

Text: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

Theme: Faith Gives Thanks

Date: November 22, 2007 (Thanksgiving)

In the Name of Jesus, in whose name we bring all our thanks to God, Dear Christian friends,

How would you say thanks to someone when the gift is so big that you cannot really measure its value? For example, how would you say thanks if your house started on fire tonight/today and someone risked their life to come into the burning building and pull you out? Would you just say, "Thanks a lot," and leave it at that? How would you say thanks if you were drowning in a lake and someone swam out to you and pulled you in to safety? Would you send the person a little thank-you card or a handwritten note and say, "Thanks a lot for saving my life. I really appreciate it." How can you say thanks to someone who saved your life?

While there may be people who go to great lengths to save human life, there is but one has truly given us the gift of life. Our heavenly **Father gave us life** by bringing us into our earthly families. Day after day he continually gives us what we need to stay alive: clothing, food, drink, shelter and work. Then when we misused or abused God's gifts and were headed to hell because of our sins, an amazing thing happened. **God saved our lives.** "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." He sent Jesus. He sent Jesus to take our place. He sent Jesus to be punished as the Substitute for our sin on the cross. "He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities." He sent Jesus to die for us. And so God saved our life. And then when we wanted nothing to do with Jesus, when we said, "Thanks, but no thanks," when we said we would rather try to pull ourselves out of hell with our own meager good works; **God saved us again.** He sent the Holy Spirit. He sent the Holy Spirit in Baptism, in the Gospel, in the Word of God to give us faith in Jesus, and so, not one time, but three times God gave us life. How can we ever say thanks to God?

Surely that must be a question that runs through the mind of every person who believes in Jesus. Many years ago there was a woman who wondered how she could say thanks to God. Her name was Hannah. Hannah was the mother of the prophet Samuel. Hannah was a child of God. Hannah was a person to whom God had given the gift of faith in Jesus. And as a result of her faith in Jesus Hannah just naturally wanted to give thanks. God teaches us many things about giving thanks as he allows us to learn about how Hannah gave thanks. On this thanksgiving Eve/Day we examine the thankful heart of Hannah and again learn from God that **Faith Gives Thanks.** Christian faith gives thanks to a gracious God and Faith Congregation gives thanks to a gracious God. Faith gives thanks in three different ways: 1) with humility, 2) with confidence, and 3) with generosity.

1. With Humility

Hannah was a woman who had a rough life. In Old Testament times much of a woman's value was measured by her ability to have and raise children. The Bible says that children are a heritage from the Lord and a special gift from God. In those days it was considered a great honor to have children. It was a disgrace not to have children. And Hannah could not have children. To make matters worse, her husband who could not stand the shame of being childless, found himself another woman who was able to have children. And then last of all, to add insult to injury, this other woman made fun of Hannah because she couldn't have children and she flaunted her relationship with Hannah's husband.

But the Holy Spirit had given Hannah the gift of faith in Jesus. And even in the midst of her shame and sorrow, her faith wanted to give thanks to God. In the words of our text we have Hannah's song of thanksgiving where she sings: **MY HEART REJOICES IN THE LORD; IN THE LORD MY HORN IS LIFTED HIGH.** Hannah was thankful to know that her sins were forgiven, that God had promised a Savior, that she would have a better life in heaven. We can't help but notice how humble her prayer of thanks is. She doesn't carry on about how rough her life has been. She doesn't look around at other people and complain that God owes her a few favors. She knows that she owes her very existence to the grace and mercy of God. And even if God gave her nothing but misery for a lifetime, she still owed him her eternal thanks for the promise of heaven in Jesus. And so Hannah's song of thanksgiving warns others not to boast or complain before God: **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.**

If there is a sin at the root of unthankfulness, it is pride. It is the false pride that we have earned or deserved what we have because we work hard and make sacrifices, that God owes us a few favors, that we are certainly bearing a heavier burden than others. God through Hannah warns us against such arrogance. She reminds us that the Lord is a God who knows. He knows everything about us. He knows our innermost thoughts and secrets. He even knows about those sins we commit in our hearts; sins of false pride that lead to greed, envy, a complaining and discontented heart. By him our deeds are weighed, and he knows what we really deserve.

And so Hannah teaches us that true thankfulness begins with humility. A child of God is humble. He knows that it is only because of the Lord's great mercy that he is not consumed. He knows that if God should mark iniquities, nobody could stand; there is no one who does good, not even one. He knows that he is a poor miserable sinner who deserves temporal and eternal punishment. He knows that even if he could live a perfect life, it would still be nothing to brag about because he would only be doing his duty. So it is only a humble heart of faith which gives proper thanks to God. The humble Hannahs; The penitent publicans in the temple who can't even look up at God; The short Zacchaeuses in the tree straining to get a look at Jesus; The penitent Pauls who know that they are the worst of sinners. And so we rightly say, "Faith gives thanks" with a humble heart. It doesn't brag or boast about what it's doing. It doesn't look on giving thanks as a drudgery or a burden. It doesn't look around at what other people are doing and feel that it is doing so much more. Faith gives thanks like Jacob, who looked at all the people and possessions God had given him and said, *"I am not worthy of the least of all these blessings."* It gives thanks like the leper who came and threw himself at Jesus' feet in humble awe. Like Peter who fell at Jesus' feet and said, *"Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."* When faith gives thanks to God, it comes with its head bowed low in humility. Faith Congregation, a gathering of faith-filled humble believers, also gives thanks as we join Hannah and sings: **MY HEART REJOICES IN THE LORD; IN THE LORD MY HORN IS LIFTED HIGH.**

2. With Confidence

Hannah had something special to say thanks for in our text. God had given her a child, a son. She had prayed and God had answered. Her shame was gone. Those who had laughed at her had to keep silent. Now what made Hannah's thanks to God so joyous was her confidence that God could do anything. She sings, **SHE WHO WAS BARREN HAS BORNE SEVEN CHILDREN, BUT SHE WHO HAS HAD MANY SONS PINES AWAY. THE LORD BRINGS DEATH AND MAKES ALIVE; HE BRINGS DOWN TO THE GRAVE AND RAISES UP. THE LORD SENDS POVERTY AND WEALTH; HE HUMBLER AND HE EXALTS. HE RAISES THE POOR FROM THE DUST AND LIFTS THE NEEDY FROM THE ASH HEAP.**

Those who have faith in Jesus are not only certain of God's love and forgiveness, but are also certain of his power and ability to provide. The angel who told the virgin Mary she would have a baby said, *"With God nothing is impossible."* Jesus told his disciples, *"With God all things are possible."* St. Paul said to the Romans, *"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* Faith gives thanks with happy confidence. It is absolutely certain that God will take care of us. If God sent Jesus to take care of our greatest need, our sins, then he will certainly take care of our lesser needs, our earthly ones. Faith trusts the promise of Jesus: *"The very hairs of your head are all numbered... Don't worry about tomorrow; your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask him... Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"* Or as Hannah said it: **GOD WILL GUARD THE FEET OF HIS SAINTS."**

And so on this thanksgiving do we show our thankful heart with the confidence that God will take care of our earthly needs; of family, of our congregation? Are we acting in confidence with our offerings, with our prayers, with all of God's blessings? Or are we hesitant, doubtful, pessimistic, maybe even cynical about how the Lord of the Church can provide for the ministry of Faith Congregation.? A thankful Christian is a Christian confident that God keeps his promises, every one of them. When faith comes to give thanks to God, it comes with its heart high, full of confidence and trust in God's promises in Jesus Christ.

3. With Generosity

Hannah had one more thing in mind when she came to God with her thank you. God had given her a special gift, a son. How do you measure a gift like that? It was the answer to her prayers. It meant the approval of her family and friends. It silenced the mocking and the taunting of her rival. How do you measure a joy that makes your whole life different? Hannah said thanks to God by generously giving back to God what God had given to her. She gave God her son. When Samuel reached a certain age she brought him to the temple to begin his fulltime service in the Lord's kingdom. Hannah said thanks by giving up her dearest treasure, her son.

From Hannah we learn that faith gives thanks with generosity. How can you ever say thanks for the gift of Jesus, for the forgiveness of sins, for peace of conscience, for the assurance of eternal life in heaven? How can we measure the value of being born into the wealthiest country in the world and in the entire history of mankind? Every day we experience so much grace, so much patience, so many blessings from God that we can't even begin to imagine the depth of his goodness. We can never repay God, but we can say thanks. Every day we can look for newer and better and more ways to say thanks to God. We will certainly not want our thanks to God to be like the man who is pulled out of a fire and then just says, "Thanks a lot," and goes on his way. When God has given us so much our thanks will be more than a moving mouth and a happy heart. Like Hannah we will want to give back to God some of the treasures that he has so generously given to us, like our time, abilities, money, and even our children. Faith gives thanks with generosity. Like the wise men who came to Jesus with their hands full of earthly treasures. Like the poor widow who came carrying in her hand all that she had to live on. Like Hannah who came to the temple with her own son. When faith gives thanks to God, it comes with its hands full. Amen.