
I Have Been Pouring Out My Soul

**A meditation for Evensong by the Rev. Canon Lauren Holder
Proper 28 – Year B**

I hope you noticed that the canticle we heard the Schola sing today was Hannah's song, followed by Hannah's story, and then of course Mary's song—the Magnificat. Both Hannah's song and Mary's song share something with our gospel reading from Mark—they all describe an undoing or a destruction of one world or one way of living, alongside the eclipse of something new. They are all apocalyptic in their tone.

Hannah sings: “the bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength... the Lord raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap...”

Mary, who would have been raised in the Hebrew tradition and presumably knew Hannah's story and Hannah's song, she sings: “the Lord has scattered the proud... he has put down the mighty and exalted the humble and meek... he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty...”

And then Jesus, faithfully and lovingly raised by his blessed mother Mary, says to his disciple: “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

Do you hear the common thread? Can you hear the theme passed down from Hannah, to Mary, to Jesus? Our texts in the lectionary are not always connected or interwoven in the way I hear them today—but when reflecting on these texts side by side this week, I began to imagine Mary singing to Jesus as a child... singing to Jesus before bed... singing the same words we hear prayed every Sunday at evensong... the same words some people pray daily at evening prayer... the Magnificat. I began to imagine Jesus at the age of 5 or 6, cuddling in close to his mother Mary, “Mama—sing the one about the poor being raised up and the proud being scattered again... sing the song you sang to God when I was still in your tummy...”

Perhaps that's a silly thing to imagine. But if you were once a child, which I believe you were... and your parents ever sang to you, which I hope they did... then perhaps it's not too far-fetched to presume the same would have been true of Jesus and Mary.

I say all of this because our readings today about closed-up wombs and buildings destroyed are not easy to hear. They are texts we wrestle with. And yet they speak to universal truths each of us holds tenderly throughout our lives.

When have you felt barren? Or when have you felt your world turned upside down? Are you in that space now? Or are you walking alongside someone you love, someone suffering their own barrenness, emptiness, upheaval or destruction? These things are true of us, and they are hard.

Barrenness comes in different forms. It could be an idea or a job you keep waiting to materialize—or it could be that you are out of ideas. It could be a profound longing for companionship—a lover or a friend. Or perhaps a longing for a sense of adequacy or enoughness.

Apocalypse can come in different forms too. Our lives can be turned upside down by so many things—broken bodies, broken minds, broken hearts, broken relationships, broken promises. So many forms of destruction that can feel like the end of the world.

My world was turned upside down a few weeks ago when I learned one of my nearest and dearest is battling cancer once again. I am full of hopefulness that she'll beat this and be healed—and I also cry scared and

angry tears almost every day. Hannah says to Eli: "I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord..." and that's what I do every morning before the rest of my house wakes up.

Whatever barrenness or apocalypse you face, you are not alone. You are not alone. No matter what season of life you find yourself in today, I invite you to try something on this week... try pouring out your soul to the Lord like Hannah. Pour out your soul to the Lord who lovingly created you. Pour out your soul to God without worrying about how to do it. Eli thought Hannah was drunk! Don't worry about how... just start talking or writing or singing or walking—pour out your soul to God. And then pray this song of Hannah or this song of Mary. Maybe the Magnificat could become your bedtime song as well. Hold whatever barrenness or destruction or heartache you have in one hand, and hold God's promises of redemption in the other, and bring them together at your heart. And as you hold them together at your heart, may you come to know the fullness of God who holds you at all times and in all places and in all things.

Amen.