

1 Samuel 2:12-26

¹² *Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD. ¹³ Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled ¹⁴ and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. ¹⁵ But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."*

¹⁶ *If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."*

¹⁷ *This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt.*

¹⁸ *But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home. 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.*

²² *Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. ²⁴ No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD's people is not good. ²⁵ If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.*

²⁶ *And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.*

Locating Where we Are in the Text

Jumping from Joseph to Samuel

This is a study in contrasts.

Hophni and Phinehas v. Samuel

It is a contrast between false faith and true faith.

And perhaps worthy of our consideration in regard to healthy Christian Community and unhealthy ones.

¹² *Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD.*

Literally - they did not know God.

You can believe there is a God, even serve him and not care less.

Before we point our fingers at Eli's sons, we should consider ourselves.

We call ourselves Christians, followers of Christ, but how do we treat God and others?

Do we live a life that reflects truth and grace, obedience and mercy or do we simply do our own thing.

Do we compartmentalize God.

Even more common - do we forget about him throughout the day, the week, the month?

Hophni and Phinehas had become numb to God.

It was about going through the motions.

Perhaps we treat communion in the same manner - or prayer at the supper table.

As if God doesn't care.

¹³ *Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled ¹⁴ and would plunge the fork into the pan or*

kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. ¹⁵ *But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."* ¹⁶ *If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."*

¹⁷ *This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt.* It had become tradition for the priest to literally do potluck.

Stick a fork in the pot and whatever came out was their portion.

But the sons of Eli wanted the best parts.

You see sacrifice was very important - it symbolized the faith and devotion of a person and their family.

Right sacrifice, was their key expression of faith.

What H&P did was interfere with that and even corrupt the sacrifice of other people.

They even threatened them.

They were corrupt officials that got in the way of people wanting to meet God.

They did this to benefit themselves - as if there is no judgment.

Sometimes we think God does not notice injustice.

That God doesn't care.

Well, he does.

PRAY: for an injustice in the world that God brings to your heart.

¹⁸ *But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod.*

What a beautiful contrast to Phinehas and Hophni!

Samuel was but a boy.

There is a spirituality that can be cultivated when you are very young.

Never sell a child's spirituality short - ever.

Even when surrounded by bullies.

He ministered "before God" as opposed to being louts, who had no regard for God.

"If God is not real, I don't want to believe in him."

Is one of the deepest theological journeys a person can make.

It is the beginning of faith, not the end.

¹⁹ *Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.*

In contrast, the story here is that Samuel's Parents are not the beneficiaries of the sacrifices they were the givers.

They made their offerings.

And here is a very important observation.

What is missing in this passage?

Or better asked, who is missing?

Especially in relation to Hophni and Phinehas?

There is no mother to speak of.

The tenderness of Hannah's story is essential to the life of Samuel.

I don't want to read more than the text allows, but this is an intentional contrast.

This is not to say single parents cannot fulfill the role but that there was something missing, someone missing.

Never underestimate the power of a faithful mother or father.

Hannah was a woman who poured her heart to God and it makes a difference.

Do your children hear you pray?

Do you pray for them?

Do you pray over them?

It makes a difference.

²⁰ *Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home.*

Here is a good place to recall the Story of Samuel's family.

Elkanah had two wives named Hannah and Peninah

Peninah had many children while Hannah was barren.

Peninah in fact mocked Hannah and rubbed it in.
Thankfully, Elkanah was not a mean spirited man - he did not torment Hannah.
But, yes, another dysfunctional family.
And yes, yet another expose of why having more than one wife is a terrible idea.

Hannah had gone to the temple in anguish to beg God to hear her prayers for a son.
Eli was there and thought she was drunk - which tell you more about Eli than Hannah.
God hears her prayer and grants her a son.
In gratitude, she dedicates Samuel to be with God always.
And so Samuel grew up in the temple.
Every year Elkanah and Hannah would visit the temple and give Samuel new simple clothes to serve in.
It is a beautiful image.

There is going to be two infant dedications int he first week of November.
Anessa & Raphaela
This is what the parents mean when the dedicate their children to God.
They want thier child to know God.
Really know him and serve him all their lives.

²¹ And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters.

The Lord continues to bless Hannah for her faith and devotion and grants her 5 more children.

Although I have three children, I know many couples who want children but do not have them.
I think God wants them to know that whatever happens, he sees them.
He hears their prayers.
He cares for them.
He may or may not grant children, but he has his purposes, not to curse but the bless.
Childlessness is not a sign of God's judgment or displeasure.
It is sinful to torment people with such an assumption.
We have the church - the place of orphans and widows, of outcasts and wounded
We are to be a place of healing and wholeness.

PRAY: For our own barrenness/longing/pain and the barrenness/longing/pain of others.

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

What a wonderful summary and contrast to Hophni and Phineas who treated the sacrifices with contempt.

²² Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. ²⁴ No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD's people is not good. ²⁵ If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?"

I don't think it gets much worse than this.
We talk of sex scandals and abuses in the church - this was what Eli's sons were into.
What does Eli do?
What should he do?
I remember being asked by my doctor one day when I went to see him,
"What do you think about the child abuse that has occurred in some churches?"
I told him, "The leaders of these churches should have investigated immediately
and upon doing so prosecuted the perpetrators to the full extent of the law."
But why were we having that conversation?
Because the church suffered from the sin of Eli.
Instead of removing them, he lets them play on after a little scolding.
And you wonder why Israel turned to other Gods.
And you wonder why the church has lost its legitimacy in public discourse.

Because we sided with the devil.
They became a curse to the people of God.
And what does God think?

His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.

Our loving, merciful God is going to put them to death.

Shocking!

Not really.

God cannot be good if he is not just.

God cannot be loving if he winks at corruption.

And he does not.

He is patient and give chances for people like Hophni an Phinehas to turn form their ways.

But when they persist.

He will do as he promises.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy

²⁶ *And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.*

This same phrase appears one other time in Scripture about another little boy.

His name is Jesus.

The incorruptable one.

The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

God's answer to injustice and barrenness.

And again the stark contrast.

Two priests who corrupt the temple and one boy who serves God.

What happens to them?

Well, that's for you to read in chapters 1-7.

Samuel literally hears God.

The House of Eli ends ignominiously.

How you live matters to God.

It matters to the people around you.

It should matter to you.

Q&A