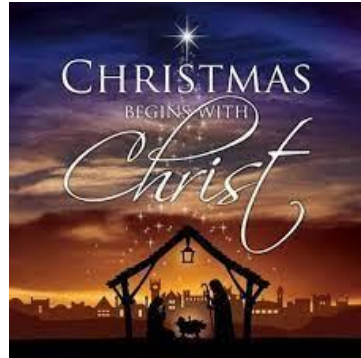


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WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANT TO ME THEN AND NOW

In my younger days, Christmas to me was a time of great fun and enjoyment in receiving gifts from loved ones and also giving to others. A time of celebration over good food and drink with family members and friends and even having a wonderful partying time. Moreover, it is a public holiday and the counting down to the new year ahead with just 7 more days to goindeed a holiday season mood during the last week of each year. We hear people greeting each other "Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year".



My first encounter of Christmas experience in a church was when I was 15 years of age. My neighbour invited me to a Christmas event in his church on Christmas Eve where I first heard about the reason why Christians celebrate Christmas. It is about the birth of Jesus Christ and why He came to this world.

My understanding then was that Jesus came to save sinners (Luke 19:10 – For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost). After the event, the only thing that I can remember was the Bible verse that says "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." – John 3:16. This is the message of Christmas which the Christians call it the good news: GOSPEL.

God's **O**nly **S**on **P**erished, bringing **E**verlasting **L**ife

With **C**HRI**S**T **M**any **A**re **S**aved

Without **C**HRI**S**T **I** am **N**othing

The birth of Jesus is God's Plan of Salvation for men through His life, death & resurrection (Roman 1:16 the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth).

As I continued to grow in my walk of faith with the knowledge of God in spiritual wisdom and understanding, I began to realise that Christmas is not just about the Gospel (the Good News) of God's love & His forgiveness of my sins and having eternal life in Christ.

The central theme & reality of the Gospel is about:

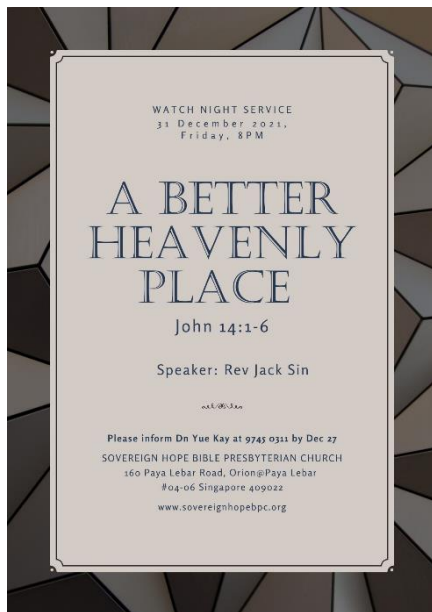
- the holiness and sovereignty of God
- the ugliness and consequence of sin
- the helplessness and responsibility of man
- the death and resurrection of Christ
- the justification by faith alone
- the sanctifying work of the Spirit
- the glory of Christ's return &
- the final judgement

CHRISTMAS is an indictment before it becomes a delight. Luke 2:11 – “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord”. If you don't need a Saviour, you don't need Christmas. Christmas will not have its intended effect until we feel desperately the need for a Saviour.

BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL!



Deacon Yue Kay



SHBPC Wednesday 8p.m. Prayer Meeting (1st December 2021)

“Lessons from The Prayer Life of Hannah” 1 Sam.1: 9 - 28

Pastor Jack welcomed the 9 attendees (Deacon, members & regular friends and 2 overseas brethren, namely, Pastor Lazarus from Calvary Reformed Church and Preacher Mok @ New Life BPC, London). We started the Prayer Meeting with the hymn, “Sweet Hour of Prayer”. This hymn appropriately supported and reflected the theme of fervency in our prayers and petitions to God, especially in this difficult time of widespread fear, pain & suffering, discouragement, death & hopelessness brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thereafter Pastor Jack led us in the opening prayer.

Next, we took turns to read God’s Word from 1Samuel 1: 9 -28 before Pastor Jack expounded on it. Here are the 4 salient points to consider:

A) The Pains of Hannah's Life (v 9 – 10)

Background information on the 8 unread verses in 1 Sam 1: v 1 –8

- At the end of the time of the Judges, there lived a man named Elkanah, who had 2 wives.
- Hannah was the first wife without any child while Penninah was the second wife with children. (v2)
- The Bible recorded the practice of bigamy, at that point in time, in that fallen and depraved world as only a matter of fact, but it did not commend on or approve of that practice which God had clearly prohibited. Yet it was still being practised even by the Jews as a “fallen culture” during that time of depravity.
- Peninnah persistently ridiculed, taunted and provoked Hannah sorely for her inability to bear children, because the Lord had “shut up her womb” so much so that Hannah became “sorely grieved”. (v 6)
- In such matters of relationships in the home/household, the pains of life can appear in various forms and in different seasons.
- The young, the middle-aged and the senior folks will have their own peculiar set of problems to face and mitigate.
- We are reminded that everyone, even Christians, who are saved by grace, will have to face many such struggles in life, because we live in a sinful, depraved and fallen world.
- Hannah was thus so sorely affected by this adversity/trial in her life that she wept sorely and could not eat. (v 8)
- Hannah lived with Elkanah, her caring and loving husband, and Penninah, her tormentor, causing her much sadness, grief and adversity in life.
- Sometimes God allows adversity to take place in our lives, such as in Hannah's case, where her inability to give birth was perceived as a

negative issue (shame/ disgrace), because society perceives that a woman's joy in her home is to be able to have children and to establish her family. This was an expectation widely upheld living during those ancient times.

- Hannah was greatly saddened and provoked by this adversity in her life that she cried out to the Lord for help to overcome her adversity caused by her infertility issue.

B) The Prayer of Hannah (v 9--16)

What will you, as a Christian, do when you are faced with problems, challenges, pains, fears or failures and adversities in life?

Whom / What will you turn to in order to seek help?

Is it your friends, parents, family, or the authorities? Something for us to ponder over.

- In verse 9, Hannah “rose up” after taking some food and drink in Shiloh and went to pray in the temple at Shiloh.
- Hannah turned to the Lord immediately to seek help.
- Shiloh was a sort of religious centre in the north, where there was a small temple in which an elderly priest named Eli lived.
- In verse 10, when Hannah began to seek God in the temple, she ...
 - (i) felt bitterness in her soul,
 - (ii) prayed,
 - (iii) wept sore ..and
 - (iv) vowed (made a strong commitment) a vow. (v 11)
- Hannah's actions showed the conditions that she felt at that time while she prayed to God.
- Hannah's deep emotional upheaval drove her nearer to God and enabled her to present her petition (for a son) to God.
- Hannah prayed for her petition with a sincere, fervent and humbling spirit and God heard her prayer. We are thus reminded to have the right, sincere and humble attitude when we are asking God to grant us our petition, and not to give up so easily if one's petition is not granted immediately.
- Hannah made a vow to the Lord that if God gave her a “man child”, she would dedicate/give the son back to the Lord to serve Him all the days of his life and ensure that “no razor” shall come upon his head.
- The “no razor” statement refers to the Nazarite Vow (Num.6:1 –4) whereby the person making the vow will separate himself from sin to keep himself pure unto the Lord. One way is by not shaving off his /her hair from the head. Samson made such a vow.
- If anyone makes a vow, then he/she must remember to keep that vow and honour what he/she had promised God.

- In verse 12, Hannah was so grieved that she could not utter (say) her prayer verbally or properly. She prayed in her heart, moving her lips but without any voice. Even Eli, the elderly priest, thought that she was drunk on wine. (v 13 --14)
- Hannah denied being drunk. Instead, she shared with Eli her pain and grief caused by her problem /adversity with a sincere, honest, persevering and humble attitude. (v 15)
- In verse 16, Hannah used the word “complaint” not in a negative sense, but to mean all her unhappiness, grief and distress caused by her adversity /problem (v 16).

C) The Promise to Hannah (v 17- 20)

- Eli the priest represented God and also literally, the people in the land to God
- Eli must have communicated directly with God in order to be able to tell Hannah that God had granted her the petition she prayed for and to go in peace. (v 17)
- In the promise to Hannah, we see a very good and faithful response from Hannah who subsequently stopped crying, started eating and was no longer sad.
- In those days, God spoke directly to the people, and those who asked for petitions could know directly if theirs was granted or denied, but not anymore at present. So that's why, we in the present time, will not be able to know when God will give us a reply to our prayers.
- If we had submitted our petition, then it is important that we should allow God’s response to be revealed to us in due time, regardless of their outcome.
- Sometimes God brings us to a point of desperation so that we turn to Him. When we turn to God in desperation, He will test us on our patience, perseverance and faithfulness in waiting upon Him to seek for that particular thing that we crave so badly for.
- When we want something so desperately, we will even go on our knees to request for it from God and cry out to Him for it.
- God has a plan and a purpose for this. More often than not, God would have granted your petition and the reply was already on the way to you.
- There are 4 answers to prayers:
 - (i) Direct (Yes) You get what you asked for.
 - (ii) Different (not as expected) You get something else.
 - (iii) Delayed (need to wait for reply)
 - (iv) Denial (No) You get a negative answer.

God looked at her heart which was right with God. She had no selfish agenda in asking for a son. Hannah sought the Lord and got what she

asked for. She conceived and bore a son and named him “Samuel” which meant “the Lord heard my prayer”. (v 20)

D) The Peace of Hannah (v 21--28)

- Hannah fed and weaned her young son for a few years, maybe up to 3 years. After that she took her son Samuel, with 3 bullocks, an ephah of flour and a bottle of wine to the temple in Shiloh to honour her vow to God. (v 21—24)
- Hannah remembered her vow. Their family slew a bullock and brought it and Samuel to Eli the priest (v 25)
- Hannah then told Eli her identity and explained the purpose of her visit to the temple. (v 26—27)
- Thus Hannah found a thankful peace in her heart when she remembered the grace of God in granting her the petition/wish for a son a few years ago. She remembered her vow and came with thanksgiving, to honour it faithfully by dedicating Samuel to the service of God, for as long as he lived. (v 28)
- In verse 28, when Hannah said, “I have lent him to the Lord”, she meant that she had surrendered (offered) or dedicated her son Samuel to serve God in His temple throughout Samuel’s entire lifetime and so Samuel worshipped there.

Conclusion:

From the above sharing of the Bible text in 1 Sam 1: 9–28, we can indeed learn many valuable lessons from “Hannah’s prayer life” that we can use and apply to our own daily lives, to enrich our personal spiritual growth and faith in the Lord. This sermon also helps us to appreciate the need for and practice of holding regular prayer sessions to commune with the Lord, especially in this current global health crisis, where fear, confusion, pain, suffering, terrorism, disease, death, evil, crime and uncertainty abounds.

The church and her believers need to pray and uphold one another in their faith and spiritual vitality and discernment, as well as for the leaders of our nation, Singapore, and the other countries in the world, to effectively manage and survive this current health catastrophe that is affecting all aspects of life in the world today.

We need to be calm, alert, resilient, sensible, united, cautious, and co-operative with God in this current challenging situation. We must not panic or be obsessed or paralysed by fear. We also need to look fervently to the LORD for WISDOM, GUIDANCE, PEACE, COMFORT and DELIVERANCE.

MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON US

Han Kin Hoong

The 1st
Myanmese
Sunday School
class at SHBPC
with Bro
James giving
the Bible
lesson.



Mercy Church, Nya Pyi Taw, Yangon



Lapui teaching
the Sunday
School class in
her church
with her
husband, the
preacher.



Memory Verse

Neh 12:30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Pastor speaks today on “***Serving with Accountable Stewardship***” (*Neh 12:31-47*), continuing the quarterly theme of “***A Biblical Paradigm for Triumphant Christian Service***”.
3. Rev Philip Heng speaks at our **Christmas Eve Service (8pm)** on “***When God Became Man***” (*1 Tim 3:16*)
4. Pastor speaks next Sunday on “***Biblical Separation Learnt & Practiced***” (*Neh 13:1-31*).
5. Sunday School classes continues after worship service:
 - WCF Shorter Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
 - Understanding Biblical Eschatology & related Topics – Joseph
 - Studies in Numbers – Dn Kwong Leen
 - Burmese Bible Class - James
6. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. Included in the programme is a study on Church History in China on alternate Sundays. Join us for a time of profitable learning.
7. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church.
8. Neighbourhood Bible Class meets on every first Friday of each month on the study of 2 Samuel. Come and join us!
9. Fide Vitae is giving a 20% discount on all books for the month of December.
10. Those who wish to bring a new friend to the worship service, kindly inform the safety officer Dn Yue Kay or Pastor at least a day in advance.
11. The Pandemic book can be purchased through Dn Yue Kay (Hp: +65 97450311) or via email at sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com.
12. Do kindly observe the safety measures of the church and assist with the weekly cleaning of the premises.
13. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB Account 392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**
