

## Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

## Let's Get Real

## Gospel Lesson

1 Samuel 1:9-20 (NRSVUE)

<sup>9</sup>After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup>She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup>She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

<sup>12</sup>As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup>Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. <sup>14</sup>So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." <sup>15</sup>But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. <sup>16</sup>Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." <sup>17</sup>Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." <sup>18</sup>And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went her way and ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

<sup>19</sup>They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup>In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."

## Bible/Sermon Focus

For most of Biblical times women were completely dependent on men to survive, just to have their basic needs met. Women were not allowed to own property or have citizenship rights. Therefore a woman was dependent on either a father, husband, or a son to provide shelter and land to tend. Women were always aware that if they didn't produce offspring, and especially male offspring, there may not be anyone to care for them in their older age.

Hannah was unable to have children, and when she prayed to God to ask for a son she promised that the child would belong to God. She was praying and weeping and bargaining and in her feelings when Eli approached her thinking that she was drunk. She wasn't drunk, she was emotional. She was emotional for reasons that Eli would never be able to fully grasp.

As Pastor Andy said of Eli this week, "[He] quickly assumed a mystical encounter with the divine was something disgraceful." This happens in the Pentecost story as well. As the disciples are experiencing the receiving of the Holy Spirit, some of the on lookers assume them to be drunk.

Too often we assume the worst in people. And when we see the Spirit doing something amazing in our midst we assume something scandalous is happening. And maybe there's some truth to that. Maybe the actions of the Spirit are scandalous. Maybe the work of God in the

world is so different than the hegemonic that we struggle to know how to process it, or where to put it.

Often when new and innovative things are happening in ministry there is a sudden push back. People struggle to believe that we - yes, even we - could be on the precipice of a moment in time that God has set apart. When we are being called to *pay attention*, we instead assume scandal and point fingers. As Pastor Andy said, "There seems to be a human tendency to be suspicious of things we don't understand."

Maybe that's why so many Christians struggle to tithe and to share themselves completely with a church. And maybe that's why many Christians who give don't actually start with a tithe, but instead designate their giving for specific purposes.

A tithe is a Biblical example of how we give. We are supposed to give 10% of our paycheck to the church, undesignated. At Manchester UMC that means to the "general fund." After 10% if people are able and willing to give more, it is appropriate to designate our giving. May people giving above 10% like to designate money to debt reduction or our HVAC project. And yet, so many people designate their giving even though they are not even close to giving at 10%. Is this because we want to *control* how our giving works? Is this because, by nature we are suspicious, or assume that we know best? When people designate their giving to a ministry area, none of that money can go toward paying staff or keeping the lights on. We have never, as a congregation, had a difficult time raising money for the Missions program, but we have struggled for a long while now at giving our staff a raise.

Manchester UMC is at a crucial and amazing moment. Something amazing is happening here. Lives are being changed, people are being care for, the outcast is being welcomed, the poor are being fed, the naked are being clothed. The Gospel is alive among us. And no, we're not drunk. And yes, it's scandalous. The Gospel is scandalous. Grace is scandalous. Hope and faith and love are scandalous. It's divine. And it's like nothing else in the world.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why is it difficult to believe that good things are happening in our lives and in our church?
2. How do you witness to the spirit moving at Manchester UMC right now?
3. How are the actions of the Spirit Scandalous?
4. Why do you think people struggle to tithe to the church?
5. When did you know that Manchester UMC was your church home?

## Prayer

Mystical Creator you work in wonderous ways and call us to be a part of that work. We are grateful for the opportunity to corporate with your vision and Spirit. We are grateful to be called to work together as a congregation. Be with us in the present moment and fill us with your presence and assurance. Give us a vision toward the future and all that you have in store for us. **Amen.**

*"All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." -Acts 2:12-13*