

Hannah's Song

1 Samuel 2:1-10

People of God, today we lit the pink Advent candle, which represents the joy of anticipation for Christmas. Hannah's opening words in 1 Samuel 2:1 reflect this joy: "*My heart rejoices in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.*" The joy in Hannah's heart overflows from her personal experience of God's deliverance, her confidence in His unchanging character, and the hope of the coming King.

Advent Joy reminds us to look beyond and even laugh at the pain of our past, the persecutions of our enemies, and even our present circumstances. This third week of Advent we are invited to rejoice in the Lord's salvation.

As we walk through Hannah's Song we will consider its message under three themes: **Rejoicing in the Salvation and Sovereignty of the Lord, Rejoicing at God's Sovereign Reversals, and Rejoicing in the Victory of God's King.**

I. Rejoicing in the Salvation and Sovereignty of the Lord (1 Samuel 2:1-3)

Hannah begins her song with a shout of triumph: "*My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at, or better yet, my mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation*" (v. 1).

Hannah's joy is deeply personal, flowing from her own experience of God's faithfulness. God has answered her prayer for a child, and this has transformed her sorrow into joy.

Hannah's praise goes beyond her personal circumstances. Her son – Samuel – is much more than just an answer to her own barrenness. He is a symbol of the salvation that is to come to God's fruitless people who have given themselves over to idolatry and wickedness, and who are being provoked and persecuted by a perverted priesthood. Hannah's joy therefore is in the Lord Himself—His salvation, His strength, and His sovereignty.

Beloved, we must remember what we so often forget: instead of sinking into sorrow and anxiety over life's difficulties, we can laugh and smile at our enemies. Like Hannah with Peninnah, we can mock those who provoke and slander us, remembering God's salvation. This applies not only to earthly enemies but also to our sin and to Satan, who seeks to destroy us. The way to conquer despair, dear saints, is to let our hearts overflow with the joy of God's salvation.

In verse 2, Hannah declares that there is no one holy like God—He alone is God, and He alone is the Rock. This Rock is not a small stone but a massive, immovable

mountain, symbolizing protection, strength, and everlasting stability.

In a world of shifting cultural opinions, changing leaders, fleeting generations, and uncertain futures, God alone is unchanging and dependable. He is our Rock, the stability of our times. Because of this, we can boldly confront our enemies, as Hannah did Peninnah, saying, “Silence your mocking and pride, for God sees your arrogance and knows your hearts” (v. 3).

Connection to Mary’s Magnificat:

Like Hannah, the virgin Mary also rejoiced in God’s salvation and sovereignty, and stability. She exclaims,

⁴⁶ My soul doth magnify the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath magnified me; and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

Advent Application:

Beloved of Christ, this Advent season you are commanded by our Lord to rejoice in His salvation.

*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

Christ our Savior has come, delivering us from sin, death, and the power of the enemy. We rejoice because God is our Rock, providing everlasting strength, protection and stability in the face of life's uncertainties.

II. Marveling at God's Sovereign Reversals (1 Samuel 2:4-8)

Hannah's song vividly portrays the great reversals God brings about through His sovereign power. She sings of the mighty being broken and the weak being strengthened (v. 4), the full becoming hungry and the hungry being filled (v. 5), the barren bearing children and the fruitful withering away (v. 5). She proclaims that God brings life and death, poverty and riches, humiliation and exaltation (v. 6-7).

Ultimately, these reversals serve a purpose: *to raise the poor from the dust and the needy from the ash heap, setting them among princes and giving them a throne of glory* (v. 8).

These reversals reveal God's heart for his humble and oppressed people. Our God is not bound by human corruption, money, institutions, or power structures. Our God exalts the lowly and humbles the proud to display His grace and glory to the poor who are bowed down in the dust. He raises the needy from the ash heap. We do not have to remain in our sin. We do not have to stay condemned. We do not have to reside in a place of loneliness and depression. Our God lifts us up from there, to glorify us.

Consider Adam, the man of dust, who, upon death to the dust returned. Who going further after death and his soul went down to Sheol and Hades. And we were in union with him. But Christ, who is the Second Adam, came to

glorify those who were brought low. He did not consider the glory of God as something to hold on to, but he humbled himself by taking upon himself the form of a Man, a man of dust.

And then went lower, became a slave. And as a slave he went further still and was crucified. And going even further still, he descended into Hades to find our first father Adam. And then on the third day our Lord was raised up from the dust, into the heights and glories of Heaven, and he took Adam and all of us with him. He lifted us beggars from the curse of the dust and the ash heap of the grave, and took us with himself up into Heavenly glories to make us sit with princes and to inherit a throne of glory.

This is the story of our salvation. It is the greatest reversal of fortunes to ever happen. The son of God became Man so that Men could become sons of God.

Connection to Mary's Magnificat:

The virgin Mary also echoes these themes of reversal in her Magnificat:

⁵¹ *He has shown strength with his arm;*

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

⁵² *he has brought down the mighty from their thrones*

and exalted those of humble estate;

*⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty. (Luke 1:51-53).*

Like Hannah, Mary marvels at how God reverses the fortunes of God's poor persecuted people, and lifts us up to a throne of glory.

Advent Application:

Advent calls us to rejoice at the greatest reversal of all: the incarnation of Christ. The King of glory humbles Himself, taking on human flesh and being born in a manger. His life, death, and resurrection demonstrate the ultimate reversal: He conquers death by dying and brings life and glory to all who die with him in Holy Baptism.

Therefore do not look on the outward appearance of other people, do not presume to judge them according to their past. God is in the business of reversing the fortunes of his people. Remain humble, rejoice in the reversal of God's judgment that saved you, and open your own heart to share the Gospel of God's grace with those who are laid low by their own sin, or because of circumstances outside their control. Have mercy on all.

III. Resting in the Victory of God's King (1 Samuel 2:9-10)

Hannah's song concludes with a vision of God's ultimate victory in the King.

When she states, "The pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them," she is referring to that which upholds the world. Pillars in a temple support the structure, and the temple itself symbolizes the world. When Samson knocked down the pillars in Dagon's temple, he was effectively toppling Philistine civilization. It was as if the sky came crashing down upon them.

These pillars are also represented by people. We often use the expression "a pillar of the community" to refer to someone who is foundational to a group. Hannah asserts that what upholds civilization, the world, and even the entire universe is not a false god like Dagon, but rather YHWH. The pillars of the community are His righteous saints. God supports their footing so that they can stand firm on the Rock and sustain the world.

Interestingly, in an Eastern Orthodox Church, if you look up, you will see a dome at the center. This dome symbolizes the universe, and at its center is the icon of Christ Pantocrator—Christ the Ruler of All. Surrounding

Him are icons of the apostles, prophets, and saints. This imagery illustrates the universe being upheld by the saints who surround Christ, serving as the pillars of this domed universe.

Hannah understands that for her times to change and become more stable, the wicked must be silenced and cast into darkness. They should not be given a platform from which to spread their misguided anti-Christ ideas, which undermine the foundation upon which God has built the universe and on which the saints are to build society—Christ the Rock. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The good news Hannah proclaims is that no matter how dire the circumstances may become, no human strength can prevail against the Lord. The adversaries of the Lord will be shattered (v. 10) as they attempt to undermine the moral, spiritual, and political foundations upon which the world rests. We find comfort in the truth that their strength cannot succeed against the Lord.

As Christ our Lord said, “*And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to dust*” (Matt. 21:44). Thus, Hannah states that God Himself will thunder from Heaven against them. The thunder of God symbolically represents His voice and Word. His Son, the

eternal Word, exercises His power, thundering from Heaven against His enemies and judging the world.

This is illustrated in 1 Samuel 7:10, where Israel was fearful to confront the Philistines. Samuel offered a sacrifice and cried out to the Lord on behalf of Israel. As the Philistines gathered for battle, and while Samuel was presenting the burnt offering, God thundered with a loud thunder against the Philistines, confusing them so that they were overcome by Israel.

The thunder that accompanies the worship of God also pertains to the coming of God's anointed King. When Hannah declares that God will exalt the horn of His anointed, it refers to two aspects. First, it is analogous to the horn of an animal, symbolizing strength and glory, as well as the sign of victory that it lifts up when it has won a battle.

But horns are also found on altars upon which sacrifices are offered. "To say that the king's horn is exalted carries the idea that the king would be exalted by prayer and worship of YHWH."¹

Thus, just as Hannah's horn was exalted in the beginning of the song, so she ends in the same way, with the horn of

¹ Leithart, A Son to Me, 45.

the anointed King exalted. Through the worship of the King, through the exaltation of the horn of the Messiah, He thunders in judgment from Heaven against His enemies.

This climactic note highlights Hannah's immediate context regarding the upcoming reign of King David, who will unite the worship of God's people in Jerusalem by bringing the ark of the covenant there. Moreover, it also points forward to King Solomon, who will build the temple.

Ultimately, however, Hannah's words anticipate Christ, the ultimate Anointed One. Jesus fulfills the hope expressed in this song as the victorious King who conquers sin, death, and Satan. He is the Rock and pillar of the world, upholding all things alongside His saints who worship Him and rejoice in His salvation.

Connection to Zechariah's Benedictus:

Hannah's song has a connection to another song, the Benedictus, sung by Zechariah after the birth of John the Baptist. It celebrates God's faithfulness in sending the Messiah. And like Hannah he speaks of the horn, of God defeating our enemies, and the service or worship of God. He says,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David...” (vv. 68-69)

Zechariah continues, declaring God’s purpose:

“...that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant” (vv. 71-72).

Advent Application:

This Advent, let us rest in the victory of Christ over His enemies. Let us also exalt the horn of God’s anointed and worship and praise and glorify Christ our King this Christmas season, proclaiming that even in His birth he has his victory over sin, death, and the devil.

While we wait for the time that He places our enemies under His feet, let us still live as though pillars of the earth belong to Christ and his Saints. He rules over all things with us. Therefore, trust that He will guard you, but also, walk circumspectly, that you may not fall into temptation.

Rejoice in knowing that Christ will judge His enemies, and is currently in the process of establishing His kingdom in full, on earth as it is in Heaven.

Conclusion: Joining the Song of Advent

Hannah's Song invite us to join in the great songs of salvation that echoes through Scripture and history. As we celebrate the coming our King, let us rejoice in God's salvation and sovereignty, rejoice at His sovereign reversals, and rejoice in the victory of His King. Amen.