

The History of Mother's Day

Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis is probably not a name you know. She was from West Virginia in America. She organized a club of women to nurse wounded soldiers from the north and south during the civil war. After the war she started "Mother Friendship days" to reconcile families that had been divided by the conflict.

She had four children and lost another seven children. She taught Sunday school in the local Methodist church for twenty years. She died in 1905 and her daughter Anna honoured her mother by initiating a holiday honouring all mothers. Later a resolution on congress passed in May 1918 established the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

I wanted to reflect on a mother in the Bible, Hannah. Hannah was the mother of the prophet Samuel. Samuel was Eli's replacement. He ushers in the monarchy and with God's help, chose Saul and David to be Kings of Israel. In the first few chapters of 1 Samuel, we see that the story moves from despair to hope.

1 Samuel: 1:5-7

⁵But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

Hannah's barrenness is the opening topic of despair. Not only could she not have children but her rival provoked her until she wept and would not eat. Human beings can be cruel. It's sad that the Bible doesn't record anything about anyone supporting her as she suffered. However, she kept on praying and humbly trusting and preserving in God. She didn't give up.

1 Samuel 1: 10-17 ¹⁰In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

¹²As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

¹⁵"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. ¹⁶Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

¹⁷Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

1. Hannah was committed to God and prayer.

In verse fifteen, we read that Hannah was pouring out her soul to the Lord. When mothers pray for their children, things can change. I remember as a new Christian hearing an older women speak. She was introducing her son who had just turned forty years old. He had also just become a Christian. Everyone clapped. She went on to say that she had been praying for him every day since he was born. The prayer of mothers makes a difference.

2. Hannah honoured God in prayer.

We find her amazing prayer in 1 Samuel 2: 1-10. Here are a few verses;

2 Then Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. ²“There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

What an incredible turn around for Hannah as she goes from absolute despair to hope. Theologians tell us that this prayer of Hannah presents the basic theology of the whole book of Samuel. William Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament* says, “She recalls Israel’s history in terms of Yahweh’s interventions and she voices Israel’s long-term royal hope”.

She is an honoured contributor to the Old Testament and her faith together with God’s grace and mercy produce the Prophet Samuel. Samuel goes on to play a pivotal role in the selection and anointing of two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

3. Hannah’s love was sacrificial

She makes a vow to God in verse eleven.

¹¹ And she made a vow, “, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

Samuel is a Nazirite- the priests of Israel, of the Old Testament. We can read about them in Numbers 6:1-21. One of the distinguishing features was they were not to cut their hair. Hence Hannah saying, “and no razor will ever be used on his head”. Hannah knew that her son was from God. She also knew that this wasn’t a fleeting arrangement. This would go on to shape Samuel’s life and the life and direction of the nation of Israel.

In an incredibly unselfish act, she vows to see that if God gives her a son, she will dedicate him to serving both Israel and God. She follows through on this commitment. Verses 21-22 and in verses 26-28.

²¹ When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfil his vow, ²² Hannah did not go. She

said to her husband, “After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always.”

1 Samuel 1:26-28: ²⁶ and she said to him, “Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.” And he worshiped the LORD there.

She was singularly focused on honouring God. She recognised that Samuel was not hers but belonged to God. The Lord’s will for Samuel took precedence over any desires she had to keep her child to herself. I am sure this must have been quite a struggle for her. Regardless, she wanted Samuel to belong to the Lord.

It takes great trust to believe that God has the best interest in mind for our children. Hannah wanted to follow the Lord and she wanted her son to follow the Lord and follow the Lord he did.

4. Hannah was Honoured

Hannah’s story is a great testament to the faithfulness of God, both for her personally and for the nation of Israel. Without Hannah’s faith and trust in God, Samuel would not have been born. It’s great and right that today we should celebrate Mother’s Day. However, I encourage you to go one step further and really honour the women in your life that love you, guide you and pray for you and honour God as they did.

1 Samuel: 2: 21 ²¹ And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

1 Samuel 2: 26 ²⁶ And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with people.

1 Samuel 3:19-21 ¹⁹ The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

1 Samuel 4:1 ⁴ and Samuel’s word came to all Israel.