

**Opening Scripture:** Psalm 3

**Introduction:** Based on Pew Research Forum data, the "religiously unaffiliated" now comprise the second-largest religious category in North America, and the UK has persistently declining religious affiliation, with about half the population identifying with a church or religious organization.

In Europe, a fascinating trend has emerged due to the prolonged absence of religious influence in daily life. *People are creating secular traditions resembling religious rituals, without divine elements, called "Sunday Assemblies" or "Atheist Churches."* These Sunday Assemblies have expanded to nearly 60 locations across Britain, continental Europe, North America, and Australia. They feature group singing, greeting, offerings, secular TED-talk-style presentations, contemplative moments of reflection, and conclude with fellowship over tea and biscuits. All without any reference to or acknowledgment of God's existence.

One wonders what could possibly be driving this need to mimic religion. I can think of a few reasons...

- (1) **Community and belonging;** (2) **Purpose and meaning;** (3) **A moral and ethical framework** (4) **Emotional well-being;** (5) **A sense of transcendence;** (6) **Ritual and tradition;** (7) **Health benefits.**

While atheism certainly doesn't provide ***grounds for thinking our lives have objective purpose and meaning***, the atheist must nevertheless *live as though his life has meaning*. While atheism doesn't supply grounds for objective moral values and duties/ethics, the atheist must *live as if morality and ethics are objectively binding*. While atheists cannot truly experience transcendence (because on their view, there is no transcendent reality), denying these facts doesn't make the need for them go away.

Honestly, this is sad and pitiful. They want the benefits of religion without the God who gives its content and meaning.

Contrary to this dismal approach to life, we came here this morning to be taught the truth by the great theologian, Hannah. She is going to take us to theology and worship school this morning.

Hannah will instruct us regarding 5 things that are crucial to worship. 5 mindsets or truths.

**1. Hannah's praise is reserved for God alone.** She starts where every good theology of worship needs to start. Who is the object of our religious devotion and attention?

1 Samuel 2:1–2 “My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is lifted up by the LORD. My mouth boasts over my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation. <sup>2</sup> There is no one holy like the LORD. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God.”

- Hannah's worship is directed at God. She rejoices “in the LORD,” and the horn of her victory is “lifted up by the LORD.” She rejoices in her salvation.
- Hannah reminds us of God's Holiness—absolute perfection, morally, rationally, and creatively.
- Hannah reminds us of God's Uniqueness—there is no God but God. He alone is the infinite, personal, uncaused creator of the universe.
- Hannah knows that God alone is our refuge in times of need. “There is no Rock like our God” is an idiomatic expression referring to rocky cliffs in which troops would take refuge from their enemies. These cliffs were often impenetrable fortresses. Megiddo is a good example of this.

**Illus. In Luke 4, Jesus faces off with Satan, God's arch-enemy.** Satan is there to tempt Jesus in the wilderness and to see if he can get him to disobey God's plan for Christ's life. He promises Jesus all the Kingdoms of the world if he will but bow down and worship Satan. Luke 4:8 And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” For the followers of In that story Satan wants to discover if Jesus is the Son of God he knew from his days serving in the court of Yahweh. If he can get this Unique and eternal Son to worship him, a lesser created being, then he will immediately derail any plans he might have of establishing his everlasting Kingdom.\

Jesus, there is no other way. We worship and serve the Lord our God and him only.

**Why is worshipping anything or anyone else so detrimental to us?**

1 Corinthians 8:6 “There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

**Application: To worship God authentically, we must know God accurately.** Our worship begins with a truer picture of God. God is holy, and there is none like him. God is unique and revealed now in Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Does our worship begin with the Triune God of the universe?

## 2. Hannah's praise serves as a rebuke to the proud and arrogant.

1 Samuel 2:3 "Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by him." **You really get the sense here that Peninnah is standing nearby.**

**As a Christian, is it ever appropriate to boast?**

**Paul tells us** that we only boast in one thing...

Galatians 6:14 "But as for me, ***I will never boast about anything except the cross*** of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world."

- The cross tells me that God has wrath for sin—that Christ took my punishment—that through it God now offers salvation—and without it, we will be lost forever. In other words, it is the highest achievement you will ever know, it is the greatest status symbol in the history of the world—so how could we boast about lesser things—like education, jobs, or possessions?
- The cure to a prideful, boastful spirit is to face the cross, knowing Jesus took my shame, and to be invited into the presence of God.

**Illus. Have you ever experienced a humbling moment?** In my freshman year, I was called up from the junior varsity team to stand in for the sick varsity quarterback. I impressed the coaches by taking charge on the field. However, my ego took a hit during sprints at practice.

Feeling pretty confident after my performance, I lined up next to Bryan Jackson and Glenn Newitt, the fastest players on the team. I was eager to show everyone just how fast I was. When the coach blew the whistle, I took off and left everyone in my wake. Immediately I got this strut in my walk. We lined up again, the coach blew the whistle, and the same thing.

My brother came running in the line behind me, and when he crossed the finish line, he said, "You stupid idiot. Didn't you hear the coach call out 'Half Speed!'" Suddenly, I realized my mistake. The next time I lined up with Bryan and Glenn, the coach said, "Ok guys, this time—full speed." And he blew that whistle, and Bryan Jackson and Glenn Newitt left me like I was standing still.

I was immediately, inconsolably humbled by my arrogance. Have you ever been humbled by someone or something?

Listen, nothing will remind you that you are not the mountain as when you meet the mountain. Nothing will strike healthy, rapturous fear in your heart like standing close enough to feel the spray and the power of a mighty waterfall, which has the energy to crush and drown you but is also to be admired for its awesome power.

**Application: Humility comes to us as a choice or a consequence.** We can choose to humble ourselves in his presence, or we can wait for God to bring us low. Humility is either self-imposed or God-imposed, and we have the choice between the two. When we have been long nourished in God's presence, it will right our attitudes and remind us of our place and our limits.

**3. Hannah's praise reminds us that God specializes in reversing fortunes.** Her story is honestly not remotely a surprise. It should be no surprise that by now, God specializes in exalting the lowly, in empowering the weak—all to demonstrate his strength. 1 Samuel 2:4–5 The bows of the warriors are broken, but the feeble are clothed with strength. <sup>5</sup> Those who are full hire themselves out for food, but those who are starving hunger no more. The woman who is childless gives birth to seven, but the woman with many sons pines away. Oh yeah, Penninah is listening.

This is technically what theologians refer to as the great **reversal of fortune's theme** that runs all the way through the Bible.

Just think of...

- **Israel**—God chooses a nation of slaves and makes them the center of his redemptive program.
- **Gideon**—God chooses the man who is last in his family and least in his clan.
- **Gideon**—God chooses a fearful, craven thresher to be a mighty man of valor in the Spirit's strength.
- **Hannah**—God chooses a woman who cannot bear children to bring forth the greatest prophetic archetype in the OT other than Moses himself.
- **David**—God makes David the greatest king of Israel, raising him up from obscurity and insignificance to the most powerful position in Israel. He becomes the prototype for God's King who will perfect David's reign.
- **Jesus**—Jesus was God's Son, so you'd think he would be born in a palace and in opulence, wealth privilege into a cushy life with a prominent and well-connected family. But Jesus is born in Bethlehem, an out-of-the-way town that isn't on its way to anywhere, into a humble blue-collar existence. The Son of God was born into such lowly circumstances.
- **The disciples**—could there be a more obvious example than Jesus' 12? He takes 12 ordinary fishermen, farmers, a tax collector, a religious zealot—men from the agrarian and artisan classes and raises them as the great 12 apostles of the church.

Why is this God's pattern?

1 Corinthians 1:26–28 “Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise (trained philosophers) from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something.”

**Application: In the eyes of God, the worth of a human soul is never determined by worldly rank or riches.** In God's economy, the measure of a person is not found in their titles, their resources, or their achievements, but in God's favor, his grace, his lovingkindness.

Let me ask you, do you feel kind of worthless or useless sometimes?

Let me ask you another question, do you know that God specializes in accomplishing his purposes through people just like you? He is the God who breaks the bow of those who smug in their own resourcefulness—and he strengthens the feeble, satisfies the hungry, and chooses the foolish and despised things of this world to shame the wise and chooses the things that are not to nullify the things that are?

**4. Hannah's praise instills faith.** Just look, she says, at all that God can do.

1 Samuel 2:6–8 The LORD brings death and gives life; he sends some down to Sheol, and he raises others up. <sup>7</sup> The LORD brings poverty and gives wealth; he humbles and he exalts.<sup>8</sup> He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the trash heap. He seats them with noblemen and gives them a throne of honor.

Who, does Hannah say, gives us the ability to produce wealth and abundance? God does.

But who, does she say, also brings poverty? God does.

In this society, wealth and resources (land ownership, cattle, sheep, and farm hands) were symbols of God's blessing. God was able to raise those in poverty and meet their needs according to his glorious riches.

**Not to be mistaken for the false prosperity Gospel we take some space to distinguish these two very different ideas:**

- Biblical prosperity originates from God's blessings, emphasizing spiritual and emotional well-being alongside material wealth, while the false prosperity gospel asserts material success as an unbreakable spiritual law (that even God himself must answer to).
- Biblical prosperity prioritizes seeking God's kingdom and acknowledges the potential for suffering, promoting perseverance. In contrast, false prosperity fixates on material gain, often claiming that suffering is a sign of insufficient faith.
- Biblical prosperity emphasizes giving as an act of love and obedience, focusing on benevolence toward the less fortunate, while false prosperity is motivated by greed and personal financial gain.
- Finally, biblical prosperity encourages an eternal perspective, recognizing the transience of worldly wealth, whereas the false prosperity gospel often prioritizes earthly rewards over eternal considerations.

Listen, Hannah's praise infuses in us the faith that God can reverse our outcome, that God supplies all our needs, that God exalts the humble and humbles the proud—God alone restores us, lifts us, and bestows honor upon us. We can trust God to do it. And she knows that God is sovereign in all of it. When she was poor and barren, that happened on God's watch. Now that she is blessed and fruitful—that, too, is part of God's plan.

**Application: God's silence is not his absence.** Hannah's prayer reminds us that God hears, and he cares, and he answers. We can trust God to hear the silent and whispered cries of the heart. Let Hannah's praise inspire your heart today as you trust in God whose nature and character are literally the only unchanging variables in your changing circumstances.



**5. Hannah's praise comforts the faithful and warns the proud of their fate.** Now notice how she frames this. She's so smart. Let's pick up the song in verse eight... 1 Samuel 2:8 "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; he has set the world on them (creation). 9 (Providence) He guards the steps of his faithful ones..."

So, she reminds us of who we're dealing with here. We're dealing with the God who set the world on its foundations—that is an idiomatic expression meaning that God is the creator of all things.

**She reminds us that God safeguards our steps.**

Psalm 37:23—"A person's steps are established by the Lord, and he takes pleasure in his way. <sup>24</sup> Though he falls, he will not be overwhelmed, because the Lord supports him with his hand." The same God who set the world on its foundations is our heavenly Father, who guides our steps and supports us when we fall.

Ephesians 1:3–6 "Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has ***blessed us with every spiritual blessing*** in the heavens in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For ***he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world***, to be holy and blameless in love before him. <sup>5</sup> He ***predestined us to be adopted as sons*** through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the ***good pleasure of his will***, <sup>6</sup> to the ***praise of his glorious grace*** that he lavished on us in the Beloved One."

I can get up every single day and be assured that come what may, dark clouds or sunny skies, rough waters or balmy conditions—I know that come what may, the God who established the world on its foundation is my God—and I make plans, but my steps are ordered of the LORD. For he called me and chose and loved me before the foundations of the world. That he planned out my life.

**But Hannah reminds us that just as God in his providence cares for us and orders our steps, he also shatters those who oppose him. Look at verse ten** 1 Samuel 2:10 Those who oppose the LORD will be shattered; he will thunder in the heavens against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

Hannah knows that this All-knowing, Almighty, Holy God is a God who watches over his children and settles accounts with sinners.

**Psalm 7:11** "God is a righteous judge and a God who shows his wrath every day."

**Jeremiah 10:10** "But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and eternal King. The earth quakes at his wrath, and the nations cannot endure his fury."

**John 3:36** "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."



**Romans 1:18** “For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

**Romans 2:5** “Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed.”

The LORD is the judge of everyone, from one end of the earth to the other.

**Application: If God is for us, who could be against us? But if God is against us, who could be for us?** With God in our corner, no foe can prevail. If God is your ally, you are more than a conqueror. When God is your advocate, who could accuse and testify against you?

But if you find yourself at enmity with God. Opposing his purposes and his gospel. If God’s wrath is against us, then where could we take refuge? We can only take refuge in God’s Son, Jesus, who died for us and gave himself for us.

I want to suggest to you that any teaching that denies God’s justice for wrongdoing, God’s judgment on sin, or disavows his wrath and fury for unrighteousness is a false gospel, and you should stop listening to those people.

We cannot imagine how God can love us enough to send Jesus to die for us but then also judge us as sinners if we fail to receive Christ and to accept so great a salvation.

Let me give you a helpful analogy.

**Illus. Let’s suppose Judge Oliver and I are out having a nice steak dinner, shooting the breeze, chatting about kids and life.** We spend a couple of hours enjoying each other’s company and part ways. On the way home, I think, “Man, that Justin is the best guy. Love spending time with him. I think I’ll rob a liquor store.” So, I run in with my 357 magnum and hold up the liquor store. Later, the cops catch me, and they tell me that they have my wallet with all my identification information in it that I left at the liquor store. And they have a video of me robbing the place. They got me dead to rights. I am guilty.

So I’m arrested and arraigned and now appear before my good friend, Judge Oliver (for this hypothetical, He oversees criminal cases and doesn’t have to recuse himself due to our friendship). Though, as a friend, he may wish me well, have warm personal feelings for me, and maybe even personally root for my rehabilitation, as a moral and just judge he must hear my case and judge me according to the law.

God is for you, who could be against you?

But if God opposes you, where could you take refuge? Only in Jesus. Because he has satisfied God’s just demand that sin be punished.



## 6. Hannah's praise anticipates our need for a King.

1 Samuel 2:10 He will give power to his king; he will lift up the horn of his anointed. Remember what the problem was in Judges. In those days, the author says, there was no King in Israel, and everyone did what seemed right in their own eyes. At each stage of their national failure, this phrase can be found.

Now, she anticipates by the inspiration of the Spirit that God intends to anoint a King of Israel and of the nations. She can't know all the contents of this promise yet, but as Christians with a completed NT we do know the rest of the story.

David's Kingdom will set into motion the Kingdom of God that can never be shaken in Christ, the Son of David.

Listen, Jesus' death doesn't just save you from bad things; it doesn't just cleanse you from moral offense to a holy God. Jesus' death on the cross saves us from *self-rule*, which is what sin is.

And in place of self-rule, we need Christ to reign in grace in and through us.

**Recap:** Let's bring it all home,

**Hannah teaches us that accurate worship matters.** That in order to worship God authentically, we must know God accurately.

**She teaches us that God humbles the proud and exalts the humble.** Humility comes to us as a choice or a consequence.

**She reminds us that God can turn our situation around.** We are reminded that in God's eyes, the worth of a human soul is never determined by worldly rank or riches.

**Hannah instructs us that God silence is not his absence.** A season in which it seems as though our prayers are not getting through—God hears, he cares, and he will answer from heaven.

**She also reminds us that If God is for us, who could be against us?** But if God is against us, who could be for us? Who could possibly be our advocate?