

Icebreaker: Are you the type who barter? What's the best (or worse) deal you ever made?

- Before opening your notes, what lingers from Robert's sermon for you? (Any illustration or point?)

- Sermon overview: How do we handle trouble? What "treasures" do we find in the midst of trouble.

- 1 Sam. 1.3: "Year after year..." This was not a quick-fix. How many Psalms have some variation of "how long will you ignore me, Lord?" How do you see God working in the midst of a long struggle?

- Note that there's more than one tragedy here. Elkanah is distraught by his wife's despair.

- What are the personality traits of each character in the story?

- Elkanah (He loves Hannah, but why doesn't he do something about his second wife – is he afraid to confront?)

- Hannah (Devout, believes in prayer. What is her relationship with Elkanah? What do you think she answers to his question, "Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" How do you think it felt for her to give Samuel to Eli?)

- Penninah (Possibly the second wife, married because Hannah was barren. She's mean. She provoked Hannah "until she wept"! That's more than a few snide words. Why would she provoke Hannah? Jealous of the first wife? Jealous of Elkanah's love?)

- Eli the priest. (Why does he assume that Hannah has been drinking because she's crying and praying silently – which was unusual at that time? Is drinking a familiar sin to Eli? Look at Eli and Phinehas' behavior later in 1 Sam. 2.22-25 and 34-35. Is Eli a faithful priest? He confronts his sons but they ignore him. Recall Emmanuel's sermon on David's inability to confront his son's sin.)

- Samuel. Proof that God answers prayer. Why did it take so long for God to answer, though, both here in with Abraham and Sarah? (Is this a long preparation time for them or some kind of test for them?)

- The Lord. He "closed (Hannah's) womb. Why? Was she cursed, as people normally thought of barrenness? Was she blessed, in a way similar to Sarah with Isaac? Later, he grants her request and she makes good on her vow. Is it right to bargain with God? Martin Luther did, after lightning struck a nearby tree he vowed to become a monk, to his father's initial dismay. How do you approach asking God for a blessing?

- Note Eli's blessing of Hannah in v17. Is this a blow-off blessing or a model of economic use of language?

- One of the lessons of this text – such a hard-earned lesson! – is “wait on the Lord.” I suggest ending with reading Psalm 27 or at least the last verse in the Psalm:

“Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.”