

2016-03-06 Sue Diggory
Mothering Sunday

Hannah Dedicates Samuel (1 Sam 1: 20 – 28) & Luke 2: 33 - 35

Today is Mothering Sunday – a special day for lots of us, a day for breakfast in bed, a day for someone different to cook the lunch and for some of us a day for presents!

But for some it is a very difficult day – a day when we remember mums who are no longer with us, mums who we found difficult at times or for some children who never were or are not with us now.

It is a day that can be painful as well as happy, a day for sad as well as happy memories and a time when we need to remember those who will not be celebrating with their families.

Mothering Sunday, had it existed would have been a very difficult day for both of the women in our readings today; for Mary as she would one day have to watch her son die and for Hannah the mother in our first reading who longed for a child, a baby of her own.

It is very difficult for those of us who have children to understand how desperate Hannah must have been

To understand how it felt to want a baby so much

Her husband, Elkanah had 2 wives – Peninnah who had several children and Hannah who didn't have any. Hannah was so desperate to have a baby that she prayed and prayed to God, she prayed and prayed and eventually she became pregnant and had a little boy – Samuel whose name means 'someone from God'

How do you think Hannah felt?

She was so thrilled that God had given her a baby son that she promised that when he was older she would take him and dedicate him to God, so that he could serve God all his life. When he was about 3 she set off for Shiloh and left Samuel in the care of Eli the priest. She went to see him every year – I guess that sounds very odd to us but Hannah kept her promise to God and although I'm sure she really missed Samuel she did have 5 more children; 3 sons and 2 daughters.

And when Samuel grew up he did lots of things for God but that is another story for another day.

So does God always give us what we want?

Here I'm going to use the image of traffic lights as an illustration

What do they mean? Green means ... **GO**
Sometimes God gives us what we have asked for
It's as if he were saying Yes and **GO**

God knew what Hannah wanted – a baby, BUT he also know what was best for her, and how having Samuel would draw her even closer to him

Amber means ... what does that mean ... **wait**,
Wait, but just for a while
Sometimes when we are asking for something
but now isn't the right time we need to wait a bit,

Whose mum or dad has ever said 'not now' or 'in a minute'
Who finds it hard to be patient – I do

Now we know Hannah prayed for a baby but we also know that she had had to wait a long time, until it was the right time in God's eyes; because he wanted her to learn to trust him

There are lots of stories in the Bible about people who had to learn to wait and trust God

– after Jesus died and went back to heaven to told the disciples to wait, to wait for the Holy Spirit to come
– and the Holy Spirit did come, he came at Pentecost
– we know they had to wait for 50 days because we know the end of the story
BUT the disciples just had to trust and wait not knowing how long it would be.

And finally red ...**red means STOP**

Sometimes we ask for things that wouldn't be good for us and God just like any good parent has to say **NO**.

We don't like being told no – or at least I don't,
but sometimes the loving thing that a parent has to say is no is to say no.
And as father God is the perfect father, he knows there are times when the right answer to a prayer request is NO

Yes and Go, Wait a bit!, Stop and no!

– 3 different answers that God can and does give,

But what about us – what can we give back to God in return?

God gave Hannah a son, and she kept her promise to 'give him back' to God, because she loved God and new that Samuel was a gift from him

As parents we can say **'thank you'** for our children but we can do more than that we can pray that God will bless and use our children as he wants, and that means that like Hannah we have to be prepared to give them back to God,

And as children, children of any age we can say 'thank you' to God for our mums and our families, for everyone who cares for us even if we grew up a long time ago, and we can all say thank you to God for the things he has given to each one of us because he loves us

And perhaps today is a good time to remember that when we pray and ask God for things he always answers our prayers but not always as we want because he loves us too much to always say yes and give us the green light,

but we also need to remember that because he loves us that like traffic lights we need to keep alert because the colour can change quickly and unexpectedly.

Let's pray