

Waiting On God

By [Rev. Josiah Katumu](#)

A sermon delivered by Rev. Josiah K. Katumu, Director of Partnerships at Third Millennium Ministries, to Willow Creek Church, Winter Springs, Florida, on August 17, 2025.

Let's go into God's word. And this morning, I want us to look at the book of First Samuel in the Hebrew text. It's actually just Samuel, just one book. It's not two books. We're not going to do a series on this book, obviously, and so we're just going to scratch the surface on this particular book. But I was thinking about pastor Greg, and after he preached last week and ended just such a beautiful, awesome exposition of the book of Exodus. And he ended on a really good note, right? He ended on the presence of God dwelling with his people, that as God's people are struggling and wandering in the wilderness and asking questions about, "when shall we enter into the promised land," and "is God going to be with us?" He reminded us that God's presence was always with his people. And so, this morning, I was thinking, there's something else that we need to hear about God's presence as we think about who we are, a people who are always waiting on God.

With that, we read First Samuel, chapter one, verses one through 20. Hear now the reading of God's holy, inspired Word:

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. 2 He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3 Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord. 4 On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. 6 And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. 7 So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. 8 And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" 9 After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting

on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. 10 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. 11 And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head." 12 As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. 14 And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." 15 But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." 17 Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." 18 And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. 19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. 20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the Lord."

This is the Word of God. Would you pray with me?

Lord. For every mind that seeks understanding, for every ear that longs to hear from you, and for every eye that wants to see you, and for every heart that seeks to be transformed pour out Your Spirit, and may this be the day of our salvation, the day that we are transformed by the power of your living word. We pray in Your Name. Amen.

Waiting is not one of my spiritual gifts.

I can almost hear my son and my wife nod and smile right now and think, "Yeah, that's right, he cannot wait for anything." And so, because I don't like waiting, and I'm so impatient in life, often, like this past week, I was hungry while I was at the office, and so I decided Chick-fil-A would be my lunch. So I waited until the lunch traffic was done. And of course, as someone who is always impatient, I got to do the mobile order, right? Why sit in the drive through, trying to tell someone, "I want this and I want that."

So I did my mobile order, and I'm thinking when I get to that person that's asking me, "What would you like?" I just say: "Mobile order for Josiah." "Okay, any changes?" "No, let's go."

So I get there, it's a little late. I'm hungry. I need to eat, and there's a car in front of me, and you know where this is going, right? The person in front of me is just driving so slowly, like it's on a Sunday morning. And I keep thinking to myself, "Lady, you better move on, because I have places to go." She takes her time ordering her food, and then as we're getting to the window, I can almost see the light at the end of the tunnel., I'll be over with this lady, because she's driving so slowly she stops. I'm watching her as she's being given her food. And inside of me, I'm just raging mad. I'm thinking, "Please, let's just move on, because I don't like waiting!"

But then I was convicted.

Because, in my car, as I was about to lower my window to get to the window and get my food, I'm blaring Fernando Ortega music, and if you don't know, Fernando Ortega is Christian music, and I was convicted. I'm thinking, "Josiah, what is it with you? You are raging mad. Maybe this lady can even see you on her rear-view window and realize that you're getting mad, and here you are playing loud Christian music. When you get to the window, you're going to lower your window, and everybody's going to hear you playing Christian music. How nice of you as a Christian."

And so I stopped, and I said, "Well, let me just calm myself down. It's okay. She'll get her food and she will go and be gone." I was okay for about a few seconds.

I watched her get her food, put it in a car...

...and then she started chatting up the person serving her, and I could tell that she was saying something nice, because this person was saying, "Oh, that was so nice."

And I'm thinking, "Oh, my goodness."

You know, at that moment, I realized that while I am so impatient about certain things in life, like waiting in a drive through at Chick-fil-A, it is actually a reflection of my very own life, on how I live when it comes to waiting on God.

But here's the hardest thing for me to ask all of us this morning. How is it that we struggle with waiting on God when the life of a believer, as well as anybody that follows Jesus, is all about waiting?

Every single one of us here is waiting, waiting on God, waiting for restoration, waiting for sin to be done away, that day that you will never have to struggle with sin, waiting, waiting to have a new body that doesn't tire, that doesn't age, that doesn't die, waiting for that rest that God promises us our life, the life for every believer, every person that follows Jesus Christ is all about waiting.

The prophet Habakkuk in chapter three reminds us of the reality of what waiting looks like for us. He cries out to God. He says, "Oh, Lord, how long shall I cry for help? Will you not hear?" And then he says, "Oh, cry out violence. Will you not come and save me?"

And then later on, he actually is able to confess and say, "Though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit beyond the vines, the produce of the olive fell in the fields yield no food - yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation."

What is he telling us there is so much pain in waiting. Waiting is hard, and prayer can be so difficult for us to do, yet there is joy when we wait on the Lord.

How are you waiting for God this morning?

Is your waiting full of pain and struggle? Is your waiting full of questions like, "How long Lord must I wait for you?" Are you asking, "Lord, if you really cared for my family, if you really cared for me, if you really loved me, you would have showed up right now?" Are you asking the question, "How long must I wait to see your promises fulfilled in my own life, in the life of my children, in the life of those that I know and love?" Maybe your waiting is full of frustration. Maybe your waiting is even worse. You are tempted to play God.

I don't have to wait. I can play God.

Friends, I want us to realize how God shapes the stories of our life and the way he does it. It's so that our faith might be stretched, even in our waiting, even in our struggle with waiting. And so that we may learn what it means to trust in Him. And, by the way, friends, as we wait on God, let us not forget that our trials, as we wait on God, are meant to help us. Our trials are the platform through which God's glory is manifested, and our faith is strengthened.

As I've said, we're just going to scratch the surface here as we look at the book of First Samuel. Here just a quick summary of this book, because it actually does help us, as we read Hannah's story, to realize what's going on. It's a book about transitions. It's a book about three people, Samuel, who is going to be born of Hannah, who is barren, that we read that she'll have that baby. So the secret is out. You don't have to wait until you read chapter two and realize that she has a baby. It's a story about Samuel who is going to be Israel's last judge. It's a book about Saul, who is Israel's first king. Their choice of King, not God's choice. It's a book about David, God's choice of a king who reigns supreme. And we know the promises that God makes to David as an ancestor of Jesus Christ, but the transitions here are really clear for us to see that when we read in the book of Judges, we realize that the things did not end very well. Theocracy, where God provided this periodic leadership over His people. He would use judges, and now

they're moving into a monarchy where leadership is going to be hereditary, institutionalized.

But as we read in the book, you realize that things did not end well, because it says that in those days, there was no king in Israel, and everybody did what they pleased.

Now we get to the story of this woman, but it's not just her story, it's the story of God's people.

It's our story of how we can wait on God and how we struggle with an answered prayer. Because that's a problem. When God does not answer our prayers, we have a problem. But then the way God comes to our rescue is always unexpected. I love that about scripture, about God. The way God comes to our rescue is always through unexpected means. The chapter of the book does not even begin with a powerful, impressive, amazing king or man. It starts with a certain man from this city that you probably cannot pronounce, just like I cannot. He is a nobody. And by the way, the whole book of Samuel is going to be telling us exactly that - how God performs wonderful, amazing things out of nothing.

But this guy, Elkanah, he's a good man. He loves his family.

He's got two wives, not recommended.

But it does tell us why he married a second wife. Because we're told Hannah was not able to have a child. He's also committed to the Lord. He goes every year to Shiloh, an important place for Israel to worship. But he's a nobody. We know nothing about his family. He doesn't occupy a place of power and position.

No, no, no, but it is really this book telling us the importance of unimportance,

That those who are called nobodies can accomplish God's will when they have His Spirit.

And Hannah's predicament is really a dark thing here. We read, for example, in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter seven, verse 14, it says "You will be blessed." This is speaking of the people of God - blessed more than any other people. None of your men or women will be childless, nor will any of your livestock be without young. Imagine what Hannah is thinking when she knows about that particular promise, especially,

What does that mean for me as a covenant, as a child of the covenant?

Hannah's problems really represent Israel's problems. Israel is barren. That's the reality for them. And she's asking, "Lord, where is my blessing as a member of

the family of God?" Her name ironically means "grace," or "gracious." What grace is Hannah experiencing in this circumstance?

Let's take a moment to imagine how difficult it is for a woman in these ancient times when her whole purpose of living back then was to bear a child, and how important children were. Psalm 127 reminds us they are gift from God, and they were supposed to be the ones who inherit the wealth of the family. They're the ones who built the economy by working and taking care of parents in their old age.

Let's think about barrenness and how this was seen as a curse. You were stigmatized if you could not have children. God has forgotten you if you're not going to have any children. And here we're told - we just read it - God is the one who had closed her womb.

But Hannah's problems progress from bad to worse. She suffers alone. Did you hear it? At home. There is no peace because her co wife taunts her, torments her every day. Her husband, yes, the guy loves her. He gives a double portion when she goes to sacrifice, for crying out loud, but then he's being a real dude. He doesn't understand her pain. What does he say? You know, guys, we like to provide solutions, right? "Am I not enough for you more than 10 sons?" Hannah, that's called comfort, right there, right? He does not understand her pain. So there is no place at home with her husband. There's no comfort.

And then she goes to church. She goes to the temple, the place where she's supposed to find solace. And what does she find? A stinging rebuke from the very man who was supposed to care for her.

He thinks she's drunk.

Friends, we have something here to hear as a church, listen - everybody that walks through those doors every Sunday morning brings their pain, their doubts, their frustrations, their joys, and we must be careful to know that when we worship together,

This is a place of healing and solace, not a place of suffering, and let it be so that our bitter struggles, must lead us to the great comforter. That's what Hannah does. Instead of sitting in her despair, she says, "I must rise up and go to the Lord." She probably didn't know what the priest was going to say to her when she sat there and praying, but it's the only place that she can go to. She rises, she pleads her case before God. Her pain drives her to prayer.

Where does your pain brother sister drive you to?

Does your pain drive you to your knees?

I really believe that Hannah, her years of barrenness, had driven her - convinced her - that there was absolutely nothing anybody could do. That if she was ever going to have a child, if she was ever going to have peace in her heart, it was nothing short of a miracle from God.

That's why she goes to him, the only place where she knows she's going to find help. She knows that God had closed her womb and only God could open it. Now we're told here that Hannah actually makes a vow.

In verses 10, we read she was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. And in verses 11, it says, "And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of Your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant his son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

You've read Numbers chapter six, where the Nazarites would make this vow? And they would vow not to drink alcohol, not to have their hair shaved, not to do all these things, and it was only supposed to be for a time. It wasn't supposed to be forever. But notice here she's actually making a vow to God that she would get a gift, the gift that she has lived all her life desiring, and then turn around and give that gift back to God for ever.

Think about that for just a second. This is not bargaining with God. She is not trying to manipulate God in any way. She's not trying to induce God's favor, because sometimes that's what we do, right?

That's not what she's doing.

And we get a little secret here as well, in terms of how she prays. She says, "Oh, Lord of hosts," that language, "Lord Saba," as we sing. That's the Lord Almighty. That's the commander of armies. That's the God who commands the legions of Heavens to come.

She knows who God is, this powerful, majestic, amazing being.

But what does she say? Does she say, "O, Lord of hosts, listen to me now. Listen to the afflictions of your servant." She knows who God is, but she also knows who she is.

Maybe you are asking me. "So if there is this powerful god, this amazing, awesome God, who should already know all things, then why should we pray?"

Then why should we tell him anything, if he already knows anything before we ask him, right? Do you ever ask yourself that question? Oh, friends, because prayer benefits us. Prayer is for us. Prayer deepens our faith, our dependence on God.

That's why we pray, and then we see you in verses 12 through 18. I'm not going to read it, but you read the story, the ironic encounter between Eli and Hannah again.

The priests of all people cannot discern where Hannah is. He thinks she's drunk, but she sets him straight. Oh, I love it.

"Do not regard me as a worthless woman, sir, I am not a worthless woman. I am troubled in spirit."

Don't you love it?

You know there are two ways that we can respond to waiting, actually three, but two main ways, right? The third thing is actually what we ought to do.

When we're waiting on God, we can sometimes go in the direction of fatalism.

Fatalism basically says, "You know that life happens, right? It is what it is. So disregard it. Just let it be."

Or we can go to a place of resentment where we say, "I want absolutely nothing to do with such a God who would allow such things." We're told here God had closed Hannah's womb. God.

But faith drives us to the very God whom we know is more than able to take care of us. That's what faith does, right? Hannah's faith was not some make believe thing. She knew her history. She knew she had heard about Exodus chapter three, when God heard the affliction of her ancestors and brought them out of the Exodus, out of slavery in Egypt. And what Hannah is doing is saying, "I am going to this very same God, and I'm going to say, God, you delivered my people, you brought them out of misery, Lord, you can do the same for me. I know what you are like. I know you are kind and faithful and gracious and merciful. I know you're forgiving, and I know what you've done. I've been told stories of the Exodus, and I believe that they are true."

"Hear my humble cry while on others, thou art calling. Please do not pass me by." Because when our spirit is troubled, that's where we go with anxiety and friends, let me remind us. Let us not waste our waiting on God. Let us not waste our waiting on God. We must embrace tension. We don't like tension. I don't like tension, right? That is caused by our trials and pain, and the way to do it friends, the way to deal with our waiting is to name our expectations. Because when our expectations collide with our experiences, then there's pain, then there are problems.

But when we name our expectations, we're able to commit them to the Lord, and we're able to say, Lord, I'm going to go with what I know about who you are and what you have done, even when I don't know what my life looks like?

We trust what we know of God and who he is, what he is, what he has done, especially when it's confusing, or our lives are confusing and we don't know what's going on, we focus our heart on who God is and what he's like.

But friends, it's not just the pain of waiting that stretches our faith, that deepens our faith - and that's hard.

But it's also understanding that when we reach the end of the rope, so to speak, that God does actually come to all relief, that our waiting does bear fruit.

Did you see what happens here towards the end of these verses, as Hannah goes out, she has an encounter with the priest, who has no clue what's going on here, and then he blesses her. And then she leaves this place a changed woman.

No more weeping. Now she can eat. "I can eat now."

She has peace. It's a turning point right in the whole story. Just the whole story changes. Why? Because prayer changes us. Hannah had refused to shelter herself in the protective shell of her bitterness, she said, "No more."

Now did Hannah eat and go away happy, because she saw a little angel? That he talked to her and said, "you can have a child?"

She had no clue.

She didn't know.

And the solution here comes in a surprising, a rather surprising situation. She finds peace without knowing that God is going to answer her prayer.

"It is well with my soul."

"It is well with my soul" does not mean your prayer has been answered the way you want it to be answered. "It is well with my soul" does not mean you've been cured from cancer. "It is well with my soul" does not mean you don't struggle with depression anymore. "It is well with my soul" does not mean that your sin is no more. "It is well with my soul" means you have a peace that surpasses understanding that you cannot explain, because it is coming from God and God alone.

But then we hear these little powerful words, "God remembered."

Two of my favorite words in the Bible are “God remembered.”

He remembered this woman.

Friends, we must also be careful as we hear God remembering Hannah, that sometimes we try to liken ourselves to specific situations in the Bible, and that God is going to answer my prayer exactly the way he answered Hannah's.

Sometimes we might have to wait until he returns and we get our healing, we get our restoration. But I do think that the words of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament are really appropriate for us to hear and to think about in terms of what you know. Paul, we're told, was praying and asking the Lord to take away the thorn in his flesh and three times the Lord said “no,” but he did tell him something that's powerful for us to hear and to remember. “My grace is sufficient for you. Know that, and when you were weak, you were strong.

I believe that Hannah could have heard the stories of Sarah, who went before her, the mother of Isaac, through whom nations are blessed. She heard the story of Rebecca, the mother of Esau and Jacob, Jacob, the father of the nations. She heard the story of Rachel, who bore Joseph, who would redeem God's people. She heard the story of a barren woman that was visited by an angel, and then she bears a son. His name is Samson, the big old, strong dude that kills and slays the Philistines.

And notice how each one of these women had shared a sadness like Hannah, but in each case, a child is born, a baby, a teeny, little, innocent baby, is born, and that baby becomes the answer, God's answer to the crisis of the time. So we are justified even before reading, in the book of Samuel chapter 1 verses 21 and chapter two and all, we're justified to believe that something spectacular is about to happen with this child.

As God makes something out of nothing, as God brings life out of death, as God brings richness out of poverty, as God makes somebody out of nobody,

And in our pain and struggles, our greatest fear friends, we often entertain the thought that God has forgotten us.

Perhaps that's your reality today. Perhaps that's what you're experiencing in your struggle. You feel “God has forgotten me. He doesn't remember my struggles.”

I have some good news for you, brother, sister, he does not sleep, neither does he slumber. He does not need reminding. He does not forget.

In fact, while you think you're waiting (and you are), God does not wait. He is always moving towards his perfect plan, and that includes you, child of God.

One of my favorite passages in Scripture is found in the Gospel of John in chapter 11, we have a beautiful encounter there that happens between Jesus and two sisters whose brother, Lazarus, the dear friend of Jesus, has died. And if you know the story, Jesus had been told, word had been sent to him that Lazarus was about to die. Jesus takes his sweet time. Four days he waits, and then when he shows up, Martha is right there, and Mary, and they're asking Jesus, "Where were you? If you had been here, something would have been different."

And Martha, in that beautiful encounter, is standing there, she's confronting Jesus and asking Jesus, "Where were you when my brother was dying?"

There's something amazing that happens in that encounter, and it is this: Jesus tells Martha, "Your brother will live again." And Martha is a good Jew, just like Hannah. She's a wonderful Jew. She responds, "Of course, I know my brother will live again at the resurrection."

But Jesus looks at her and says, "That's not what I'm talking about."

He looks at her and he says, "Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. I am what you are looking for. You don't have to wait any more."

And friends - this morning, I am here to encourage you and to remind you of this reality, this truth.

I'm not here to tell you that somehow, when you walk out of those doors, you're not going to be like me. You're impatient waiting. I'm not going to tell you that "once you walk out of this place that everything is going to be fixed, and now we can all be patient. Let's all go home, and we can wait on Jesus when He comes back."

But I'm going to tell you this,

There is hope in your waiting, because Jesus, this Jesus, who stands in front of Martha, he also prayed earnestly to his father, bitterly, asking that the Father would take the cup away from him.

And then on the cross, as he hangs there, he says, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani, my God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?"

And all he hears is silence, because he was supposed to be performing, accomplishing the work that God, the Father, had sent him. He had to drink the bitter cup.

Your sin and my sin took him there.

And the good news for us this morning is this, that this Jesus, who stood on the cross and who cried bitterly, knows what it means to cry bitterly. He knows what it means to wait. He knows what it means to be in pain and in affliction. He knows pain so bad that he actually died on the cross.

That means he can sympathize with you.

He knows what you feel.

But more than that, he has dealt decisively with sin and Satan and death itself.

And so he says to you, my friend, you can wait on me. You know why?

“Because one day I will turn your mourning into dancing. I will wipe away every tear that you shed. There will be no more sorrow in your life. You will not struggle with sin anymore.”

And he says, “You can wait because I am with you. I am with you, and you can wait.”

And I cannot wait for that day in the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).