

“In Search of a King” // 1

Samuel 1–2 // *The Search for a King, #1*

I know this is a little unusual... I am in Indonesia right now (not, right now...but when you are hearing this message). I listened to Bruce’s sermon on last week in SENT and felt so convicted I just left... (No, Pastor’s Conferences).

But we are scheduled to start our new series this week, and so what I’m going to do is teach you the 1st 20–25 mins of this 1st message right here, and then our campus pastors at each of our campuses will bring you the last part of the message.

The series is called “The Search for a King,” and it’s a study of one of my favorite Bible characters, David. David is a very important character in the Bible, mentioned (outside of the story of his life) 182 times in the Old Testament, and 59 times in the New.

Here’s the context for the story of David: When Israel left Egypt and settled into the Promised Land one of the 1st things they begged God for was a king. A king, they thought, was the key to national success. A king, they were sure, would guarantee prosperity, give them stability, and keep them safe. They looked around at all the other nations and said, “Well, they’ve got a king... we need a king!”

Well, 1 Samuel is the story of their search for that king, and how David was, in many ways, the ideal king (just what they’d asked for), but then how he tragically disappoints everybody at the end... and, get this, you’re left with this big question mark, saying, “Is that it? David is the best king we could have hoped for, and look what happened... Is there no hope?”

Let me get right to the punchline... David’s story is in the Bible to point you forward to another King who was coming. This king would not only be from God, but would be God Himself. David’s story is going to point us to Jesus, the son of David, who would be the King of Kings.

And that’s where this story applies to you. *All of us, you see, are “searching for a King.”* We want somebody to guarantee us prosperity, safety, and stability. AIRPORT

- I go over, quite often, what those things might be for you:
 - For a lot of people it is **marriage**—you think, if I can just get married or be married happily... life would be so good. I could handle anything with someone who really loved me.
 - For some, it is being **established in their career**—if I can get a secure job making good money I’ll be able to handle anything;
 - Or, “if I can just achieve recognition in my field”
 - For some, it’s **family**: if my family just lived close—kids and grandkids nearby... got along, took care of me in my old age, that’s the good life! When I grew up, there was an old statement, “*Love will get you through times of no money...*”

Whatever that thing is in which you seek your stability, prosperity and happiness—that is your king!

- And what I’m going to show you from David’s life is that God is the only one who can really ever be our King. Everything else disappoints. Always over-promises and under-delivers.

Now, along the way you’re going to learn a lot of things about David’s life—David is, in many ways, a great man and an example to us.

- But keep in mind the point of David’s life is not to point you to himself, but to point you to Jesus. David disappointed. Jesus didn’t, and won’t ever.

(The Story of Hannah)

So, if you have your Bible, and I hope you do... open to 1 Samuel 1...

David's story opens up with a story that, at first, doesn't really seem to have anything to do with David—oh, but it so does!

It's about a woman named Hannah who is really down on her luck. Here's her story. 1 Samuel 1:2

[2] Elkanah had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah.¹ And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. [3] Now he (Elkanah) used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh... [4] And on the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. [5] But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb.

[6] And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. [7] 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.

(Hannah's Hopelessness)

Hannah's problem was that she couldn't have any kids. Now, there's no woman in any culture that would really desire that, but in those days, this was a huge deal. Having lots of kids was essential to having a good life.

- The society was agrarian: which meant the more sons you had, the more workers you had to work the land, and so the more income you could generate for your family. So, more sons meant a higher status in society and more security.
- This is also an age, remember, before social security or 401K's or retirement homes... so, the more children you had, the more likely you were to be taken care of in old age.

¹ Penninah, or Panini, In Hebrew, her name meant grilled, hard toast.

- For the nation itself, economic and military health was completely dependent on many children being born. Bearing children was a life or death issue for families and for nations.

So women who could bear children were like heroes. But women who couldn't bear children were utterly useless. An Old Testament commentator named Walter Brueggemann says this: *"Barrenness in any ancient text or narrative is the effective metaphor of hopelessness, for without children, there was no foreseeable future for yourself, for your family, or for your people. Barrenness meant there was no human power to invent a future at all."*

Today, most people don't think like this. Today, we put more value on what kind of job you have, where you graduated from, what you look like... But think of it from her perspective, in a culture where value and security was determined by family, Hannah can't have kids! So, practically speaking, she has no significance, no life and no hope!

And what made matters worse is that Panini, Elkanah's other wife, had lots of kids. Vs. 6 says she grievously irritated Hannah.

- Now, this is not irritated like (swagger) "oh, she gets on my nerves."
- In Hebrew this word means "to thunder" or "to roar," like a storm. It's the word you would have used to describe being caught in a hurricane. That's what Hannah felt like on the inside. (Interestingly, this is the only place in the Bible where this word is applied to someone's interior condition—usually used of a storm!)² Hannah is a deeply distressed individual. In verse 7 it says she was so depressed she wouldn't even eat!

And vs. 6 says it was continual! Panini was always looking for ways to remind her. Hannah... would you do the dishes tonight? I have 4 kids, remember, and I am so tired... Hannah, I used to like to knit like you...

² Tim Keller, *The Prayer for David*, MP3.

- Panini was like the annoying beeping noise your car gives off telling you that your door is open. “No duh! I’m getting my groceries out. Give me a second.”
- Or she’s like those annoying update/restart reminders that come up on your Windows PC while you’re trying to work. Every 5 minutes... restarting your computer now.
- Or maybe she’s like your pastor that keeps telling you to switch to the Saturday night campus...

The point was, it was constant. Panini drove this in. Hannah would sometimes fantasize at night about stomping on her face with golf cleats... But, lightness aside, most of her nights she laid there in despair... she was a broken, hopeless failure... and every day Panini threw it in her face.

(The romantic solution)

Well, Elkanah, her husband, bless his heart, is kind of sweet but pretty dumb. Look what he does:

[8] 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?”

- Elkanah has my self-confidence. I really like him.
- Hannah... “You may not amount to much, but I love you, and my love should be enough for you.”
- In verse 5 it says he would give her a double portion of food, which is kind of a weird way of showing affection... sitting there with your 2 wives and to show one of them you love them best you give them 2 scoops of mashed potatoes...

(Review)

I want to make sure you see what is happening because, if you do, you’ll see how it applies to your life. Hannah lives in a world where significance and security for a woman is determined by how well she pops out babies. Well, Hannah is childless, which means in her culture she is worthless and she has no security.

- She’s tried everything to have kids, even prayed about it, a lot, but she can’t. Many nights she argued with God and said, “God, why won’t you listen? What have I done? God, do you hate me?”

Panini has told her that she’ll never be valuable if she doesn’t have kids. And **Elkanah** has tried to offer her romantic salvation, telling her he can fill the void in her soul through his love.

Isn’t this the same thing that happens today? We live in a world full of Paninis that tell us that we get significance from the quality of our education, the size of our house, how good looking we are... and because of that, some of you feel worthless, and jealous, and dissatisfied. Like Hannah, who is jealous and can’t eat.

Some of you turn, in unhappiness, to a romantic solution. We think, “Well, this is what I need to have, and then I’ll be happy. Good romance; exciting sex will be better to me than 10 sons.” Hollywood and top 40 music. Maybe it’s not even romance... it’s something like alcohol or drugs, or shopping.

You see? Hannah’s story is replicated in each one of us.

(Hannah’s salvation)

Verse 9 is the turning point of Hannah’s story. But if you’re not watching close, you’ll miss it. Verse 9 says, **1:9 “After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose.”** That’s not just a random detail like, “Hannah stood up after dinner and went in the living room.” No, the word “rose” in Hebrew indicates decisive action. Hannah “stood” up, resolved, making a choice.

What was that choice? Well, she expresses it to God in her prayer in the next verse. **1:11, “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.”

2 very important things she says in that prayer:

1. When she says “remember me,” she indicates that she perceives that God cares for the plight of a rural, barren farm woman who everyone else says is a failure. That’s an extraordinary amount of faith. She says, “God, You are the kind of God who cares for even small, broken failures like me.” “You’re so compassionate and good that you care about *me*.”
2. She says, “If you give me a son, I’ll give him to you all the days of his life.”
 - Now this is not just sentimental rhetoric... “Oh God, if you give Him to me, I’ll praise you for it. He’ll be yours.” See, the next phrase says, “No razor will ever touch his head.” That is an indication of a Nazirite vow, which meant this kid would leave his family and go to the temple to become a priest.
 - **Quick historical lesson:** In those days, you couldn’t just decide to become a priest. You had to be born into the priestly family, the Levite family. If you weren’t born into a priestly family, and you wanted to become a priest, you could do so by taking a Nazirite vow, which meant that you gave away your whole life; you renounced all your family property, and you went to live and grow up at the temple. You switched families
 - When she takes a Nazirite vow for this kid, she was renouncing hold on everything you would have wanted a kid for. Taking a Nazirite vow meant that he wouldn’t grow up in her house... she wouldn’t get the emotional joy of having him around, she wouldn’t get to show him off at the baseball games, she wouldn’t have him to take care of her in her old age.
 - See, this is not some kind of sentimental rhetoric, “Oh, God, give me a son and I’ll give him to you,” or a subtle way of bargaining, “God, if you give him to me we’ll

share him.” You know like, “God if you give me a huge house I’ll promise to host small group in it once a month.” Like you’re bargaining with God, and God’s like, “Wow, I can’t turn that down. Small group in your house once a month? I’m in!”

- No, the Nazirite vow meant a complete renouncement of everything she had hoped to obtain in having a child.

Now, watch this: When she was done praying, **1:18**, “Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.”

Notice: This is before she is pregnant. At the end of this chapter, she will get pregnant. But this statement about getting up and eating and her face no longer being sad... this is *before* she gets pregnant. Very important order: she doesn’t ~~pray → get pregnant → have joy~~. She ~~prays → has joy → gets pregnant~~

What has happened? All her life she’s sought joy in having a kid. Now, she finds it somewhere else. Look at the prayer she prays in chapter 2 and she’ll tell you where she finds joy. 1 Samuel 2 is a song she wrote...

“My heart exults in the Lord... there is none like you, Lord; there is no rock like our God.” 2:1–2

Her strength is now in God, not in children.

- She goes on in that prayer to talk about God’s unfathomable wisdom, His strength, His beauty and His holiness; His compassion for small, broken, and sinful people. This, she says, is the ultimate treasure; and because she has found that God, she no longer depends on family for it.

This was Hannah’s repentance and salvation: she found her life and security and identity and significance in God, and no longer depended on it from family. She was *free*.

And so how she says, “God, I’m still asking you for a son. But all my life I’ve asked you to give me a son to make up some deficiency in my life. It’s always been for me. **Now, I’m asking one for you.** You are my sufficiency and my treasure, and so if you give me a son he’ll belong to you.”

And God gave her a son. She would name him Samuel, which means son of God, and he would grow up as priest to be Israel’s greatest prophet... and the prophet that would anoint David to be king of Israel.

But this story is in here more than just to show you a cool circumstance leading up to David’s coronation... No, **There is a parallel between Hannah’s story and David’s story.**

- Israel is searching for a king. Why? Because a king will guarantee to them prosperity, stability and security. A king give them national significance.
- *Hannah* searches for those things in a son.
- To Hannah, God says “these things aren’t found in sons;” to Israel, God says “these things aren’t found in a king.” To both of them, he says, “These things are found in Me.”
- Before the story of Israel searching for a king, you see that every person is searching for a king.

There is also **a parallel between this story and Jesus’ story.**

- This story is not a random insertion.
- You see, years later the Bible would tell us the story of another woman facing an impossible birth, like Hannah. This woman’s name was Mary. Having a son was impossible for her because she didn’t even have a husband and had never slept with a man.
- And for Mary, having a baby meant the loss of everything *she held onto* for significance and security. To be pregnant out of marriage meant the loss of reputation, it meant financial hardship; it meant a type of death.

- But like Hannah, Mary grasped the Gospel, that God was a better source of identity and security than reputation, or power or money, and so she surrendered herself to God and found her identity and hope in Him.
- And she expressed that hope, just like Hannah did, in a song. It was called “Mary’s Magnificent,” Luke 2, and it is almost exactly the same wording as Hannah’s. Both Hannah and Mary declare in song that they find their security and significance in a God who would care about the broken and the poor, and give *Himself* to them.
- **Hannah gave birth to Samuel, who would be the prophet and priest that would anoint the King; Mary would give birth to the One who would be Prophet, Priest and King.**
- And that’s where this story gets really rich. Because Jesus, like Hannah, would pray for deliverance from a curse and shame. But whereas God answered Hannah, God would turn His back on Jesus.

Why? So that Hannah’s real shame, our real shame, could be taken away, and so that we could be restored to God.

You see, the truth is our real need, our real brokenness, comes from the break in our relationship with our Creator. And that’s what Jesus would accomplish for us. He would restore us to God.

- That’s what the whole Bible is about... not about how God can give you a better family or a better job or better sex or more money, but that what you need in your life is to be restored to God.
- You can’t read Hannah’s story in isolation... no Bible story can be read in isolation. This story is not about Hannah and children, it’s about lost people/us and Jesus.

And this is where it applies to you. **There is a parallel between Hannah’s story and your story.**

- Hannah looked to a son for security and significance; Israel will look to a king for those things.

- Where will you look?

What is the “king” that you seek? What one thing must you have for life to be good? What do you care the most about obtaining? What one thing could you not imagine life without... the thing that without it, you feel like you couldn’t eat?

- Let me tell you something religious people and irreligious people have in common. You both think you need something besides God for security and significance.
- Irreligious people think they need something *instead of* Jesus (they think the good life is in...); religious people think they need something *in addition* to Jesus.
- Jesus or/Jesus and

The point of the Bible is knowing Jesus. He is life and stability and security.

So, this is where we begin our search for king.

Alright, let me turn it over to our Campus Pastors to draw some conclusions for you:

1. Most of our hurt and disappointment comes from seeking another “king” besides God.

- Where you are disappointed; hurt; worried; stressed... These are like smoke from a fire, that you can follow back to the places where you are seeking other kings besides God;

2. God is better than “many sons” or a king

- The point of Hannah’s story is not that you will get what you desire, in this life. “Just get a little bit more into God, and then He’ll give you what you want.” No.
- Maybe you’ll never have a child; never be rich; never get well. You might die barren, by the world’s standards.
- But you have God.

- The point of Hannah’s story is not that godly people have kids; the point of Hannah’s story is that godly people have God, and that is enough
- The one who has God has everything. God is significance and stability.
 - If a loving, all-powerful God is in your life, you don’t need the approval of others.
 - If a loving, all-powerful God is in your life, He will take care of you in the future.

3. Barrenness does not mean God-forsakenness

- But maybe, you say, my barrenness is proof that God doesn’t love me. That’s not true... How do I know that? Because Jesus was forsaken for you... Jesus was barren, so you would never have to be
- That means that you can be content in your barrenness by being fulfilled in Christ. Because God is the best King—in Him you have the absolute approval of the only One whose opinion really matters.

4. God loves people the world casts away

- This story teaches us that God cares for others that the world has cast away. Some of you, you feel like the story of your life has been one of failure... you haven’t accomplished; haven’t succeeded; you don’t have a king... You need the faith of Hannah. God cares for you, and God has offered Himself, the world’s greatest possession, to you as your treasure.
- This is the unique message of the church... you won’t hear it anywhere else
- One of the things we teach in our church... is that you need to be in a community that reminds you of this truth... because you live in a world that tells you the opposite continually... At the mall. If you don’t wear this, you’re worthless....
- Let me say something to you as your campus pastor... we are doing something important with this series. Small groups that study along with this. They’ll go deeper into this passage, this

is a great time to get in a small group, so you can study and experience this “search for a king” together. These things are best learned, best experienced in community, and community happens at the Summit in small group.

Bullpen:

Bible writers always tie David's birth to Jesus' birth
Woman facing an impossible situation but believes the Gospel