



# Fill My Cup Lord....

A weekly devotional provided through the  
Women's Ministry of  
First Congregational Church of Hopkinton, MA

Two women, two sets of circumstances, two different attitudes toward God. I was struck by that recently, while reading the first chapter of Samuel. It wasn't unusual, in the Old Testament, for families to be riddled with problems stemming from the fact that men regularly took multiple wives. What good could really come of that? So it's not surprising, then, that division ran through Elkanah's family. After all, one of his wives had borne him children. The other was barren. He seemed to favor his barren wife, giving her a double portion of meat after his annual sacrifice, making the mother of his children jealous.

Jealousy is never becoming, but in this case the jealous wife was particularly ugly. Penninah, the wife who had all the children but who received less meat, was hostile towards Hannah, the wife with no children but more meat. And she showed her hostility every year when the family traveled to another town to worship the LORD Almighty in His house. Samuel 1:7 says, *"This 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."*

Both women suffered heartache. Both had reason to be hostile. Penninah "had it all" by her world's standards, but lacked the love of her husband. Hannah had her husband's devotion, but suffered disgrace in her barrenness. Each had what the other wanted. Penninah took her heartache out on Hannah. Hannah took her heartache directly to God:

*"In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, '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.'"*

Have you ever brought your deep anguish to God, weeping bitterly? Did you know that you can do that? Hannah did and she was bold in her request for relief. But she didn't just make a request. She made a promise. In fact, from our culture's standpoint, it looks like she was trying to cut a deal. If God would give her a son, she would give that son back to God. Wow. That was big. It's hard to understand exactly how big a promise that was without reading further.

You see, Hannah didn't make an empty promise. She wasn't like a child telling his mother, "If you buy me this one toy, I'll never ever ask for anything ever again, ever," with no intention of holding up her end of the bargain. Hannah had a deep anguish, she trusted the Almighty God to relieve it, and she fully intended to thank Him for His mercy by gratefully giving His gift back to Him – as an act of worship.

Some time after, Hannah bore a son, and named him "Samuel," because she had *"asked the LORD for him."* (v. 20) She was a good steward of God's gift, loving Samuel and nursing him until he was strong. And then without wavering, this mother gave her only child up in service to the LORD:

*"After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, '...I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.'" (1 Samuel 1:24-28a)*

Hannah worshiped the LORD in more than one way: by trusting Him with her heartache instead of acting maliciously toward her rival, by remembering Him on the day that she named her newborn son, and by giving back to God what He had so generously given to her. We know all of that about Hannah. All we know about Penninah was that she was a jealous, malicious woman. With which one do you identify? Which one do you want to be like? How will you approach the House of the Lord this Sunday? With a hostile heart? Or with a heart that pours its heartache out on Him...as a show of trust...as a demonstration of love...as an act of worship?