

Message 1: The God Who Frames the Stories of Our Lives

信息一：塑造我们人生故事的上帝

1 Samuel 撒母耳记上 1:1-20

Hannah 哈拿

Today I want to begin a series entitled The God Who Frames the Stories of Our Lives. We are going to enter the stories of 1 and 2 Samuel and meet Hannah, Samuel, Saul and David—people who, for the most part, are ordinary human beings trying to live their lives, make choices, carry responsibilities and deal with relationships. Yet in the middle of their ordinary lives they encounter God, and those encounters shape not only their own stories but the story of Israel and, eventually, the story that leads us to Jesus.

今天，我想开始一个新的系列，题目叫《塑造我们人生故事的上帝》。我们要一起走进《撒母耳记上、下》的故事，认识哈拿、撒母耳、扫罗和大卫。其实，他们大多数时候都只是很普通的人，过着自己的日子，作选择、担责任、处理人与人之间的关系。但是，就在这些平凡的生活里，他们遇见了上帝；而这些与上帝相遇的经历，不但塑造了他们自己的人生，也塑造了以色列的故事，最后更把我们带进耶稣的故事。

The last story is the David story, the ancestor of Jesus. We will spend some time looking at his humble beginnings and then his struggle in becoming king, and his work in unifying the nation of Israel - no easy feat. His story is preceded by Saul, the first and pretty pathetic king of Israel, and Samuel, the transitional leader whose steady presence holds the country through a time of great change. These were the prominent men whose stories cast long shadows over the beginning history of Israel. However, their stories would not have happened had it not been for a little, seemingly insignificant incident in the ordinary course of life of a woman struggling to be a wife and a mother in a male-dominated culture. Her name was Hannah.

最后我们会来到大卫的故事——他是耶稣的祖先。我们会看看他卑微的开始，也会看他成为君王一路上的挣扎，以及他怎样努力把以色列这个国家重新联合起来——这绝不是一件容易的事。在大卫之前，是扫罗，以色列第一位、而且说实在相当失败的王；还有撒母耳，这位处在转折时代的领袖，在国家经历巨大改变的时候，他稳定的存在一直托住整个民族。这几个男人都是以色列早期历史中举足轻重的人物，他们的故事留下了很深的影子。可是，如果没有一个看起来很小、甚至微不足道的事件发生在一个女人平凡的生活里，他们的故事也许根本不会发生。这个女人活在男性主导的文化中，努力做一个妻子，也渴望成为一个母亲。她的名字叫哈拿。

In the midst of the stories of these people is an odd object – the ark of the covenant – that somehow weaves it's way into these peoples lives knitting them together. What we will discover in the lives of these people is that their stories, our stories, are shaped by a bigger reality of the story of God in his work of saving His people and planet earth. These stories exposes a world, an existence in which God works and speaks and saves and loves.

在这些人的故事当中，还有一样很特别的东西——约柜。它不断穿梭在这些人的生命里，好像一条线，把他们的故事编织在一起。我们会慢慢发现，他们的故事，也包括我们的故事，其实都被一个更大的现实所塑造：那就是上帝自己的故事——祂怎样拯救祂的百姓，也怎样拯救这个世界。这些故事让我们看见一个真实的世界：上帝在其中工作、说话、拯救，也爱人。

We need to recognize ourselves in these stories—not because Hannah, Samuel, Saul and David are simply examples for us to copy, but because their lives expose the same mixture we find in ourselves: faith and fear, courage and weakness, obedience and failure. God sees them, takes them seriously, calls them and deals with them long before they understand everything about Him. That does not mean faith is unimportant;

Scripture continually calls us to trust and respond to God. It means that grace begins with God's initiative before it becomes our response.

我们需要在这些故事里认出自己。不是因为哈拿、撒母耳、扫罗和大卫只是一些榜样，让我们照着做；而是因为他们的生命显出一种我们自己也很熟悉的混合：有信心，也有惧怕；有勇气，也有软弱；有顺服，也有失败。在他们还没有完全认识上帝以前，上帝已经看见他们，认真对待他们，呼召他们，也在他们生命中工作。这并不是说信心不重要；圣经一直呼召我们信靠上帝、回应上帝。这里要说的是，在我们回应以前，恩典已经先从上帝主动开始。

Over the years, one thing that has become clearer to me is the incredible power of stories. Doctrines matter. Theology matters. But very often it is stories that get under our skin and shape us. My mother was a teacher. When we were children, from time to time she would sit us down and lecture us about our behaviour. You know what? To this day I cannot remember one of those lectures. But I remember her stories. I remember her stories about growing up in Shanghai, about the war, about hardship, about hope, about working hard. But the story that influenced our family more than any other was the story of her encounter with Jesus. That story changed the direction of our family, and in no small way it changed the direction of my own life.

这些年来，有一件事我越来越看得清楚，就是故事有一种不可思议的力量。教义很重要，神学也很重要；可是很多时候，真正进入我们心里、慢慢塑造我们的，是故事。我的母亲是一位老师。我们小时候，她偶尔会把我们叫来坐下，训我们一顿，告诉我们应该怎样表现。你知道吗？到今天，那些训话我一句也记不得了。可是她讲过的故事，我却记得。我记得她讲自己怎样在上海长大，讲战争、艰难、盼望，也讲努力工作。但是，对我们一家影响最深的，是她怎样遇见耶稣的故事。那个故事改变了我们家庭的方向，也在很大程度上改变了我自己一生的方向。

Eugene Peterson makes this observation: The biblical way is not so much to present us with a moral code and tell us "Live up to this"; nor is it to set out a system of doctrine and say, "Think like this and you will live well." The biblical way is to tell a story and invite us, "Live into this. This is what it looks like to be human; this is what is involved in entering and maturing as human beings."

尤金·毕德生有这样一个观察：圣经的方式，并不是先摆出一套道德标准，然后对我们说：“你要达到这个标准”；也不是先建立一套教义系统，然后说：“你要这样思想，人生就会过得好。”圣经的方式，是讲一个故事，然后邀请我们说：“活进这个故事里。这就是作为一个人是什么样子；这就是我们怎样进入真正的人生，又怎样在人性中逐渐成熟。”

May we enter these stories with Peterson's invitation in mind—not merely asking, 'What principle can I take away?' but, 'Where am I in this story? What is God exposing in me? What might God be inviting me to become?' And the first person who teaches us how to enter the story is not a king, a warrior or a priest. It is Hannah.

所以，当我们进入这些故事的时候，让我们把毕德生这个邀请放在心里。不要只问：“我可以从这里带走什么原则？”而要问：“我在这个故事的什么地方？上帝正在显明我里面什么东西？上帝可能正在邀请我成为一个怎样的人？”而第一个教我们怎样进入这个故事的人，不是一位君王，不是一位战士，也不是一位祭司，而是哈拿。

These grand stories begin with Hannah. She is one of Elkanah's wives and appears to hold the primary place in the household, yet the honour of that position does not protect her from pain. Her story is set in the period of the Judges, a politically and morally unstable time when, as Judges concludes, 'everyone did what was right in their own eyes.' Ruth's story is set in that same broad period, and the two stories have striking parallels, although the text does not allow us to date them precisely as contemporaries.

这些宏大的故事，是从哈拿开始的。她是以利加拿的妻子之一，看起来在家中占着主要的位置；可是这样的身份和尊荣，并不能保护她不受痛苦。她的故事发生在士师时代。那是一个政治和道德都非常不稳定的时期，正如《士师记》结尾所说：“各人任意而行。”路得的故事大致也发生在同一个时代，这两个故事有很多很有意思的相似之处，只是圣经没有给我们足够资料，不能确定她们是否真的生活在完全同一个年代。

Hannah was living in a time of great instability and though her life would have been affected by the insecurity of the time, her life, given the culture she had to work in, wasn't all bad. Our text tells us that she was loved by her husband Elkanah...- for just being who she was – a rare thing indeed and yet all was not well. She couldn't fulfill her expectation as a woman and a wife in that culture and give Elkanah children to carry on the family name and heritage.

哈拿活在一个非常不稳定的时代，那种社会的不安当然也会影响她。不过，按她所处的文化来说，她的生活并不是样样都不好。经文告诉我们，她的丈夫以利加拿爱她——只是因为她就是她。这样的爱，在那个时代其实很难得。可是，她的生命里仍然有一个很深的痛。按照当时文化对女人和妻子的期待，她不能为以利加拿生儿育女，不能为这个家延续名字和家族。

So another woman, Peninnah, was inserted into the life of Elkanah and Hannah to fulfill those duties that till that time Hannah could not. Likely if Hannah could have had children, there would be no need for Peninnah and so Hannah, because of the expectations of her culture had to share her husband with another.

于是，另一个女人毗尼拿进入了以利加拿和哈拿的家庭，为的是承担哈拿当时无法承担的生育责任。很可能，如果哈拿能够生孩子，就根本不会需要毗尼拿。所以，因为文化对她的期待，哈拿不得不和另一个女人分享自己的丈夫。

Everyday Peninnah and her children's presence reminded her of her own failures in life. To further rub salt into the wound of infertility, Peninnah intentionally reminded Hannah that she did not measure up. The message translates their relationship with these words, "...her rival wife taunted Hannah cruelly, rubbing it in and never letting her forget that God had not given her children. This went on year after year. Every time she went into the sanctuary of God she could expect to be taunted. Hannah was reduced to tears...

每天，毗尼拿和她的孩子都在提醒哈拿：她觉得自己在人生中失败了。更痛的是，毗尼拿还故意在她不孕的伤口上撒盐，不断提醒哈拿，她不够好，她达不到标准。《信息本圣经》这样形容她们的关系：“她的对头残酷地讥笑哈拿，不断刺激她，绝不让她忘记上帝没有给她孩子。”一年又一年都是这样。每一次她到上帝的圣所去敬拜，都知道自己可能再次被嘲讽。哈拿痛苦得只能流泪.....

Hannah's story does resemble Ruth's in an important way. Both are women living within social structures that give them limited public power, and yet both act with courage, faith and a quiet refusal to let 'the way things are' have the final word.

哈拿的故事在一个很重要的地方，的确很像路得的故事。她们都活在一种社会结构里面，公开的权力非常有限；可是她们都以勇气、信心，以及一种安静却坚定的态度来回应——她们拒绝让“事情本来就是这样”成为最后一句话。

I love that Scripture gives such important places in the story of redemption to women whose faithfulness would have been easy for the powerful to overlook. Ruth becomes the great-grandmother of David; Hannah becomes the mother of Samuel, who will anoint David. Their lives intersect in a story neither woman could have planned.

我很喜欢圣经这一点：在救赎的故事里，上帝把非常重要的位置给了这些女人；她们的忠心，很容易被有权势的人忽略。路得后来成为大卫的曾祖母；哈拿成为撒母耳的母亲，而撒母耳后来要膏立大卫。两个女人都不可思议地事先计划这一切，可是她们的生命却在上帝的故事里交会了。

Many of the counter revolutionary stories of the Bible begin with the small acts of defiance by women who choose the rule of God over the rule of Pharaohs and kings...Biblical scholarship need to look more closely at these little, seemingly insignificant acts of defiance that changed the course of history. Midwives Shiprah and Puah for example in the Moses story, Marian, Mary Magdalene, Ruth, Abigail, the woman at the well, the nameless woman who gave away all she had,...and the many, many seemingly small acts of faith that our sisters in the scripture perform that becoming turning points in the history of humanity.

圣经里许多带来翻转的故事，都是从女人一些很小的抗拒开始的。她们选择上帝的统治，而不是法老和君王的统治。圣经研究其实应该更多留意这些看起来微不足道、却改变历史方向的小小抗拒。比如摩西故事里的接生婆施弗拉和普阿，还有 Marian、抹大拉的马利亚、路得、亚比该、井旁的妇人、那位把自己所有都献上的无名妇人.....还有圣经中许许多多姊妹所作、看起来很小的信心行动，后来竟然成为人类历史的转折点。

The book of Ruth...and the story of Hannah are parallel stories. Both stories are similar in that they are quiet stories, worked out in out-of-the way, domestic circumstances. They are similar also in that each woman stubbornly and prayerfully sets herself against “the way things are,” the circumstances handed her by society, and before you know it, history is flowing in a different direction, the purposes of God once again discernible. The spiritualities of these two women – intensely local, insistently personal, and defiant of culture, God-centered – are in the providence of God, the catalyst for initiating the great reversal that is extensively narrated in the story of David and receives its fullest expression in Jesus. (EP, 1 & 2 Samuel, p. 13-14)

《路得记》和哈拿的故事，是两条彼此平行的故事。它们都很安静，都发生在不起眼的地方，发生在家庭日常生活里面。还有一个相似之处：这两个女人都带着一种坚持，也带着祷告，起来面对“事情本来就是这样的”现实，面对社会强加给她们的处境。然后，不知不觉之间，历史开始往另一个方向流动，上帝的旨意又渐渐显明出来。这两个女人的属灵生命——非常地方化、非常个人、拒绝让文化决定一切，却又以上帝为中心——在上帝的护理中，成为启动那场“大翻转”的催化剂。这个大翻转后来在大卫的故事里被充分展开，最终在耶稣身上得到最完整的表达。（EP，《撒母耳记上、下》，13-14 页）

This is what I love most about the biblical narratives. Often, very often they tell us of seemingly unimportant acts of our lives that work themselves into the fabric of human existence and in due course, everything is changed. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a little yeast that works its way into batter and slowly the whole thing changes. The story of Hannah is the story of leaven...working its way through the fabric of Israel history and although she did not plan it nor expect it, or even imagine it...she is key in the David story ...from which the Jesus story emerged.

这正是我最喜欢圣经叙事的地方。很多时候，真的很多时候，圣经告诉我们，一些看起来毫不起眼的小事，会慢慢进入人类生活的整个纹理里，到了后来，一切都改变了。耶稣说，天国好像一点点酵，放进面团里，慢慢地，整团面就改变了。哈拿的故事就是一个“酵”的故事。它一点一点进入以色列历史的纹理中。哈拿没有计划这一切，没有预料这一切，甚至从来没有想象过这一切；可是，她却成为大卫故事中的关键人物，而耶稣的故事，正是从那条故事线里出来的。

The book of 1 Samuel starts off with six names of people and three names of places Right away, you are aware that this is not a fairy tale with a good moral lesson at the end. You are invited into a family that is three or four generations deep. You are invited to a place and a context that is three dimensional...and a story you and I can identify with

《撒母耳记上》一开始，就给我们六个人名和三个地名。你马上就会知道，这不是一个最后附上一句道德教训的童话故事。你被邀请进入一个已经有三、四代历史的家庭；你也被带进一个真实的地方、一个立体的处境里。这个故事不是遥远的，因为你和我都能在其中找到自己。

Elkanah the head of the family, has as was his habit, taken his family to Shiloh to worship. Shiloh was, at that time, the resting place for the arc of the covenant after being carried by the people of God on their long trek through the desert and through the many wars they fought to take possession of the land. By the time of Elkanah, it had been there for almost 250 years. It's significant in the great victories of the past had become distant memories and perhaps to many they were mere myths. But Elkanah's family was not one that had short memories. They still remembered the God of their ancestry and they went to worship, at least once a year.

一家之主以利加拿照着一贯的习惯，带着全家到示罗去敬拜。当时，约柜就安放在示罗。上帝的百姓曾经抬着约柜走过漫长的旷野，也经历许多战争，才进入并得着那地。到了以利加拿的时代，约柜已经在那里差不多二百五十年了。值得注意的是，过去那些伟大的胜利，这时已经成了很遥远的记忆；对一些人来说，甚至可能只像古老的传说。但是，以利加拿一家并没有忘记。他们仍然记得祖先所敬拜的上帝，所以至少每年一次，他们还是会去敬拜。

Hannah, however, has learned to dread these journeys. What should have been a joyful time of worship has become another reminder of what she does not have. Peninnah's cruelty wounds her, and the expectations of her culture tell her that a woman who cannot bear children has somehow failed. Let us be clear: the text shows us Hannah's longing for a child, but it does not teach that a woman's worth depends on motherhood. Elkanah's love cannot remove Hannah's grief, but neither does her infertility make her less valuable before God. Her pain is real without becoming the definition of who she is.

可是，对哈拿来说，这些旅程已经变成她害怕面对的事。本来应该是欢乐敬拜的时刻，如今却一次又一次提醒她：她没有什么。毗尼拿的残酷伤害她，而她所处的文化又不断告诉她，一个不能生孩子的女人，好像就是失败了。这里我们要说清楚：经文让我们看见哈拿非常渴望有一个孩子，但圣经并没有教导说，一个女人的价值取决于她能不能做母亲。以利加拿的爱不能除去哈拿的忧伤；同样，她不能生育，也没有使她在上帝眼中变得没有价值。她的痛是真实的，但她的痛并不能定义她是谁。

Hannah prays. It is a prayer that comes from pain...as many of our prayers do...

哈拿祷告。这个祷告是从痛苦里面出来的.....其实，我们很多祷告也是这样.....

It is often out of pain that our most honest prayers emerge. Prayer does not remove Hannah from reality or ask her to pretend that everything is fine. Prayer opens her reality to something larger. Peninnah's taunts are still real. Her infertility is still real. Her disappointment is still real. But they are no longer the whole story. In prayer, Hannah discovers that her small and painful world is held inside the larger reality of God.

很多时候，我们最诚实的祷告，正是从痛苦里出来的。祷告并没有把哈拿带离现实，也没有要求她假装一切都很好。祷告所做的，是把她的现实打开，让她看见一个更大的现实。毗尼拿的讥讽仍然是真的；她不能生育仍然是真的；她的失望仍然是真的。但这些已经不再是整个故事。在祷告里，哈拿发现，自己这个狭小而痛苦的世界，其实被抱在上帝更大的现实里面。

Notice her posture. Hannah's prayer is unconventional enough that Eli misunderstands it. Her lips move, but no sound comes out, and Eli assumes she is drunk. He tells her to put away her wine. Hannah answers with remarkable dignity: 'Not so, my lord...I was pouring out my soul to the LORD.' The priest misreads her, but God does not. That is worth remembering: religious people may misunderstand the way pain sounds when it prays, but God is not confused by our tears.

留意她祷告的样子。哈拿的祷告很不寻常，以至于以利误会了她。她的嘴唇在动，却没有声音，以利就以为她喝醉了，叫她不要再喝酒。哈拿却很有尊严地回答：“不是的，我主.....我是在耶和华面前倾心吐意。”祭

司看错了她，但上帝没有看错。这一点值得我们记住：宗教人士有时会误解一个人在痛苦中祷告的样子，但上帝不会被我们的眼泪弄糊涂。

We miss the force of this scene if we imagine prayer only as proper religious language offered in the proper religious way. Hannah comes with no polished speech. She brings her own words, her own tears and her own voice. Later Jewish tradition would look back on Hannah as an important model of heartfelt prayer. The point here is not that prayer replaces worship or sacrifice; it is that genuine worship cannot be reduced to ritual. Hannah speaks personally to the God who knows her personally. To Eli's credit, once he understands what is happening, he blesses her and joins his prayer to hers.

如果我们以为祷告只是用合乎宗教规矩的话、照着合乎宗教规矩的方式来讲，我们会错过这个场面的力量。哈拿没有一篇修饰得很漂亮的祷告词。她带着自己的话、自己的眼泪、自己的声音来到上帝面前。后来，犹太传统一直把哈拿看作发自内心祷告的重要榜样。这里的重点并不是说祷告取代敬拜或献祭；重点是，真正的敬拜绝不能只剩下仪式。哈拿亲自向那位亲自认识她的上帝说话。也要肯定以利：当他终于明白发生了什么以后，他就祝福哈拿，也把自己的祷告加入她的祷告里。

The context of our lives contains both joy and sorrow. We would naturally choose the joy, but sorrow cannot always be avoided—and it should never be romanticized. Some pain simply hurts. Some losses leave scars. Yet sorrow can become a place where truth comes into focus. Hannah's sorrow exposes what she longs for, what she fears and, finally, where she will turn. No one passes through deep sorrow unchanged; the pastoral question is not whether sorrow is good, but whether we will allow God to meet us there rather than letting sorrow have the final word.

我们的生命里面既有喜乐，也有忧伤。我们当然会选择喜乐，但忧伤并不总是能够避免，而且我们也绝不应该把痛苦浪漫化。有些痛，就是痛；有些失去，会留下疤痕。可是，忧伤有时会成为一个地方，让真相变得清楚。哈拿的忧伤显出她真正渴望什么、害怕什么，最后也显出她要转向谁。没有人经过深深的忧伤之后还能完全不被改变。牧养上真正的问题，不是“忧伤是不是一件好事”，而是：当我们在忧伤中时，我们愿不愿意让上帝在那里遇见我们，而不是让忧伤说最后一句话。

Her prayer is not simply help me God...make my life better but it also involves her participation as she embraces the responsibility of being part of answered prayer.

她的祷告不只是：“上帝啊，帮助我，让我的人生好一点。”她也愿意参与在上帝回应祷告的过程里，接受自己要承担的责任。

Hannah makes a vow that she would give back to the Lord what she asked of Him. What kind of prayer was that? Asking for something just to give it away? Isn't that like praying to win the lottery and promising to back everything? So why pray for something so as to lose it all? What kind of silly praying is that?

哈拿许了一个愿：她向上帝所求的，如果上帝赐给她，她要把它再献还给上帝。这是什么样的祷告？向上帝求一样东西，结果只是为了再把它送出去？这不是有点像祷告说：“上帝啊，让我中彩票吧；如果中了，我全部还给你！”既然最后要失去，为什么还要求呢？这不是很奇怪的祷告吗？

Well, Hannah is not making a deal with God ...but making a vow – much different. She recognizes that she has nothing to give unless God gives to her first. Vows are more than promises in that they bind one person to another in inexplicable ways. Wedding vows are good examples of this...Mike Mason, commenting on vows makes this observation – a vow takes about 30 seconds to say but a life time to discover what it means. It is more than just a deal that Hannah is making here...it is a life long journey she is embarking on as she vows to give away everything that God will give her.

其实，哈拿不是在跟上帝做交易，她是在许愿——这是完全不同的事。她知道，如果不是上帝先给她，她根本没有什么可以献给上帝。誓愿不只是一个承诺，因为誓愿会用一种很深、甚至难以解释的方式，把一个人与另一个人连在一起。婚姻的誓言就是很好的例子。迈克·梅森谈到誓言时有一个很好的观察：一个誓言可能只需要三十秒说完，却要用一辈子去发现它真正是什么意思。哈拿在这里所做的，远远不只是跟上帝谈一个条件；她正在踏上一段一生之久的旅程，因为她许愿，要把上帝将要赐给她的，再完全交还给上帝。

Peterson makes this comment: She asks for a child from God...but includes giving of this same child back to God. Her generosity is as integral to her prayer as her poverty. Her prayer anticipates both getting and giving... (p. 19)

毕德生这样说：她向上帝求一个孩子.....但她的祷告也包括把这个孩子再献给上帝。她的慷慨与她的缺乏一样，都是她祷告不可分割的一部分。她的祷告从一开始，就同时包含了“领受”和“给予”.....（第 19 页）

I love the ending of this reading. In verse 18, she went her way and ate ...and her face was no longer downcast. Something has happened to her – hope is renewed – though at the time nothing has really changed – this is a work of faith.

我很喜欢今天这段经文的结尾。第 18 节说，她就走去吃饭，“面上再不带愁容了”。她里面有些东西已经改变了——盼望重新回来了。可是那时候，外面的情况其实什么都还没有改变。这就是信心所作的工作。

Before we move to Hannah's three lessons, notice what has happened. Nothing outside Hannah has changed yet. Peninnah is still Peninnah. Hannah is not yet pregnant. But after prayer, her face is no longer downcast. Faith has not given her control of the outcome; it has given her a different place to stand while she waits.

在我们来看哈拿给我们的三个功课以前，先留意到底发生了什么。哈拿外在的处境还没有改变。毗尼拿还是毗尼拿；哈拿也还没有怀孕。可是祷告以后，她的脸不再愁苦。信心并没有让她控制结果；信心给了她一个新的立足点，让她在等待的时候，可以站在一个不同的位置上。

Well what can we learn from Hannah?. Let me offer you just a few of observations.

那么，我们可以从哈拿身上学到什么呢？让我提出几点观察。

First, sorrow changes us. Hannah's grief clarifies the longing of her heart, but we should be careful not to say that motherhood is what finally makes her a complete woman. Her culture may have measured her that way; God does not. Her longing for a child is genuine, and Scripture honours that longing. At the same time, her dignity before God is already present before Samuel is conceived. That is good news for anyone whose life has not turned out according to the expectations of family, culture or even our own dreams. Our losses matter, but they do not get to name our worth.

第一，忧伤会改变我们。哈拿的悲伤让她更清楚自己心里真正渴望什么；不过我们必须小心，不要说好像只有成为母亲，她才终于成为一个“完整的女人”。她的文化也许这样衡量她，但上帝不是这样。她想要孩子的渴望是真实的，圣经也尊重这个渴望。可是，在撒母耳还没有被怀上以前，哈拿在上帝面前已经有完整的尊严和价值。这对那些人生没有照着家庭的期待、文化的期待，甚至自己梦想的方向发展的人，是一个好消息。我们的失去很重要，也真的会痛；但它没有权利替我们定义我们的价值。

There is a pastoral word here for those who carry sorrow quietly. Some pain is visible and people gather around us. Other pain is private: the child we never had, the marriage we hoped would be different, the family member who has drifted away, the vocation that never opened, the loneliness nobody notices. Hannah gives us permission not to tidy those things up before we come to God. Prayer is not presenting God with the edited version of our life. Prayer is pouring out the soul.

这里也有一句牧养的话，要送给那些安静地背着忧伤的人。有些痛苦很明显，别人看得见，也会来到我们身边；但有些痛是很私人的：那个我们从来没有得到的孩子，那段我们原以为会不一样的婚姻，那个渐渐走远的家人，那扇从来没有为我们打开的工作或呼召之门，还有那种没有人注意到的孤单。哈拿让我们知道，在来到上帝面前以前，我们不需要先把这些事情整理好、包装好。祷告不是把经过剪辑的人生版本拿给上帝看。祷告，是把我们的心倾倒出来。

And perhaps that is especially important in cultures where we have learned to protect family honour, save face, remain strong or avoid burdening other people with our grief. Those instincts can contain real virtues—dignity, loyalty, endurance—but they can also make it difficult to admit that we are hurting. Hannah's prayer says there is at least one place where we do not have to perform. Before God we can tell the truth.

也许，这一点对某些文化背景的人尤其重要。我们从小学习维护家庭的体面、顾全面子、保持坚强，也尽量不让自己的忧伤成为别人的负担。这些本能里面有一些真正的美德——尊严、忠诚、忍耐；可是它们也可能使我们很难承认：“其实我很痛。”哈拿的祷告告诉我们，至少有一个地方，我们不需要表演，不需要装作没事。在上帝面前，我们可以说真话。

Second, prayer is serious business. We often pray as though prayer were the religious thing we do after we have tried everything else. Hannah does the opposite. She brings the truth of her life into the presence of God. Revelation 8 gives us a powerful picture: heaven grows silent, incense rises with the prayers of God's people, and those prayers become part of God's action in the world. The image is not a mechanical formula promising that we get whatever we ask. It tells us that our prayers matter to God. So pray...and keep on praying. Learn to pray honestly. Learn to listen as well as speak.

第二，祷告是一件严肃的事。我们常常把祷告当作最后一步：好像所有办法都试过了，最后才来做一点宗教上的事。哈拿正好相反。她把自己生命真实的处境带到上帝面前。《启示录》第8章给我们一幅很有力量的图画：天上安静下来，香随着上帝百姓的祷告升起，而这些祷告竟然成为上帝在世界中行动的一部分。这幅图画不是一个机械公式，不是在保证我们求什么就一定得到什么。它告诉我们，我们的祷告在上帝面前是有分量的。所以，祷告吧.....继续祷告。学习诚实地祷告，也学习不只是说，还要聆听。

And lastly, the ordinary is the raw material for God's extraordinary work. Hannah is not standing in a palace or leading an army. She is an ordinary woman praying out of deep pain. Yet that prayer becomes part of the story of Samuel, David and, ultimately, Jesus. We do not have to make our lives spectacular in order for them to matter to God. The ordinary acts of faithfulness—praying, caring, giving, listening, showing up—may carry consequences we will never live long enough to see. Who would have thought that the story of kings would begin with a woman praying? Amen.

最后，平凡就是上帝成就非凡工作的原材料。哈拿不是站在王宫里，也没有带领一支军队。她只是一个普通的女人，在深深的痛苦中祷告。可是那个祷告，却成为撒母耳的故事、大卫的故事，最后也是耶稣故事的一部分。我们不需要把自己的人生弄得轰轰烈烈，才会在上帝眼中有意义。那些平凡的忠心——祷告、关怀、给予、聆听、持续出现、守在自己的位置上——也许会带来一些结果，是我们这一生都来不及亲眼看见的。谁会想到，君王的故事，竟然从一个女人的祷告开始呢？阿们。

Next time we will discover that answered prayer creates a new kind of responsibility. Hannah receives the child she prayed for, but faith will ask her to do something harder than receiving: nurture him, and then let him go.

下一次我们会看见，蒙应允的祷告会带来一种新的责任。哈拿得到了她所祈求的孩子，可是信心接下来要她做一件比“得到”更难的事：养育他，然后放手，把他交出去。