

My favorite kind of music to play on my alto saxophone is jazz. It's not necessarily my favorite kind of music, but it is the kind of music where the saxophone gets to shine. My senior year, I got the honor of playing a solo in Jazz band. You might not know this about jazz, but jazz is a lot of improvisation. And so a solo is your time to play whatever you want in the middle of a song. And I'm not a bad saxophone player and I'm pretty good at playing jazz but I can't improvise. I can play just about anything you give me music for with enough practice. But if you ask me to play anything and then put me in front of people, I have nothing.

That might be how some of you feel when you're invited to pray. When you're asking in front of people, hey why don't you pray for us? Pray whatever you want. You can feel that same anxiety of suddenly having no idea how to pray. This morning we're gonna try to see some guidelines for how to pray. Or passage this morning is looking at Hannah's prayer. And it's not necessarily a prayer like the Lord's prayer that we can just repeat or pray word for word. But I think her prayer is placed here, not just to teach us some theology or to fill us in on the narrative, but to give us an example of how we can pray when it's our turn.

Turn to 1 Samuel 2:1-10

I. Connect God's particular work in your life to his character (v. 1-3).

Verse 1, ***"And Hannah prayed and said,"***

Again, this is a model for how we should pray.

In the first thing that we see is Hannah is praising God because of how he has answered her prayers.

She prayed desperately with tears and weeping that God would give her a child.

And another God has answered she praise in a way that's recorded for us.

I think it's important to know that we don't get the first prayer that Hannah parade but we do get this one.

And the reason I think that we are told with the second prayer is because this is the one we are to copy into imitate in our prayers.

This is the prayer that we are to learn from.

If we got both prayers, then we would gravitate towards the prayer that God answered, and we would ignore this one.

"My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD"

She begins by praising God.

She is exulting the Lord in her heart.

It's another way of saying her heart is overwhelmed with praise for God.

She is so thankful for the Lord and what he has done.

And then she mentions her horn.

All throughout the Old Testament, the horn is kind of a symbol of pride or legacy.

So when she says my horn is exalted in the Lord, she's saying that my family and my personal legacy has been praised by God and lifted up.

A horn is also a symbol of kingship repeatedly.

At least part of this is a hint that the rest of this book is going to be about Kings.

It could be foreshadowing that Samuel will be the one who chooses the next two kings.

But note that she is not just saying "thanks God."

She is being specific with her thanks.

And she is thanking God for being who He is.

"My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation."

Then here she is talking about her response to her enemies.

Your translation may say derides

It may say swallows

Or it may say mocks.

They should remind us of the last chapter last week, but we read in Hannah's story.

She was repeatedly mocked for her failure to have children.

Her husband's other wife would constantly demean her and attack her.

She was mocked by others all her life.

But she will be mocked no more.
Now she can laugh at those who mocked her.
She has the last laugh.
She will no longer can be mocked.
This is not really about mocking others in return.
She just means that she wins.
Everything that they have said is not true.

And she can respond this way because of what God has done.
Because of the salvation that He has brought.
Because He has saved her from her shame.
Because He has opened up her womb.
Here she's not just talking about salvation at the end of her life.
Hannah is praising God for giving her a son.

Verse 2, **"There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides your there is no rock like our God."**

And because of what God has done, she praises his character.
She is connecting it again to who God is.
She reminds us that there is no one who is holy like God.
Holiness is not just being set apart.
Holiness does not just mean without sin.
Holiness in Hebrew means a weightiness or heaviness.

It means there is no one like God.
No one can be holy like God.
This is why God is surrounded day and night by angels who proclaim over and over and over "Holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty."
And they never get bored because His holiness cannot make you bored.
Every moment you experience it is greater than the one before.
It never runs out and it never gets old.

There is no one like our God.
People will try to make claims that every god is the same.

Or that all religions make the same basic claims.
Or that any spirituality does not really matter.
It sounds good on its surface, but only if you have not gazed at the holiness of God.
It only makes sense if you have not examined the God of the Bible closely.
Because there is none like God.

And there is no one who is a rock like God.
No one who is a refuge.
There is no one who is a safe anchor for our souls.
There is no one who can keep you safe from whatever life throws your way.
He is the only rock we can hold onto.

Verse 3, **"Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance from from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed."**

If we understand the holiness of God, it changes us.
If we think and meditate on God's character, we should be different.
Hannah is praying that people will see God's character.
Because if you understand who God is, you cannot be arrogant.
You cannot call yourself the best at anything if you gaze at God.
Getting a glimpse of His holiness makes our mouths shut tight.

God knows everything.
God sees everything.
God will judge and weigh everything.
This should keep us from being prideful and arrogant!

We should always not be arrogant because we never know what God will do.
His ways are not our ways.
His plans are not our plans.
His timing is not our timing.

We would be arrogant to assume that we know exactly what God will or will not do in our lives or in the lives of those that we know.

One of the reasons we pray is because we don't know what God will do.

We know He will be consistent with His character.

But that does not mean He is predictable.

it does not mean that we can manipulate Him.

And we know that God opposes the proud.

If we are arrogant, then God will oppose us.

So, we should humble ourselves before Him.

Especially in our prayers.

Now, how can we do this?

In our own prayers we need to be thanking God for what He has done.

And we should do it specifically.

We should point out and thank Him for each way He has blessed us..

For each instance of answering our prayers.

And then connect it to His character.

If He has provided for you, then thank Him for being the Provider.

If He has healed you, thank Him for being a healer.

If He was gracious to you, thank Him for being gracious.

Our prayers should praise God for who He is.

To thank GOd for who He is.

And to remind ourselves who God is.

II. Connect God's particular work for you with His general work (v. 4-8).

This is the second principle of prayer.

We thank God for soemthing He has done in our lives.

But then we need to connect it to what God is always doing.

Connect it to how He normally works.

We should recognize that what He does for us, is part of what He regularly does in the world for His people.

Verse 4, **"The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength."**

Hannah praises God for how he destroys the mighty.

God breaks their pride.

He takes the symbols and monuments of their pride and breaks it.

The bows are broken.

The armies are disarmed.

The power of the world is nothing compared to the power of God.

Although the Bible, the strength of the world has been destroyed.

Gideon's 300 defeated Assyria.

Pharaoh and Egypt were brought to their knees by plagues.

The giant Goliath was killed by a young shepherd.

Pride goes before a fall.

Because God makes them fall.

And on the flip side this is what God does.

The weak are strengthened.

The feeble are made strong.

This is how the kingdom of God works.

He takes the weak and makes them strong.

He lets them ride on eagles wings.

Fisherman are made apostles.

Moses the stutterer is made a prophet.

The youngest son is made a king.

The empty womb is made whole.

Here is how we connect this to our prayers.

When we see God destroy the proud.

When we see God thwart the strength of the enemies of God's people or those who oppose us.

We should praise God for doing it again and again.

We recognize His regular work.

And we should praise Him for it.

When God strengthens us when we are feeble.
We should praise Him for doing it again.
We should connect it to all the other times in God's word that He has done so.

Personally, I often quote 1 Corinthians, God uses the foolish of the world to shame the wise.

Verse 5, **"Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger."**

Five continues this series of reversals

This one is focused on hunger.

There were those who were always full.

They have never needed to work for their food. They have never wondered where their next meal would come from.

And they have never prayed that God would feed them.

But now they are hungry.

And now they have to go work to get food.

And they're having to wander around, offering to work just that they could get a little bit of food.

We will see you later in the book that this is what will happen to Eli and his family.

But this is part of God's work he takes those who are always full in this life and did not pray and we're not needy.

And God will stop being merciful.

And we will see this in the next few passages.

The false religious leaders are about to go hungry.

There's also the reverse.

Those who have been hungry will be full.

Those who have had to beg for bread will be satisfied.

This is part of the regular work of God and it's why Jesus and the be attitude says blessed are the hungry.

Because they will be fed.

Because our God can make bread rain from heaven.

"The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn."

The barren one will bring children

Those with many children will be disappointed.

She is connecting her story and the broader story of what God has done.

She will have many children. but she'll only have six.

So the seven is not about her specifically, but about all that God does

Is all through the Bible we see story after story of barren women giving birth.

We saw it with Sarah, who was far too old, and I never had children gave birth to a son in her old age

Rebekkah gives birth to Jacob and Essau

Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist.

The Virgin gives birth to Christ.

God loves to visit barren women.

He does not just use those who have the most kids.

Verse 6, **"The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up."**

She remembers that God is in control of life and death.

God is the one who brings us into existence.

God is the one who fashions us in our mother's womb.

And God is the one who numbers our days.

He determines how long we live, and he determines when our final day will be.

Our God is the one who controls what happens after death.

He is the one who takes some down to the place of the dead and he is the one who can bring the dead back to life.

We just finished observing Easter and the resurrection of Jesus.

And all season is reminding us of what God's power over death in life is.

The world may think it is the control of who lives and who dies, and who has brought in the world and who gets to go out.
But God is the one who determines it.

Verse 7, **"The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts."**

We can see the upside down kingdom of God.
God determines who is rich and who is poor.
It is not determined by people's hard work alone.
There is not nor has there ever been a truly self-made man or woman.
Nor is there anyone who is in poverty, simply because of their bad choices.
God determines where we will be.
We were poor and find our self rich.
We have God to thank.

We also see God is the one who brings low and who exults.
God is the one who takes the proud and the rich and humbles them.
God is also the one who lifts up the poor in the overlooked.
So often in the scriptures, we see God do this again and again.
We see him, take Abraham and turn him into one of the richest men in the world.
Joseph was sold as a slave and ends up the second most powerful man in Egypt.
David was just a Shepherd boy and the youngest of 12 and he ends up as the king.

Now we see God, humble Nebuchadnezzar.
Who lives like an animal for 7 years because of his pride.
Herod Agrippa was struck dead in the middle of a speech for his arrogance.
All of the empires and kingdoms of the world are destroyed by God.

Verse 8, **"He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor."**

This continues as God raises up the poor and helps the needy.

He takes the overlooked and brings them to the front.

The kingdom of God is the place where the prostitutes and the beggars and the leper are not just welcomed to eat scraps off of the table, but are brought to the seat of honor.

The kingdom of God is where women are recognized not just as welcome, but equal and vital parts of the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is the place where the disciples are taken from the streets and from the professions of sinners like tax collectors and made to be holy.

This is the gospel.

It is what God does.

He takes the poor and the sinners and the weak and the broken and he makes them new.

He takes us out of the ashheap of our sins, and he raises us up to sit with Jesus in heaven.

And once we see this, we see that the gospel is all throughout the Bible. When Jesus is revealed, and when sins are forgiven, and he dies on the cross, and he's raised again is the culmination of the story God has been laying the groundwork for since the very beginning.

After Adam himself was created from the dust.

We were not made from stars or something divine we were created from the very dirt.

And yet we are beloved by God and I've been honored above almost all of creation.

What is man that you were mindful of him??

If you believe in Christ, you can be seated with Christ.

You can inherit the entire world.

But we have to acknowledge our sin.

And we have to acknowledge how much we need Jesus.

"For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's and on them he has set the world."

She praises God and acknowledges that He holds the world in His hands.
The pillars of the earth are what holds the earth together.

They are the foundation of the world.

And God is in charge of them.

He keeps our existence going by His might and power.

All things happen because God is in control.

Sometimes this can give us anxiety.

Sometimes it make us hard questions about the suffering we se and why
God allows bad things to happen.

But this should give us comfort.

If God is in control, then we can trust what we don't understand.

If God holds the pillars, then we know things will be okay in the end.

This is how we should pray.

We do not just want to list our own requests.

We do not just want to praise God for the particular things that we see.

We also should connect them to God's larger work.

We should connect them to God's greater work.

We should do this because it contextualizes our stories.

It helps us see how God is acting now, is how God acts in the world.

We are not the only people God blesses this way.

It also gives us a larger appreciation of God's goodness.

This is not just a onetime miracle or blessing.

This is something God has always done and continues to do.

And we can even do this in a small way.

Thank you for blessing me, like you always bless the weak.

Thank you for being faithful, like you have been faithful to your people in
the past.

Thank you you healing me today as you healed the leper, and the blind and the lame.

Thank you Lord for keeping us safe traveling as you kept Christ and His family safe as they fled Herod.

This is not just flexing Biblical knowledge.

It is not trying to show off how much you know God's Word that you know.

This is meant to be a way to remind us of what God does.

It helps place ourselves in the story.

We can be reminded that we are not the main characters of Jesus' work.

We are not the focus of the kingdom of God.

God is doing and has done so much in the world.

We have a part to play and God loves us and God values us.

And this helps connect us to the entire story.

Our lives are but a chapter in the greatest story ever told.

III. Connect God's particular work with His final work (v. 9-10).

This should be the end of our prayers.

We begin with our own situation.

We place it in what God is doing in the world.

And then we end with recognizing how it relates to God's final work.

Verse 9, **"He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail."**

Hannah is looking to the end here.

This is not just what is happening in her day.

Because her day is filled with wickedness and sin.

But she is acknowledging that God will do this.

In the end, his faithful ones will be safe.

It mentions their feet because this is where they walk.

It is a figure of speech to describe their life.

It means God will protect their feet as they travel.

He will watch over their steps.

But the evil and wicked will be cut off.
This is the final judgment.
One day all of the wicked will have to face justice.

Verse 10, **"The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven."**

Everyone who is an adversary of God will be judged.
They will be defeated.
Their might shall be broken.
Their armies will be destroyed.
Their airplanes crashed.
Their missiles and bombs disarmed.
Their towers and monuments reduced to rubble.

God will thunder against them.
God's power is revealed in thunder.
We can all hear it and feel it during the storm.
It feels like God's voice, but it is just an echo.
One day, He will truly thunder.

"The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

She concludes her prayer looking toward the final days.
She looks forward to the end of the earth.
The day when Christ will return and justice will be done in full.
A day when the ends of the Earth are judged.
Because no one will be able to hide or escape.
No one will be able to buy their way out through bribes.
No one will be able to escape because of who they know.
No one will be able to escape because they died before justice could be done.
Every secret thing will be revealed.
And God will do what is right.

And Jesus will be the king.
His horn and anointed will be exalted.
Jesus will rule and reign on the earth.
We have this to look forward to because pain and death will be no more.
Pain, suffering, and sickness will be forgotten.
Sin's power will be broken and cast into the pit.
Healing will come for all.
And there will be resurrection.

This is where it is good for our prayers to end.
We connect how God has worked on our life today to how God has worked with his people generally and connected finally to his ultimate work.
Is this helps us see what God has done today is a for taste and a foreshadowing of what he will do on the final day.
So when we pray this way, it lifts our eyes up.
It helps recalibrate our hearts and help us gaze at the kingdom that is coming.
It keeps us just from longing for the world that is here for the things. God gives us here.
It helps to connect them to the world of Jesus is going to bring.
Reminds us that we are citizens of heaven.
So, connect your prayer to God's final promises.
Remind yourself in your requests that their ultimate fulfillment will be on the last day.
Remind yourself that the blessing you have received now is nothing compared to what is to come.

Connect God's particular work to God's character, His general work, and His ultimate work.

This is not a formula, but it is a way we can easily pray.
So that if you have to stand and pray, you know what to say.
It also will help our prayers be focused on God instead of just ourselves.