

March 16, 2021

Read 1 Samuel 1:1 - 2:10

Key verse: 1 Samuel 2:2

*There is no Holy One like the Lord,  
no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.*

### **Love = Mutual Giving**

Someday I might study the Hebrew language a bit more; then I'd appreciate the Psalms and many of the songs that appear in the Old Testament even more than I do now. Today's scripture passage tells the story of Hannah, a woman who was barren and prayed fervently for a child. When her prayer was answered, she responded in song. Today's key verse comes from that song.

Hannah prayed the way that many of us pray when we really really want something; we say something like, "Lord, if you do this for me, I'll do this for you." Hannah had told the Lord, "If you give me a male child, I will in turn give that child to you."

That seems like a fair exchange, doesn't it? And Hannah was true to her promise: When her son Samuel was still very young, she gave him over to the priest Eli, who trained him to serve the Lord. So often our prayer requests are very one-sided: "Lord, do this for me...*period*," or "Lord, do something great for me, and I'll do something nice for you." God is gracious and loving always, so why do we often give him such a small portion of our time, our money, our attention?

Love is about mutual giving, and it can be measured in how much one gives to the other. During Lent we are reminded that God gave *his* only Son to us, just as Hannah gave *her* only son to God. Some might think of Hannah's gift as a bit excessive, as irrational, even irresponsible. But Hannah understood just how great God is, and that if we want to truly express our love to God, we give to God. We give even the things that we cherish the most. And God, in turn, blesses us with expressions of his own love for us.

**Prayer:** God of relationship, too often we treat you as a resource to help us get what we want from this world. Lord, there is nothing that we should want more than a heart that loves you as much as you love us. Help us to give as Hannah gave. Help us to honor you above all things. Amen.