

“Can’t Out Give God”
The Rev. S. Shane Nanney ~ August 18, 2024
1 Samuel 1:9-20, John 6:51-58

In a quaint little town, there was a famous bakery known for its incredible pies. The bakery was run by a kind-hearted woman named Mrs. Baker, who was renowned not just for her delicious pies but also for her unparalleled generosity. One day, Mrs. Baker announced that she would be giving away free pie slices to everyone in town to celebrate her birthday.

The townspeople were thrilled. They lined up outside the bakery, eagerly anticipating their slices. As each person received their pie, they marveled at how perfectly flaky and delicious it was. The line seemed endless, but Mrs. Baker kept serving, never running out of pie.

Timmy decided to find out the secret behind the endless pie. He sneaked into the bakery and hid behind a stack of flour bags. To his amazement, he saw Mrs. Baker taking slices from a huge, magical pie that never seemed to get smaller.

Timmy could not contain his curiosity and asked, “Mrs. Baker, how is it possible that the pie never runs out?”

Mrs. Baker chuckled and said, “Oh, Timmy, this pie is a gift from God. It never ends because God’s generosity is like this pie—there is always more than enough to go around!”

Timmy, with his eyes wide in awe, replied, “That is amazing! So, if God’s generosity is like this pie, does that mean I can have as much as I want forever?”

Mrs. Baker smiled and said, “Absolutely! But remember, Timmy, just like with pie, it’s not about how much you take, but about how much you share.”

Timmy took his lesson to heart. From that day on, he shared his pie with everyone he met, always remembering that God’s generosity is boundless and best enjoyed when shared with others. God’s generosity is an infinite, delightful gift—much like Mrs. Baker’s never-ending pie.

This story illustrates the concept of God’s generosity through the metaphor of an endless pie, emphasizing that the blessings we receive are not only abundant but also meant to be shared.

Let me paint you another picture of the scenery to our Old Testament lesson. The book of 1 Samuel begins in a period of great distress for Israel. The nation is in turmoil, there is no king because we are in the time of Judges, all the tribes functioned independently and often conflicted with each other, the nation had no direction, the priesthood is corrupt, and spiritually, things seem bleak. Into this context, we are introduced to a humble woman named Hannah.

Hannah was one of Elkanah’s (El Kaa na) two wives, and while Peninnah (pea nina), the other wife, bore children, Hannah remained childless. This situation was not just a personal heartache but a social and spiritual dilemma in ancient Israel.

Hannah is desperate to have a child. The inability to bear children was seen as a sign of divine disfavor and brought intense social stigma. She is seen by her community as failing to do the thing women was supposed to do, have children. She herself feels like a failure. And in that anguish, she comes to God begging for a son. She seeks an audience with God because she believes that only God can give her what she wants -- A male child. You can hear the anguish in her prayer as she prays: “O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me and not forget your

servant but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazirite until the day of his death. he shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.”

Hannah’s prayer is a mix of deep sorrow and resolute faith. She is not merely asking for a son; she is making a vow to dedicate her child to the Lord. This is an extraordinary act of faith and surrender. Hannah’s promise reflects her deep desire to see God’s intervention and her willingness to give back to God what she so desperately wants.

Hannah’s earnest prayer was misunderstood, but Eli soon recognized her sincerity and blessed her. The text shows us that Hannah’s fervent prayers were heard, and in due time, she conceived and gave birth to Samuel.

Hannah’s story culminates in the birth of Samuel, a profound answer to prayer. But her story does not end with merely receiving what she asked for. She honored her vow by dedicating Samuel to the Lord’s service, where she brings Samuel to the temple and leaves him there to serve God.

From Hannah’s story, we can draw several key lessons about God’s generosity and our response:

- 1. God Honors Faithful Devotion:** Hannah’s story demonstrates that God honors sincere and faithful devotion. Her intense prayer and vow were not just expressions of her needs but reflections of her deep faith and trust in God. God responded to her devotion with a blessing that exceeded her expectations. This reminds us that when we approach God with genuine hearts and unwavering faith, He is faithful to respond in His perfect timing.
- 2. The Principle of Surrender:** She was willing to give up her deepest desire for the glory of God. This is a powerful lesson in surrendering our own desires and plans for God’s greater

purpose. It is not my will but God's will be done. When we are willing to let go and trust God, He can work miracles in our lives and through us.

- 3. The Endless Generosity of God:** The principle that we cannot out-give God is evident in Hannah's story. She gave her son to God, and in return, God blessed her not only with Samuel but also with other children. God's generosity is beyond measure; He multiplies our offerings and acts of faithfulness. We may offer our time, talents, and resources, but God's return is always more abundant than we could ever imagine.
- 4. Impact Beyond the Immediate:** Hannah's faithfulness had an impact far beyond her immediate situation. Samuel grew up to be a great prophet and judge of Israel, leading the nation through a crucial period in their history. Our acts of faithfulness and surrender can have lasting effects, not only in our own lives but also in the lives of those around us and for the advancement of God's kingdom.

Who here has not ever asked God for something? Who here has never received a blessing from God? We all have. But how does it work? Why does God bless us with some things and not others? Because God knows best. God sees the bigger picture. We see the immediate. So, God really does know what is best for me.

But our asking of God is also a determination of how and what we get. We can learn a lot from Hannah's prayer and story. So, the next time you ask God, remember to:

- 1. Examine Your Heart:** Just as Hannah's prayer reflected her heart's desire and trust, we should examine our own hearts. Are we bringing our deepest desires to God? Are we willing to trust Him fully with our needs and desires?

2. **Embrace the Principle of Surrender:** Consider what God might be asking you to surrender. It could be your time, talents, or resources. Are you willing to let go and trust God with those things?
3. **Be Faithful in Small Things:** Sometimes, it is in the small, everyday acts of faithfulness that we see God's generosity. Be consistent in your prayers, in your giving, and in your service. Trust that God will honor your faithfulness.
4. **Trust in God's Abundant Provision:** Remember that God's generosity far exceeds anything we can give. Trust Him to provide for your needs and to bless your efforts in ways that are beyond your imagination.

Hannah's story is a testament to the truth that we cannot out-give God. Her faithfulness and surrender were met with God's immeasurable generosity. As we reflect on her story, let us be inspired to approach God with the same fervent devotion and trust, knowing that He is always more generous than we could ever imagine. May we live out this truth in our own lives, confident that when we give to God, He will always give back to us abundantly. Amen.