

That's what Samuel did.

But God also blessed Hannah and Elkanah.

He gave them three more sons and two more daughters.

But Hannah was a completely different person than she was before.

She knew what living with hope was.

Hope was not found in her circumstances, but in her relationship with God.

God responds to us as well.

He sent His Son Jesus.

Jesus came to bring dead men and women to life again.

John 5, he says, I tell you the truth, whoever hears my words and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned.

He has crossed over from death to life.

I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

Hannah heard the voice of God in her heart.

and found life.

Hannah wanted God to see her.

In Jesus, God came to us and Jesus entered into our world and He looked upon our lives.

He saw the hopelessness, the hurt, the darkness that we live with.

And like Hannah needed God to show up, we do too.

And God shows up in the life of Jesus.

Jesus sees us just like He saw Nathanael sitting under the tree.

Just like He saw the disciples who were struggling in a boat in the middle of a storm.

He saw them from the hillside and went to them.

And just like in Matthew 9, it says when He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like

Sheep without a shepherd he sees us, he sees the circumstances that we're walking through, he sees the struggle.

He sees the doubts.

He sees the storms.

He sees all the stuff.

None of it escapes him.

He sees it.

Hannah needed God to remember her, to be her strength.

We have a God-man who remembers us.

who stands in strength.

He defeated our every enemy.

His name is Jesus.

13, I can do what?

I can do what?

Through who strengthens me.

We know this.

But do we know this?

Do we rely upon it?

Do we live in it?

Do we trust it?

Do we look to it?

Or do we just know it and then manage as best we can as we get along?

Hannah needed God who was going to be with her into her future, who was not going to forget her,

Because he had marked her.

He had made her his.

Jesus came to be our future and will walk with us through every dark day that we encounter.

And he marks you and I as well.

It says in Ephesians, having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.

The same kind of inheritance that Hannah discovered.

Our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possessions to the praise of His glory.

Amen?

Hannah needed God to vindicate her, to validate her, to be

to give her a reason to be, to bring her hope that went far beyond her circumstances.

Jesus came to vindicate us and to validate us and to give us a hope and a future as well.

And we can move forward with the hope of Jesus, the hope that Hannah moved forward with.

Jesus left us with a very great and precious gift.

way to remember him, that he is the one who stands in the gap for us.

He is our future.

He is our hope.

I believe this was an important message for your church because I want you to remember that while you stand at this stage of your church life,

I know you're happy with Steve.

Who wouldn't be?

The last church that he pastored for 30 years that was thousands of people was happy with him too.

He's not your hope.

And he's not your future.

He's here for a few days, for a while, more than a few days, but he'll be here for a while yet.

and there will be another man coming and you need to prepare your hearts and minds for that day.

And he will be a man.

He won't be perfect.

I think you have a pretty good idea of that.

He won't be perfect.

And we pray that he will lead your church well into the future that God has for you.

But regardless, church, your hope is not in him or anyone else but Jesus.

Okay?

And if you lose sight of that, you will lose sight of what God has for your church.

I don't know the timing.

That's way above my pay grade.

But I do know the purposes of God for his church.

And he will bring the right man at the right time in the course of time.

but your hope is not in the circumstances of any of that.

Your hope is in Jesus, okay?

Stay focused there and He will lead you well.