

Worship at Home

17th November 2024

Prayers are from 17th November 2024
The Vine at Home is compiled and produced by twelvebaskets

Based on Hannah's prayer: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

God causes hearts to rejoice and strength to increase. God of all knowledge, judges our actions, breaking the power of the mighty, and clothing the feeble with strength.



God raises up the poor and the needy;
Giving them seats of honour guarding those who are faithful. and condemning those who do wrong.
We worship and praise God - judge of all the earth.

Let us Pray

God of all grace,

I gather my thoughts this day, and come into this space, choosing to open my heart to all that holds glimpses of your love in the world around me. May I be open to the spirit of the autumn season, allowing myself to be at peace, despite all that tries to pull us away.

May I sit in your love with the peace of creatures hibernating below ground: resting safely with calm and steady heartbeats in the knowledge that now is time for stopping and that the warmth will come again.

May I experience the world around me with child-like tastebuds: and taste and know that it is good and that God has provided.

May I allow the Autumn breeze to help me to let go of that which weighs me down and holds me back from entering fully into the wonder around and within me. As ongoing news of violence, hatred and selfishness threatens endlessly to pull our world into despair, I pause with this time to turn my eyes and heart to the beauty of your creation. Thank you for the wonder of the natural world and for making me a part of it. **Amen.**

Listen or sing or read the words of these hymns - CH4 192 All my hope on God is founded

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRw8uxyN1Rc>

Reading: [1 Samuel 1: 4-20](#) and [Mark 13:1-8](#)

Reflections on the reading

On these opening pages of 1 Samuel we are introduced to a family drama. Eli is believed to have been a priest at Shiloh at around 1025 BC, so the story has been around for a long time.

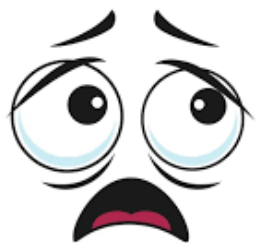


Hannah's husband, Elkanah must have been quite well off since he could maintain two wives (Hannah and Peninnah), a practice that was quite legal at that time. We can see from the unhappy situation that developed why that practice was discontinued. Quarrels and misunderstandings can happen in any family, but jealousy would almost have been inevitable with rival wives, and especially if one was capable of bearing children and the other seemingly incapable. Hannah believed her only hope lay with God, and so her earnest prayer echoes across the centuries to resonate with women who similarly long for a child. And we hear Hannah bargaining with God...if a child is born, she vows, I will give him back - dedicate him to God's service.



In following verses, we read that the Lord re-remembered Hannah - created a wholeness that had somehow been lacking, and she conceived and bore - Samuel - sometimes described as "the Kingmaker" for his important role in Jewish history. So - out of barrenness and hopelessness came hope and promise for the future.

The Macquarie dictionary defines hope as "the expectation of something desired - as confidence in a future event. The philosopher, Kierkegaard, described hope as "a passion for what is possible." I think both of these definitions would describe Hannah's hope. How about you and me, as Christians, do we live with a passion for what is possible?



We know that that isn't easy - apart from the weather, there are plenty of things to worry about - health problems, from getting cancer to Alzheimer's - accidents. We worry over there being jobs for all the young people involved in final exams at the moment, or for those who have completed educational requirements - over all the

risks associated with unemployment, the difficulties that rising interest rates create for people with loans - these are just some of the things that form part of our everyday living whether we like it or not. So, does the gospel offer us any hope today?

Not at first glance, but when we recall the background of this passage, and the fact that Mark wrote it after the temple had been destroyed by the Romans, when severe persecution of Christians was taking place, we then realise that Mark brought these words of Jesus to the people as words of reassurance and hope - yes, he says, dreadful things will happen, wars, earthquakes, famines, but they do not mean that the end has come. These things are like going through the last stage of labour before the birth can take place.

So, the summons sounded to these first Christians, as to us, - is not to hopelessness, but to faithfulness in Jesus Christ.

When all is said and done, who knows what the future will hold? Great words, and true - words that certainly give us hope that whatever happens in life, God walks with us in the person of Jesus Christ, empowering us with his Spirit to live with a passion for what is possible - whatever that might be for you and for me and for those in our communities who are uncertain and fearful of the future - pray that we may be empowered to be bearers of hope.

Take a moment now to reflect on the changes in your life, and the wider world at the moment. Which of these are most dramatic to you? Just sit with those thoughts in the stillness for a minute or two...



If it's helpful to share it, do find someone you can trust this week - it could be your pastoral visitor, your minister, a close friend or family member - to talk about the changes you've seen. It can be helpful to be intentional about recognising the change in our lives and how it shapes and shifts us. How do you feel about change? Is change something you find scary, or do you have a more positive attitude towards it?

If we think our time is full of social turmoil and change, we can see some of those same themes in the gospels, can't we? Jesus is born into a population living through occupation, with all the challenges, uprisings, oppression and confusion that brings for the Jewish people at the time. Where do we look for inspiration and courage to change the social order?

Finally, we come to an important emphasis when thinking about radical change - which comes from reading the Jesus stories together, from not taking any one verse of the Bible out of context, from understanding something of what Jesus' whole ministry is about. In this month of remembrance, when we think about conflict, and pray for peace, it is perhaps more important than ever to remember Jesus' emphasis on peace.

In the midst of all the social unrest of his context, Jesus' resurrection had the potential to spark full blown riots, a political revolution, the total overthrow of the social order with violence and counter-revolutions springing up all over the Middle East. However, in that moment after his return, the first thing he says to those closest to him is 'peace be with you'. He could have said: 'lets get revenge' or 'this will show them' or 'lets go get 'em boys!' but instead he insists on peace.

Jesus is a radical, he's transforming the social order even today, thousands of years later. But its not a violent act, it's not a bloody guillotine, or Molotov cocktails, or acts of terrorism that will bring about the Jesus-kingdom. Rather, it is the way of peace, the absolute commitment to non-violence, the work of building community, of sharing love. So, go as Jesus did and share the peace.

Prayers for this week

"For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." St Therese of Lisieux.

- Approach our God of hope and ask for guidance as you seek to build a future. Ask God to teach you to be a peacemaker in your daily life, in your decision making, and in your relationships.
- Approach our God of hope, and ask to be filled with the courage to build bridges of peace, and for a world where all people can live in dignity, free from fear and violence.
- Approach our God of love and ask for a growing faith and for help loving your neighbours. Ask for help learning more about God and His designs for your life.
- If you are able, take a walk around your community. As you pass each house, pray for the people who live there - just in your mind, or silently. Hold their situations, whether you know them or not, in your heart. If there is a home that you feel especially drawn to, as you pass by, take the address home with you and continue to pray for those who live there.
- Pray for peace within your church, community, nation and world.
- Pray for Justin Welby and his family, as he unexpectedly resigned his post as leader of the Church of England. You may have differing views on the action leading to his resignation, but the unexpected loss of work, comes hard. So, I urge you to pray for their future. Justin says "My wife and children have been my most important support throughout my ministry, and I am eternally grateful for their sacrifice. Caroline led the spouses' programme during the Lambeth Conference and has travelled tirelessly in areas of conflict supporting the most vulnerable, the women, and those who care for them locally."
- Pray for the Church in Scotland that many may come to faith in our land. And that we might once again be known as "a passionate band of believers committed to caring for one another in love".
- I came across this prayer this week - "Lord, of our nation who once sent missionaries throughout the world to proclaim the Good News. We now pray for a fresh outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. Rekindle that zeal in us to spread your Word and to renew our hearts with Your Holy Fire. Defend us with the heavenly armies to protect us from all evil and remove the darkness which covers this land. May we once again become a people who will shine the light of Christ throughout this land. Amen" (*New Dawn prayer movement in Scotland*)
- Pray for those plagued by alcohol, drugs, and other social ills to be lovingly reached by Christians.
- Pray for those who are ill and are waiting for test results. Pray for peace and healing.
- Pray using the attached prayers for prisoner's week which begins on Sunday.

Prayer for this week

Come, the time of focused worship is over,
Come, the time of life-long worship is just beginning again, a fresh week awaits,
with new opportunities to encounter the risen Jesus.

May you go out, and discover a God who is already there, waiting for you at every corner. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of these hymns - CH4 182 Now thank we all our God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePSfuOdF8JU>



Time to reflect

This cairn found at Aignish, Isle of Lewis commemorates/remembers a conflict between landowners and destitute crofters:

- Why is it important to remember such events?
- How does remembering the past help us live today?
- What is your experience of difficulty which has helped you to move forward?

Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day. Rev. Susan Thorburn, sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you.