

Grow Up in the LORD

✠ Regular worship (vv.18-19,26)

✠ Faithful blessing (vv.20,26)

In the name of Jesus, foreshadowed by Samuel and born of the virgin Mary, dear family of God:

Remember this? A few years ago a Christian woman said, “The only difference between a grizzly bear and a hockey mom is the lipstick.” Spiritually speaking, I’ll take the lipstick. That’s because one of my most painful memories was a hockey dad who wanted nothing to do with the spiritual care of his two sons. His wife brought their boys to church alone. When I visited the dad, he made sure I heard him scheduling games on Sunday morning. Then he shared a solemn promise he had made to God. You see, the man almost died when his gun discharged and nearly shot off his leg. So he promised if God healed him, he would go to church one extra time each year. That could have put him up to 12-15 times a year by now – not the daily personal worship or publicly together here when we can. Sadly, I did not see him or his sons again. Good thing God is faithful. We all need help to **Grow Up in the LORD.**

✠ Regular worship (vv.18-19,26)

Have you ever wondered whether God is listening? Does He really hear your prayers? Why does He let trouble come into our lives? Why let them continue so long they seem to never end? Two books of the Bible are named after a boy who foreshadowed our coming Savior Jesus Christ. His name was *Samuel* which is Hebrew for *God listens*. And it all began with his mother’s prayer.

Although God allowed polygamy, it is clearly not His will. (Genesis 2, Mark 10) Samuel’s mother Hannah suffered from it. Her rival wife had lots of kids and loved to rub it in to make Hannah feel terrible. She could have stayed home, but instead Hannah would travel with her husband Elkanah to Shiloh where the LORD’s tabernacle, worship tent, was located. There she would pour out her heart to God because of her barrenness. She did not realize that about a thousand years later, God’s chosen nation of Israel would be suffering a spiritual barrenness from 400 years without a prophet. Meanwhile, Hannah also suffered from the high priest, an old man named Eli. He saw her mouth moving and scolded her for getting drunk. When she told Eli she was pouring out her soul to the LORD in prayer, Eli answered, “**Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.**” (1 Samuel 1:17 NIV84)

God gave Hannah what she asked, so she named her son *Samuel* ~ *God listens*. As she held him in her arms, Hannah prayed: “**My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.**” (1 Samuel 2:1 NIV84) Doesn’t this sound like the Song of Mary we also call the *Magnificat*? “**My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior....**” (Luke 1:46f) Both mothers received relief and refreshment from God with the birth of their sons – Mary, because her Son was the Son of God our Savior, Hannah hoping in Him.

Hannah kept her promise and took her son in triumph to the tabernacle. She continued praying much like Mary’s *Magnificat*: “**My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.... Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.**” (1 Samuel 2:1,3) Mary too would triumph. In fact, all who put their trust in God’s Son Jesus will find relief from fear and victory over the fiercest enemies of sin, death and hell. Christ died and rose again to vanquish Satan and free us from guilt.

“**But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.**” (2:18f) The LORD commanded three annual festivals: Unleavened Bread (Passover); Feast of Harvest (Pentecost); Ingathering/Booths/Tabernacles – most likely the one here. Only the men

were required by law to travel. While Samuel was young, Hannah stayed home and cared for him. But when Samuel was old enough, she got right back into the pattern of worship. It was the custom of Elkanah's family as surely as it was for Joseph and Mary. Our Gospel lesson said that again today: ***“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.”*** (Luke 2:41f NIV84) This was a vital family tradition which Jesus' stepfather and mother Mary honored as they worshiped God. **Regular Worship** is still God's command even though we are free from the Jewish calendar. God expressed His desire when He said, ***“Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy,”*** i.e. *guarding it as special*. God wants to give...

✦ **Faithful blessing (vv.20,26)**

Mary said that too: ***“[God's] mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.”*** (Luke 1:50f NIV84) God's mercy kept Hannah coming and praying and worshiping. ***“Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, ‘May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.’ Then they would go home.”*** (1 Samuel 2:20 NIV84)

Was that blessing any good, considering the man who gave it? Remember how harshly Eli had condemned Hannah for drunkenness when she was praying? God says, ***“Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.... They were treating the LORD's offering with contempt....The slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.”*** (1 Samuel 2:12,17,22) And father Eli's way of dealing with it was to talk and talk and talk. He did nothing to discipline them, but instead grew fat on the offerings. How could blessings from such a man work?

Only because of the LORD's power in the Word. Here is another fine example to always look past the man to the message. ***“And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.”*** (1 Samuel 2:21 NIV84) Hannah's loss was really gain for her as Samuel grew up in God's house. ***“The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.”*** (1 Samuel 3:19–21 NIV84)

This week's *Meditations* point out how Samuel was growing up. ***“And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.”*** (1 Samuel 2:26 NIV84) This was spiritual stature given by God's grace through His Word and recognized in Samuel by God's people. Since the Bible was not yet written, God used Samuel as one of His prophets and spoke directly to Samuel. Even when it meant telling old Eli that his sons would die for their sins, Samuel faithfully spoke God's Word. Through Samuel, God who listens also brought to His people **Faithful Blessing**. So it was with our Lord in His youth: ***“Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”*** (Luke 2:52 NIV84)

Surely God wants all of us to grow up in Him. God puts responsibilities on parents, especially the fathers, for the spiritual and eternal welfare of their children. He also gives the children the responsibility to come as gladly as Samuel and Jesus went in order to listen, to learn, to ask questions, to **Grow Up in the LORD**. Congregations have the responsibility to provide for the Christian education of feeding our Savior's sheep and lambs. And that is part of the “joyful agony” of preaching for the pastor. His earnest efforts to prepare still leave him wondering, “Will anyone care? Will anyone come?”

Hannah closed her prayer in hope and power: ***“[The LORD] will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”*** (1 Samuel 2:9f NIV84)

That is what our God has done in the fulfillment of Samuel's shadow in Christ Jesus our LORD. May He ***“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.”*** (Malachi 4:6 NIV84) Amen.

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