

1: <sup>4</sup> On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup> But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>7</sup> So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. <sup>8</sup> And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

<sup>9</sup> After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup> She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

<sup>12</sup> As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. <sup>14</sup> And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." <sup>15</sup> But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. <sup>16</sup> Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." <sup>17</sup> Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." <sup>18</sup> And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

<sup>19</sup> They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup> And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the LORD."

God – the God we worship – is the God of the cosmos, God of the whole creation, and not just of planet earth.

But, then again, we remember

- from this story,
- from the story of nonagenarians Abram and Sarai having a baby,
- from the story of the virgin Mary having a baby,
- from the story of Ruth and Boaz down on the threshing floor, and
- from so many other accounts in the Bible of individual healings and miracles – we remember that God gets right down into the ordinary stuff of life.

God of the sparrow and God of the whale. **God is found in the details of life.**

This story might be entitled "**the desperate woman and two idiot men.**"

From her husband's ***Oh why are you upset that you don't have a son? You have me.*** To the priest's ***Oh there's a woman in church moving her lips but I can't hear anything; she must be drunk.***

Without putting too fine a point on it, lots of well intentioned, and sometimes good but careless people, say hurtful, or at least maddeningly irritating and inept things.

One pastoral counselor, who regularly does group grief work, told me that they regularly have whole sessions where victims give vent to the host of those stupid and hurtful things that people say to them.

Jesus said (in Matthew 12:36) **"I tell you, on the day of judgment, you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; ..."**

**To not be guilty of the same thing, I need to be quick to say that when I say *God is involved in the details of life* I do not to demean these issues of childlessness as being **INSIGNIFICANT**.**

And to the people in this congregation who intimately know Hannah's very real pain, this is **ANY**thing but **IN**significant.

This story might also be interpreted as one that could make childless parents feel that God answered Hannah's prayer, but not their own.

And in THIS is where the word 'DETAIL' becomes relevant.

As monumentally painful as Hannah's situation was – and to which God got involved – we all, today, in this place, have the historical perspective to see how all of this worked out.

It was the **DNA CONJUNCTION** of Elkanah and Hannah that combined to create a very special spokesman for God. Not only did that son Samuel get two books in the Bible named after him, it was his leadership and anointing that brought David from the sheepfold to the king's throne, and set in motion the chain reaction that would have the Savior of the world called the "Son of [that same] David."

Painful as this whole episode was, it was a small detail in a very large production. God was in both – in the large production and in the small, often painful, details.

I have known of some great pains of some people in this church (and beyond) who prayed to give birth to children, and did not receive the same answer Hannah did.

And I know adopted children here among us who **ARE God's different answer** to those prayers. For these children, and for what they have meant to those family's lives and to the life of this church, I give thanks. None of us (yet) have the historical perspective to see how all of this will work out. So we have to trust that the God of the details is also the God of the big picture.

I've heard the old expression – perhaps so have you – ***The devil's in the details.***

I think it means that even if you have a great idea for something good, it can really fail to happen when we try to get all the minutiae – all the details – worked out.

But today's Bible lesson tells us that **GOD** is in the details.

This God has a cosmic plan which

- **Genesis** proclaims from the beginning is **good** and
- which **Revelation** finishes the story by telling us that this old world will be redeemed and that God's home is here among us, and that ultimately it's all going to be good again.

In between are the details of that becoming.

✦ **God never uses the end to justify the means.**

**God is in the details.**

**The means are always the end in the process of becoming.** (MLK,Jr. said.)

✦ Jesus shows us that **the Way is also the Truth.** You don't accomplish that by telling lies. **God is in the details.**

✦ Jesus said **good fruit does not come from bad trees. And fresh water does not come from polluted wells. God is in the details.**

What you do in your daily life is important.

It's God's Kingdom in the process of becoming.

**If we handle the little stuff, then God puts it together, and we can be part of how God takes care of the big stuff.**

A wise person once confessed:

**I was a revolutionary when I was young and all my prayer to God was "Lord, give me the energy to change the world."**

**As I approached middle age and realized that half of my life was gone without my changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to "Lord, give me the grace to change all those people who come into contact with me. Just my family and friends, and I shall be satisfied."**

**Now that I am an old man and my days are numbered, my one prayer is, "Lord give me the grace to change myself." If I had prayed this right from the start I should not have wasted my life."**

**All things really do work for good for those who love God *and are called according to God's purpose.***

I'm not saying to ***SWEAT the small stuff.***

But today's Bible lesson tells us that God is IN the small stuff.

Take care of it, while responding to God's purpose, and all the other stuff WILL work for good.

Neither you nor I have a pay scale big enough to understand God's cosmic plan. But we can trust that God is in charge. We DO however have the ability to pay attention to God in the details of our life, and to live them according to God's purpose.

When you remember this, then you may DO or NOT DO. There is no TRY.

God's in the details. **If you are having a hard time finding God, pay attention to the little things of your life. There you will find God.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So be it.