**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**15th October 2023**

**1 Samuel 2:1-10**

**Gathering**

May we find a quiet centre

A slowing down of the world

To replenish our hope

And recharge our faith

And reorientate our anxiety

For we have been battered from a distance

Again

With conflict

And what that does to our souls

Our relationship with the world

And each other

Let us find that space

In the breadth of God

In the generosity of God

In the peace of God

And breathe in the spirit of God

That we might centre ourselves

On where light fades but rekindles

Where hope dims but chooses to hang on

Where love dies but is born again

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for this meeting place where we can gather together, and know we are community in worship… What words shall we give the world today? We find them in Hannah’s Song, the song she was given to sing to express the hope we are to invest in the future, as she promises; her son to be given to the temple after years of barrenness… Samuel is a child, but in him lies the hope of a rekindling of faith and renewed relationship with God for the whole nation. These are our words today. Let us worship.

**Prayer**

Holy God

May you be the presence we need today

The strength that holds us

The light that lifts us

The colour that warms us

The word that calls us

The silence that has space for us

The love that recreates us

Today

Here

Now

Together

Pause

For this is what we need today

And whose we are today

In a world that is ever more conflicted

And sad today

Yet may your word open up in us

The promise that lives there

And speak into our living

Renewed hope

And unfolding light

And love that is resurrected

O God of the great story of life

That always seems to redeem

Finding a way towards us

Grasps us with hope

And calls us anew

Inviting the future still

God, bigger than any religion

And called by many names

Owned by no culture or community

In your breadth and diversity

And your many faces and stories

May we find a common meeting place

Shaped by our longing for noisy peace

Honest opinion, valued and listened to

And a belief that sees the image of you in the other

And the patience to get there

Through the pain and hope

Of forgiveness and grace

And a prevalent desire for the next generation

To know peace, humanity, and love

May we share that

As we share your words

So be it

Amen

**Scripture Background**

We sing our faith long before we talk about it… That’s not new… Generations before us have always done this… In fact, it is a Biblical tradition… The Bible has turned hope and longing into song and expresses it far more coherently than our speeches and preaching ever have…

Hannah is case in point, the second wife of Elkanah… she was barren… The other wife… Peninnah bore many children and mocked Hannah… Hannah was in the temple… praying… her lips silently moving… Eli the priest accused her of drinking… but she explained she was barren and was praying for a child…

Eli responded… “Go in peace and may God answer your prayer” … God did… But Hannah had made a promise that if she bore a son… she would give him back to God and so Samuel was handed to Eli… then… in hope and pain, I am sure, she sang and this is the song she sang…

**Scripture Reading: 1 Sammuel 2:1-10**

**Reflection**

Do you ever feel the world getting way on top of you? … if it’s not one thing… it’s another… big things… things out of our control… and indeed anyone’s…

Lots of strong words…strong men (usually) talking war talk… yet they don’t know what they are doing… and we don’t trust any of them… yet we’re caught up in the conflict… There’s too much live action… without any decent reflection… and we become restless… distracted… anxious…

And sandwiched in with that is an environmental crisis… a welfare crisis… cost of living crisis… an existential crisis for the church too… I hope you haven’t come this morning to be cheered up… and no one has a handle on any of these… no one could possibly have a handle on it all… and we’re left flaying with our faith… our politics… our values… not sure what to do… or what we can do…

Of course… none of this is new… In fact,… the best stories we have in our faith… are those that have been shaped in such moments of great national crisis…

Moses… Joseph… Samuel… David… Jesus… These are our stories… and they are to be read… now… for they are for this time… each one has grown out of a time when the future seemed impossible to untangle…

But… and here’s the crucial thing… Moses… Joseph… Samuel… David… Jesus… When do we first meet them? … When is it their story begins?…

Each story begins with each of them being born… There is a strand to our faith that we should perhaps pay far more attention to when we find ourselves in crisis… that great movement of a God… who… in the birth of a child… delivers us through the prospects of our children…

Because Biblical faith is grounded… in a belief that our salvation is found in investing in the future… and the chances we give our children…

That is where we find Hannah in her song… Don’t ask me to support every word she delivers… or the writer has her deliver… talk of conflict… but it is the song itself… a recognition of deliverance… as she hands her child to Eli the temple priest so that her son… promised to God… might become hope for Israel… which he was… in the prophet Samuel…

Indeed… Jonathan Sacks suggests it is our sacred duty to do so… the future is found in the fitting we give our children… our deliverance… salvation… is found in their prospects… Do we need to repeat that? …

We do! … again, and again…

That is the underlying pain in all of these many crises… and I believe… deep down we know that… that whatever response we make… it has to be in the context of the prospects of our children…

But short-term politics… and don’t let anyone tell you they are long-term… most are really thinking only towards the next election… or less painful fixes to environmental crisis… or even presbytery plans and the church… are not long enough… They aren’t focused on the next generation…

Now I’m not daft enough to suggest that any response that speaks of deliverance from these things can be sudden and simple… That would be irresponsible and certainly not based on the evidence of faith… especially in conflicts in the middle east that have lasted so long and resisted so many peace initiatives…

But it is not wrong to speak of the values we know are fundamental to our salvation… that we are called to look to the future more than the past… to shape that future round the chances of a child… Thus, is it wrong to ask the warmongers and the politicians and environmentalists and church folk to sing with Hannah… Mary… and every other mother and father… the songs the Bible gives us… that recognise… how we redeem the future… is thinking of the prospects of those yet to be born…

It would be irresponsible to suggest that a conflict that has lasted so long in the middle east and resisted so many initiatives could be solved suddenly and simply… or environmental solutions, welfare policies, presbytery plans… Yet it is not wrong to suggest a fundamental value about who we are is at stake…

A society, church, a parliament, a congregation that cherishes children… is one that thinks of tomorrow even more than yesterday… That is a society, church, parliament, congregation… that gives a central place to hope…

Samuel… Moses… Joseph… Isaac… David… Jesus… all these birth stories are not just somewhere to begin a story… but a fundamental sign that our salvation is invested in our children… our salvation is in the chances of those yet to be born… That is what the world in crisis needs to know… May we proclaim it…

**Prayers for Others**

For our world and all its people

We pause

And hold

And pray

For conflicts and all those hurt

In Palestine/Israel

Ukraine Russia

Sudan Somalia

We pray

For people displaced around the world

Refugees in boats

In camps

Crossing borders

We pray

For an environment less and less suited to us

Of global warming

Climate change

And our polluting

We pray

For a peace beyond war, greed, wealth gaps

In which our children can live

Gently

Peacefully

We pray

For families and fiends

Ill and worried

About mental and physical illness

Our neighbours and neighbourhoods

Our parish and community

For church and society

We pray

Hear us

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**