

THINKING DAY SERVICE
CONNECTING WITH GOD!

Readings: 1 Samuel 2:1-9; John 20:10-18

Hannah is going through a tough time in her life. She has big hopes and ambitions for her life and family; she has all kinds of things that she wants to do with her life. But none of these hopes and ambitions are coming true and it looks as if she is going to have to go through life disappointed. To make matters worse, for other people around about her everything is fantastic: all the things Hannah dreams about, these other people are getting and achieving and some are even laughing at her. Hannah believes in God; Hannah believes that God understands how she feels and she believes that God will help her through these difficult days in her life. We read part of her prayer in 1 Samuel chapter 2: she rejoices that there is no-one like God, that He is strong and able to help her; that He is loving and knows why she has been sad. She believes that God is able to help her overcome what has been hard for her and her prayer says thank you to God for the help He gives. Her connection with God by her faith and by her prayer helps her be strong, helps her keep hold of her dreams and ambitions and even helps her make these dreams come true.

It is Easter time and Mary has gone to the garden on Sunday morning. It's not quite daylight yet, but she has gone there to the place where Jesus' friends had put His body after He died. She discovers that everything is not as it might seem and the place where they put Jesus' body is empty! He is not there. She begins to talk to someone in the garden; she thinks that he is the gardener, but she's not looking at him through her tears, and in the half-light! Then the man speaks to her; He speaks one word that changes everything; He says her name – "Mary". She turns; she looks; she sees Jesus and He is alive and she is delighted and she runs off to tell the others that Jesus is alive; she was sad when He died, but she is full of joy now that He is alive. She has connected with Jesus again and her heart is full of joy.

Here are two stories of people who connected with God. In her prayer, Hannah connects with God and asks Him for help in the hard days of her life; God listens to her prayer and she finds hope and peace. Mary is sad because Jesus has died, but she is delighted to connect with Jesus alive again and her faith is made new. These two women discover that being connected with God in faith and prayer really makes a difference to their lives. The Bible is full of other stories of people who made the same discovery, that life is better when we are connected with God.

There are all kinds of ways in which we can make these connections: the *Girlguiding* promise to develop belief is all about making these connections; across the city today *TryPraying* is launched, and is designed to help people make that connection with God, either for the first time or to make it stronger. We connect with God because God has connected with us: Jesus is God become human for us; He came to live in our neighbourhood; He came to be One of us, to live amongst us and then to die for us and be raised so that He could be our Saviour; this is God making a real and deep connection with us in Jesus. Because He has made that connection with us, we can connect with Him in faith and in prayer, just like Hannah did, just like Mary did.