

## ***Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 1: 1 – 28***

Key Verse: 1 Samuel 1: 15 – 16, “No, I’m not drunk, Sir... I have not been drinking! I am desperate, and I have been praying, pouring out my troubles to the Lord. Don’t think I am a worthless woman. I have been praying like this because I am so miserable”.

### **Message: THE MISERABLE PRAYER**

The Solomon Islands Unit women have just demonstrated to you the “Peninnah and Hannah” narrative found in the first chapter of the first book of Samuel. In this short sermon, I want us to concentrate our focus on “The miserable prayer of Hannah – the barren mother.

Besides Peninnah, Hannah was another wife of Elkannah. The difference was that Peninnah was able to produce children while Hannah who was barren, was producing no children.

In the Old Testament, being “barren” was believed to be God’s intervention due to some sins committed. If a mother pronounced “barren” then it would become a domestic and public issue in their traditional religion. So Barren Hannah was becoming a centre of public mockery and domestically considered “useless, worthless, and good for nothing”.

Each time Elkannah offered his sacrifice, he would give the best meat to Peninnah and her children and left – overs to Hannah due to the reason that the Lord had kept her from having children. The same reason drove Peninnah, her co-

wife and rival, to upset, torment, and humiliate Hannah with her mockery, sarcastic, rude, and negative remarks, commentaries and mannerisms.

Consequently, the pain that Hannah experienced was unbearable and was running deeply embedded in her psyche. Every aspect of her life was affected. Religiously, she was out from the chosen race. Socially, she was a laughing stock. Economically, there was no one to pass on her rights and properties. Educationally, there was no one to pass on her norms, values, knowledge and wisdom. For this, she would cry bitterly, feel distressed and miserable to the extent of refusing to eat.

Everyone would have thought that Hannah was hopeless because she had come to an end. Given the painful scenario, Hannah was more determined than before to disprove the public stereotype opinion about her by praying miserably, bitterly, and desperately to God, “Lord Almighty, look at me, your servant! See my trouble and remember me! Don’t forget me! If you give me a son, I promise that I will dedicate him to you for his whole life and that he will never have his hair cut” (1 Samuel 1: 11).

Hannah was so absorbed and obsessed with her prayer life that she showed some signs of abnormal behaviour. Eli the High Priest of Shiloh thought that Hannah was drunk so said to her, “Stop a drunken show of your -self! Stop your

drinking and sober up!” (1 Samuel 1: 14) but Hannah responded, “No, I’m not drunk, Sir ... I have not been drinking! I am desperate, and I have been praying, pouring out my troubles to the Lord. Don’t think I am a worthless woman. I have been praying like this because I’m so miserable” (1 Samuel 1: 15 – 16).

Our message says, “The miserable prayer”. Then God heard the miserable prayer of barren Hannah. He felt the miserability, bitterness, and desperation Hannah was bearing. When God looked into the eyes of Hannah, he could see the pain in her eyes. When he saw the pain in her eyes, his heart was broken. God gave Hannah her deepest need; she gave birth to baby Samuel who was not only the blessing to her generation but to the whole nation of Israel as well.

As women in the Pacific, what are our deepest needs in life that seem to be impossible to actualize? Being “barren” in the Pacific society is not a public issue but a domestic concern between husband and wife. But we can be religiously barren where women’s “worthiness” is often down – played by male domination. We can be socially barren where women are vulnerable to abuse and a laughing stock to certain extent. We can be economically barren where we as mothers are struggling to make ends meet with the high cost of living and education demand of our children. We can be educationally barren where priorities and opportunities are given to male populations.

Women believers of our Lord Jesus Christ, our worthiness, vulnerability, struggle, and opportunities are determined and controlled outside of our strength and capacities. We are at the mercy of the male leadership of the church at the upper bracket. We are at the mercy of sociological perspective of women. We are at the mercy of the price – controllers. We are at the mercy of educational theories and practices. We are victims in our small world. We struggle against struggle; hope against hope, and our struggle and hope appear to be practically impossible.

How do we feel? Are we feeling miserable, desperate, bitter, or hopeless? Let us take our feelings and tears to the Lord in prayer. Let us empty ourselves and pour them all to Jesus Christ our mediator. If Hannah was able to break through, we can make it through our miserable and unceasing prayers. As Jesus invited us in Matthew 27: 11, “Come to me all of you who are tired of carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest”.

For our meditation, let us sing “What a friend we have in Jesus...”

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and grief to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Take him to the lord in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,

O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to god in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged:  
Take it to the lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful,  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness:  
Take it to the lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious saviour, still our refuge:  
Take it to the lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsaken thee.  
Take it to the lord in prayer;  
In his arms he'll take and shield thee.  
Thou wilt find a solace there.  
Amen.

