

I SAMUEL 2:1-10

Written by Hope Langeland, senior GC student

Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. ²"There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. ³Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. ⁴The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. ⁵Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ⁶The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. ⁸He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. ⁹"He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. ¹⁰The Lord! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed."

I believe that Hannah's prayer was said through tears. Hannah has given up her precious child, and though she says her heart rejoices in the Lord, her heart must also be aching. And yet, it is just in this joint of joy and pain that Hannah is able to speak so confidently of a God who is present in all parts of life. Hannah initially petitioned God from a position of weakness. She was a barren woman and her husband's other wife had the upper hand. God gave her a son, and therefore gave her strength in her household and community, but Hannah is now willingly putting herself in a place of weakness again. She feels such security in God's goodness that she is able to place her most precious possession in God's hands. I can't pretend to understand this kind of complete faith, but I think that it is something beyond simple submission. Hannah has experienced true joy and desolating pain and expresses them as intimately interwoven. She is able to embrace and rejoice in a God who brings both death and life. The prayer she prays describes a perspective of such deep peace, an undercurrent untouched by the highs and lows of humanity.

To be honest, I marvel at this wise woman's prayer. I doubt, and I question, and I am still seeking a faith that could allow me to give myself so fully into the hands of an unseen God. I find my own solace in Hannah's words that "The Lord is a God who knows." There is peace in being understood, even when I do not understand. May you find stillness and rest through both joy and pain, because God is a God who knows.