

Victory of the Lamb – August 6, 2017 – Pastor Bill Limmer

1 Samuel 1:1-17, 1 Samuel 2:1-2, 9-10 Vending Machines, Microchips and Prayer

Friends have you ever fought with a vending machine. You put your money in and you push the button for the item you want and the little cylinder things doesn't even move so you have to choose another item that you didn't want as much. Or how about this: you put your money in push the button and the cylinder goes around but not enough to push item out. So you lost your money and you don't have anything to show for it. Or how about: I know this happened to some of you: you put your money in. Make your selection. The cylinder turns and the product you chose gets hung up between the glass and the row it came from. What?? You hit the vending machine lightly. Because you don't want to draw too much attention to yourself but you want your product. It still doesn't drop. You bang on the machine a little harder. You tilt the machine even though the sign says don't hit or tip. Sometimes, not always, isn't it true, that sometimes we treat God like a vending machine. We pray, that is our money deposit and then he is supposed to give us what we want – Now! I am humbled by this thought.

Kevin is 25 years old. Lives in a well-established neighborhood with his parents. – Dear God, thank you for your goodness. Lord, I know you want me to be blessed and happy. And that is why I pray you, please let me have this Corvette I have been looking at lately. I really like it. And if it be your will, let it be metallic blue. Amen. – What's going on. Come on God. I really want this car.

Michelle is 29. College graduate. Young professional. – Lord, I'm single. I'd really like to find someone special. I know it is time Lord. Make it happen. Bring me a spouse. Someone who is head over hills in love with me. Someone who will take care of me. Someone special to life with me. Amen. – Hello. Hello. You know this is important me. Are you even listening?

Karen is in her mid 40's. She lives in a very nice neighborhood just off a golf course. Lord, I know you love to give good gifts. All of our friends in the Cul de Sac have in ground pools. We are the only ones who don't. You can make this happen for us Lord. I want to lay out and enjoy your creation poolside in our very own backyard. Please, Lord give us a in ground pool. Amen. – Why isn't this working? Can you hear me God? You can do it. So do it.

Isn't it true that sometimes, not always, but sometimes you and I have thought about prayer as a kind of vending machine from God? We look at prayer as a way to get stuff or people or status or just about anything except as a time of relationship with God. Three Square Market introduced the microchip to their company this week. The microchips are about as big as a grain of rice, and enable the wearer to perform various tasks such as entering a building or making a payment or even making purchases from vending machines. Just a wave of the hand. I don't know about you but sometimes I pray to God on the run too – like here I go God bless it. God, I prayed so you owe me.

What is your story? What is your prayer story?

This is Hannah's story. I'm not going to lie to you. Hannah lived a long time ago. She was married to a man named Elkanah. Thing is she wasn't his only wife. She was living a life like "sister wives gone bad." Her revile could have children while Hannah could not. And for those who have wanted children and have not been able to have children you can appreciate the despair and the anguish that Hannah. I thank Hannah prayed just as intently as I did when my daughter was sick. Just pleading with every ounce of strength the body had. Hannah was haunted and taunted day after day and year after year by her feelings of emptiness and the verbal and emotional abuse that her rival trashed her with. She was broken and shattered, have you ever felt broken and shattered? And some of you are broken and shattered today. Broken and shattered the Scripture say: 1 Samuel 1:10,11 **In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."** I want you to know she was so intent, so focused, so deep in prayer that as she was praying her lips were moving, her heart was moving but nothing was vocal, no words were audible. She was pouring out her heart in agony. So impassioned was her prayer that Eli, the priest at the time, thought she was drunk. Hannah explained the truth to Eli. And then Eli blessed Hannah.

After some time, I will say that again, after some time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named the little boy Samuel. The name Samuel means “I asked the LORD.” She knew that the little one she gave birth to was knit together in her womb by God. Can you say knit together? Knit together. Tech team would you please turn on the house lights for a minute? Do me a favor, hold up your hands with the back of your hands toward your eyes. Do you see the lines, the stitch lines, the back and forth? Know that God knit you together too, in your mother’s womb.

Hannah not only had a prayer of heart felt agony but also a prayer of heart felt joy. **1 Samuel 2:1-2, Then Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. ²“There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.** Her heart, that once was as heavy as a mountain was now as a light as a helium filled balloon. Her heart was free to fly, free to rejoice. And she rejoiced, check this out, not in the blessing of a son, but in the one who blessed her, the LORD. She understood that it was the Lord who had blessed, who was her strength. That is why she prayed to him in the first place. That there is no one like him. That is why she rejoiced and gave thanks to Him.

Let me give you an example of how there is no one as big and grand God is. I’m going to talk about 4 stars. Our star, the sun is 93 million miles away or 8 minutes away as light travels. So by the time you walk from Victory to Show Time the light has traveled from the sun to the earth. The sun is 960K times the size of the earth. If the earth were the size of a golf ball the sun would be 176 square feet.

The second star is Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse just blows me away. It is 427 light years away. And it is twice the size of . . . the earth’s orbit around the sun. You thought I was going to say twice the size of the sun. It is twice the size of the earth’s orbit around the sun. Our God is really big. If the earth were a golf ball Betelgeuse would be 6 Empire State Building stacked on top of one another. 262 trillion earths would fit inside of it.

The third star is Mu Cephei. It is 3K light years away. If the earth were a golf ball it would be like placing the golf ball at one side of two Golden Gates Bridges. We could put 2.7 quadrillion earth’s inside this one star. A million is pretty big right. A billion is one thousand millions and a trillion is one thousand billions and a quadrillion is one thousand trillions. So let’s get our heads around that: a million seconds ago was 12 days ago. A billion seconds was like March of 1986 and a trillion seconds ago would have 29,700 BC and a quadrillion would be 30,800,000 years ago.

The final star is Canas Majorus - The Big Dog Star. If the earth was a golf ball Canas Majorus would be Mt. Everest. You could fit 7 quadrillion earths. And God holds all of this in the palm of his hand. When I think of all these things I get a shrinking feeling, not a bad one though. You see sin has a way of shrinking God and puffing us up. Sin makes us think that we can manipulate God like a vending machine and that we know best. But a glance into the universe resizes everything. We worship a God of unimaginable might and glory, power and awe. There is none like him. We are not worshipping a teen tiny God. And there is no love like the love he has for us. He has your name engraved in the palm of his hand. Isaiah 49:16 **I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.** God’s love for you is without boundaries.

Hannah has taken her son to give him back to the Lord and she praises God saying: Verse **10 “He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”** While this is Hannah’s prayer, her country has never had a king yet. Her country will not have king until about 70 years later. And understand this passage is not so much about an earthly king, but about the King of all kings, the anointed one. In other words this is a Messianic prophecy. She is talking about the Savior of the world! Now that is something to get joyful about if your story has a need for a Savior.

What is your story? Maybe you are a leader. And everybody looks to you but you are being pressed on every side because you know you don’t have all the answers and some of the answers you have given were wrong. Abraham Lincoln said: I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. Maybe you are a parent and you are struggling to balance the budget, your children’s happiness and what is really best for your children whether they like it or not. Maybe you are retired and alone. The kids are so busy they don’t have time to call, let alone come by. Your physical health is ok, but your memory is failing. You get so frustrated with yourself. What is your story? What is your prayer story? Are you pouring your heart in agony over a child who has gone astray, a marriage that disappeared, a financial hole, a family member or friend who is sick. No doubt, there are some tough roads out there that may make the rugged Alcan highway look like a walk in Kayla’s Playground. And here you are in the

midst of the storm waiting for the answer. What is that you are repeating over and over in your prayers like Hannah? Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of his willingness to bless you eternally.

Sometimes, not always, sometimes our prayers are a lot like walking up to a vending machine and waiting impatiently for the 2 seconds for the requested item to fall down to us. Friends know this: Joy is found not in accumulation but appreciation. And while sometime our prayers have been super selfish, Jesus prayers were always about caring out God's will, not for his sake, but for God's sake and for ours. I don't know if you realize it or not, but Jesus was praying for you way before you were born and Jesus is still interceding for you now. Jesus does want you to be eternally happy with this really big God in the glory of heaven.

So while you are waiting on the Lord may I offer a suggestion. Give thanks to God IN all things, not FOR all things, but in all things. After all, he has the whole world in his hands and that includes you and your best eternal interests. Pour out your heart in joy. Did you know that praise puts your difficulties, brokenness, worries in context? Some of the prayer requests you have will be answered "no," according to God's wisdom and love. According to that same wisdom and love one prayer request will not go unmet – your Savior. That is a reason to give thanks to God and to be joyful because like Hannah we know there is no one like you God. We pray: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound Amazing love, now flowing down From hands and feet that were nailed to the tree As grace flows down and covers me. Thank you God for the privilege of talking to you heart to heart. Reveal your heart to us O God, and that will be enough for us to praise you in your presence for all eternity. You are rich in love And slow to anger Your name is great and your heart is kind For all your goodness I will keep on singing. More than Ten thousand reasons to praise you. There is no one like you! Amen.