

## Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 15 November 2015

1 Samuel 1: 4-20 ; Psalm Song of Hannah; Hebrews 10: 11-25 ; Mark 13:1-11

[Proper 28B/Ordinary 33B/Pentecost 25 November 15, 2015](#) Textweek

A week of reflecting on the story of Hannah, has been a week of attending to, or at least a growing awareness of life's turning points; and unfolding in the same week have been some personal turning points, my mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and my daughter's de facto father-in-law's diagnosis of cancer and a terminal outcome, my grandson's baptism on board a US warship in America, and also a look at our community turning points, with a draft Advent service and a discussion with Michael, and our warden about creative future opportunities for our community here...

Some weeks, and some readings are full to brimming with possibilities, expected and unexpected.

Hannah's 'miraculous' birth, her giving or bringing into birth, like Mary's immaculate conception, points toward a new creation, and so to a new appreciation of life itself.

"HANNAH" as a palindrome can be read both forwards and backwards, and yet her narrative has a very clear orientation. The essence of the story is an orientation toward newness, toward birth; the story sets the scene for a change from a primitive, tribal priest dominated culture into a monarchical society, for Hannah's son, Samuel, will anoint David as king.

The first reading gives us a pre-Advent narrative that provides us, well in advance, with an appreciation of the lineage of David. Hannah's life might be read in either direction; but Hannah's orientation and its associated bringing to birth provides a turning point that will be realised much later. 'Once in royal David's city' begins here!

The second reading gives us an appreciation of another turning point; the movement from the sacrificial service administered through the order of priests into the realisation of our covenanted Christ-likeness. And maybe, like the palindrome, this text also can be read in one way or another; consider the energy of the Church in regard to preserving a primitively formed model of 'priest', consider how much the language of 'sacrifice' is still there in our present faith understanding.

Have we read, and seen a new orientation in this text, or did we perhaps read it backwards?

In the gospel, rather than palindromes as the linguistic tool, Jesus employs dramatic re-imagining; in saying, about the temple, that *all will be thrown down* is he really voicing an orientation toward resurrection?

In the last line of the gospel we are again given an appreciation of 'orientation';

"11 When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."

"Do not worry beforehand" tells us not to dwell on the 'before', look not to the past.

"Do not worry.... about what you **are** to say"; look not to that which you think is to come

"*But say whatever is given you at that time*"; we are being called into an awareness of our present orientation, be attentive to "whatever is given you at that time".

Coming back to the model of the palindrome, that which can be read in either direction, we might now overlay the model to life, to see in the pattern of the palindrome the alpha and the omega, to see the beginning and the end as a wholeness.

As creatures of time we primarily read, or experience life as a linear progression from start to finish from Alpha to omega; rather than a wholeness in which we eternally dwell. Most young people read their lives with an orientation forwards, and most old people read their lives with an orientation to the past; perhaps that's why the Church is so often looking in the wrong direction.

The scriptures give us an appreciation to see life in a more enlightened way, and so to more fully realise that which Christ revealed; life is not bounded by death. What we learn from Hannah's palindrome of life is that the reading in different directions is not that which names life, nor do these views give us life's orientation,; rather it is the reality of "whatever is given you at that time".

Life is found in the reality of its giftedness.

Alongside these delightfully abstract reflections on life, and contemplating life's palindromic wholeness I encountered this week a delightful Alpha and Omega in my own story.

Preparing for my mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday somehow drifted into conversations about her funeral, her alpha and omega took on the quality of "HANNAH" and could be read together as a whole. As I looked back through images of her life, so too I was looking back through my own, and discovering when the two lives truly came together as one.

I was looking for music that reflected and echoed this wholeness and two songs stood out.

When I was an eleven year old boy(1963) I travelled with my mother to Germany; it was a new and different experience, for it was just the two of us, no father and no brother.

My mother was going home because her mother was dying of cancer; it was a time where emotions were quite easily read and understood. What was not obvious was the common ground that was held by the two of us; she was travelling as the child going to look after her mother, and perhaps, unknown to an 11 year old that's what I was doing..

During that visit, we both needed time out and went to see a German film, it is from that film that the two pieces of music made a home in me as an eleven year old.

Play two short songs..... Now hear the translations of these two songs.....

### **Der Junge von St. Pauli**

hat die gunser Welt geseh'n  
in jedem fernen Hafen  
wollt' er vor Anker geh'n.  
Die Sehnsucht trieb ihn weiter  
er glaubte an sein Glück  
doch es führten alle Wege  
nach St. Pauli zurück.

The boy from St. Paul's  
who has the seen world  
in each remote port  
wherever he moored.  
The longing drove him further  
he believed in his luck  
but it all roads led back to St. Paul's.

### **Ich hab' Heimweh nach St. Pauli,**

Nach St. Pauli und der Reeperbahn.  
Denn es gibt nur ein St. Pauli,  
Und es gibt nur eine Reeperbahn.  
Und find' ich mal in fremden Ländern  
Ein kurzes unverhofftes Glück.  
So kann das alles gar nicht ändern,

Ich komme doch zu dir zurück.

I am homesick for St. Paul's,  
for St. Paul's and the Reeperbahn.  
Because there is only one St. Paul's,  
And there is only one Reeperbahn.  
And I find 'times in foreign countries  
A short unexpected happiness.  
but that doesn't change anything,  
I'm coming back to you.

Two songs that grounded 'St Pauli', St Paul's, into me at age eleven, played out again in a reality that could not have been imagined.  
Hannah's prayer, and her giving into a Divine orientation could not have imagined the nativity that would come from the line of David. She was not reading her life into the future, rather she lived into the truth of her orientation, she attended to "whatever is given you at that time"

We cannot imagine the contribution that we are called to make, but with prayer we can attend to our orientation in the present and perhaps we too can all bring to birth from "whatever is given us at that time".

Peter Humphris