

# Anna's Acclaim of the Arrival of the Saviour

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[ 0 : 00 ] As we were considering this morning, and again I think it's important to emphasize this evening, it's really quite remarkable how the Bible points us to Jesus so often through the eyes of seemingly obscure individuals.

Individuals who appear just a few times in Scripture and then as it were they disappear from the pages of Scripture. So we notice this morning, the morning service in relation to Simeon. Simeon, the faithful saint of God. Simeon who by the leading of the Holy Spirit, Simeon recognized the baby that had come into the temple that day.

He recognized the baby as the promised Savior, the promised Messiah, the promised Christ. In that brief but so meaningful encounter with Jesus, Simeon praised God.

Simeon glorified God for the coming of the Lord Jesus, for God having fulfilled his promise of sending the Savior, sending the Christ.

[ 1 : 08 ] And as we lead on in that section of Luke's Gospel, one of a seemingly obscure individual.

To another, we have Anna as it were in the next breath. Luke mentions Anna, in fact he only mentions her name once, and then just a few verses of comment on what happens when Anna meets Jesus.

But in that, these few verses regarding Anna, we actually see a great deal of description about this lady. And we actually have a great deal of teaching and instruction concerning the Lord Jesus and concerning our response to the Savior.

And so we do have to see that even in the mentioning of Anna, and the only time Anna is mentioned in the whole of Scripture, even this mention of this one person, then I'm sure the question is asked, why should an elderly lady who appears only once in Scripture, why should she be given such a brief but detailed mention?

I mean, after all, Scripture's full of the accounts of witnesses of Jesus. People like John the Baptist, our Gospel writers, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary, and the Apostle Paul.

[ 2 : 36 ] And you might ask, well, why is there the need for another individual to be highlighted, to be mentioned? And this only one time? This old widow whose speech even is only reported it's not quoted directly.

Why is it out of all these people, all these witnesses of Jesus in the New Testament, why has Anna been included? You may even ask yourselves, why does God so love us as individuals, amongst all the billions and billions of people who've lived on earth?

Why does God love you? Because he loves you and has loved you with an everlasting love, even as he loved Anna with an everlasting love. But in fact, when we come to look at this account here of Anna, there's actually so much to learn from this lady of faith.

There's so much for each one of us to learn from this faithful servant of Jesus, this faithful servant of the Savior, this faithful worshipper of God, this faithful proclaimer of the Savior.

There's so much that we can glean from these few verses for our own edification and glorification of God. So, as we consider what this passage shows us, I pray that we'll see that, yes, God chooses even the most apparently inconsequential of people to actually be a great consequence in our witness to the Savior.

[ 4 : 12 ] And I pray too that we'll see how faithfulness is seen, even the most, what we might call, unrecognised of people.

Certainly from the world's perspective. Unrecognised, unheralded from the world's estimation of worth and value. But as we see in the same instance, those who are most precious in God's eyes. So, let's give praise even now for God revealing this woman of faith, this woman of faithfulness, this woman of whom the world wasn't worthy.

But even as we continue to give thanks, that God will continue to use people of little consequence in the world's eyes, yet of great consequence in proclaiming the good news of Jesus and proclaiming that good news in a world that's so desperately needing to hear good news, not just at this present time, but all times, that this good news must be proclaimed, the good news of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and in Christ alone.

So, what then all, this lady, this woman, Anna, well, as we saw in the points to follow, that she was a faithful servant.

[ 5 : 34 ] In fact, we're told right at the start of the account of Anna that she's a prophetess. In other words, she'd been given special insight from God to proclaim particular things concerning God and his purposes.

And by implication then, as we heard of Simeon being described as being righteous and devout, so Anna, as a prophetess, was righteous and devout.

She'd been given special insight by God at this particular time to reveal something very important of God's purposes in the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth.

And, of course, she's not the only prophetess mentioned in the Bible. We go to the Old Testament and, is it in Exodus 15, we read of Miriam, Moses' sister.

She was called, at one time anyway, a prophetess. And then there's Deborah in the Book of Judges. Then there's the prophetess Holda in 2 Kings 22, the prophetess during the time of King Josiah.

[ 6 : 41 ] These were women whom God used at a particular time to deliver a particular message concerning God's will for his people.

And God will continue to use women for particular roles in the work of his kingdom. Now, certainly scripture forbids the role of women in church leadership.

We know that in terms of church leadership and positions of office in the church. But at the same time, let's be absolutely clear, women are never demeaned in scripture as some kind of second-class citizens, having some kind of second-class status.

It was women who first announced the risen Lord Jesus. It was women who cared for Jesus' needs in his earthly ministry. And as we've seen in certain cases, in special cases, women were given special insight from God to tell forth, to proclaim particular communications from God to his people. So we must never relegate the role of women in the church to some kind of demeaning second-class status. Women have vital ministries to play, whether it's in relation to the church or in relation to the family.

[ 8 : 02 ] And we thank God for the complementary roles that God has given to women, even in the furtherance of his kingdom. Mothers in Israel, women whom God has blessed, women whom God continues to bless, women whom God will use in the work of his kingdom, such as Anna here, Anna the prophetess, this faithful servant of God.

And this faithful servant, in fact, mentioned in particular detail. And this detail, as we read there in verse 36, this detail that includes her background, we're told she was the daughter of Manuel of the tribe of Asher.

And you might think, well, isn't this background information, some kind of unnecessary addition to the term name? Well, no, of course it's not.

Of course it's not. This is scripture. This is God's breathed out word. And every word in scripture is important. It says it's valuable. It's valuable. We can't just jump from the name of Anna straight to what she says of Jesus.

No. This is God's breathed scripture. There's no redundant word in God's word. There's no unnecessary detail. Even these very words of introduction are surely given for a purpose, for a reason.

[ 9 : 29 ] They're not just there to, as it were, fill in the blanks. There's importance. There's significance. In this little detail of Anna's background. She's the daughter of Phanuel.

Phanuel literally means, you see the L ending. Phanuel literally means face of God. And it's no coincidence that here's Anna, this very old woman, that she's been privileged to see the face of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And also she's from the tribe of Asher. Again, we have to say that that is important. Asher literally means happy one in Hebrew.

And Anna truly was happy in the right sense of the word and having seen the Lord Jesus. And of course we're told that in response to that deep happiness that she gave thanks to God when she saw the child Jesus.

I think we have to even broaden this connection between Anna and the tribe of Asher. Asher actually was a tribe, one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

[10:40] Asher actually had really quite an inglorious past, if you like. You go to the book of Judges and there in the book of Judges we read of Deborah, the prophetess.

Deborah, when she was leading Israel, judging Israel. And at the time there were Canaanite enemies of Israel. And of course the tribes of Israel had to fight the Canaanite tribes.

But the tribe of Asher refused to help their fellow Israelites. You read in Judges 5.17 and I'm reading here from the New King James Version.

Asher continued at the seashore and stayed by its inlets. Asher continued at the seashore and stayed by its inlets.

In other words, they would have nothing to do to help their fellow Israelites against their Canaanite enemies. In fact, in the time of the Judges, there were no judges, no leaders from the tribe of Asher.

[11:43] There were actually not even any heroes, Israelite heroes, from the tribe of Asher. But let's move on hundreds and hundreds of years to the temple in Jerusalem.

To this frail old lady, this widow of many years. This woman who's greatly favored by God in her seeing the Messiah, seeing the promised Christ.

And so we can say this, that despite her background from a tribe with an inglorious past. Despite her very old age. God had brought much happiness to this woman.

You're like, she's the hero that the tribe of Asher had never had. And like Simeon, we are known in our twilight years, as it were.

Yet God greatly blessed her. God had chosen her. God had chosen her to recognize the Christ child as the child, the promised Savior.

[12:45] And you know, again, I suppose going back to what we said right at the start. God in his perfect providence. God will choose, as it were, the unknowns of the world.

Those who are his, regardless of background. Regardless of status in the world. Regardless of past connections. It doesn't matter what your family background's been, what it has been, what it is.

If you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, if you know him by faith, then that's enough. I mean, you're not branded by God as somehow being outside of his love because of a family circumstance. Or maybe some background in your life. I think even as I was preparing the service a few days ago, just thinking of my many colleagues in ministry from all backgrounds.

I think of some who, one anyway, who's served time in jail. Another who was a former alcoholic. Someone else who was once a militant gay rights proponent.

[13:55] Another who was a former gangster in Asia. Others from non-Christian backgrounds. And of course, the Lord's church is full of those who once hated spouses because of a spouse's faith in the Lord Jesus.

Or even go back a little in time. And, you know, we can see the marvelous grace of God in saving sinners from all backgrounds. Take St. Augustine, for example.

Augustine, the great Augustine, the great defender of the Christian faith. Augustine was once a most immoral follower of heretical teaching.

He was marvelously converted. Another example, John Newton. John Newton, the once slave trader who, again, marvelously converted. In the Lord's church, there are Christians from non-Christian families.

God will and does rescue lost sinners from whatever background to come to faith in the Lord Jesus. And Anna, that's with Simeon, that's with all the saints of God.

[15:07] Saints of God, Old Testament saints, New Testament saints. God's people through the ages. All who are within the love of God, within the kingdom of God.

It's all because of God's choosing. God's electing grace. God has loved you because he loves you. And certainly when we think of New Testament believers, New Testament saints who in life physically saw the Lord Jesus.

Well, they had that privilege that God gave them at that particular time. Even Anna here who recognized Jesus. Even when Jesus was just a baby of a few months old.

She recognized him as the promised redeemer come to save his people. She had that privilege, as with others, to physically see the Lord Jesus and believe in Jesus.

Of course, there were many at that time who saw Jesus and didn't believe in him. Many who saw Jesus, who did believe in Jesus. That was the particular blessing that God gave them at that time in the history of redemption.

[16:20] But for you who believe, you who believe. Yes, you can still be counted as amongst those who have seen Jesus. Yes, seen him by faith.

But did Jesus say to Thomas, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. Not physically seen him and yet believe. And as you hear Jesus speak through his word, you've been given that privilege of hearing him speak to you of the good news of salvation in heaven.

I pray that as you see Jesus, that you'll follow him. As you see him, that you continue to fix your eyes in Jesus. That you continue to follow him and to be that faithful servant of God and following him wherever he leads you.

Even as Anna was that faithful servant of the Lord Jesus. A faithful servant, even in her old age. And even, as we read, even in difficult circumstances.

Her difficult circumstances. That as we're told again in verse 36. That she was advanced in years. Having lived with her husband seven years from when she was virgin.

[17:33] And then as a widow until she was 84. For many, many years, Anna was a widow. Widowed when she was very young, probably.

We're not told the exact years, but probably even being a widow in her early 20s. Now she's old. Was she bitter?

Was she angry with God? Was she angry with God for his depriving her of a long and happy marriage? Well, there's no indication of that in the passage.

The details about her loss at a young age. Well, these details are given as a background to her testimony. Her remarkable testimony of somebody who lived for the Lord in her life.

Even through her years. We're told that she was frequent in God's house in the temple. She was a faithful servant of God who served God faithfully, willingly.

[18:35] She sought first God, her Lord. And these words of introduction then about Anna. Well, truly they're given as well. To encourage you.

To encourage you not to be browbeaten by whatever loss God in his providence has given you. But rather to continue to worship and continue to be faithful in serving him.

And yes, even an encouragement to those who are well advanced in years. You're never too old to testify to your Lord and Saviour.

You're never too old for God to use you in his service. Take biblical examples. Of course, Abraham, for example. Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran to go to Canaan.

When God called him to leave that place and go to what would become the Promised Land. Moses was 80 years of age when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

[19:39] Of course, God continues to send people of every age. Every numerical age to serve him in the work that he has.

For each one of you. It was the martyred saint of the early church. So you might know him.

Polycarp. Polycarp. Who famously said at his trial.

His trial for being a follower of Jesus. At his trial he was pressurized into denying the Lord Jesus.

And he said this. 86 years I have served him.

And he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme him who saved me? And if you're tempted to think that you're on the shelf as far as the Lord's works concerned for you.

Maybe because of your advanced age. Maybe any age that you are. Well, I pray that you'll be encouraged. Even at this, what we've seen here of Anna. As God used Anna in this instance to glorify God.

[20:41] To speak of the Lord Jesus. That God will use each and every one who are his to tell of the Lord Jesus. And whether it's those who are elderly in years.

Such as Abraham, Moses, Anna. Polycarp. The many, many elderly believers. The many believers of any age.

Remember, God uses you and will use you. For his glory. For the good of his name. Just to say, Anna was used for the good of his name.

For the glory of his name. This Anna, this faithful servant. But then secondly, notice she was a faithful worshiper. We see in verse 37. She did not depart from the temple.

Worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. We might say that here's an instance of a believer. Who's that rare jewel of Christian contentment.

[ 21 : 42 ] She trusted in God fully and completely. Because she knew him. God had given her a particularly difficult providence in life. But she continued to worship God.

She was content with God's provision for her. And in that contentment, she was regular. Very regular in her worship of God.

And her presence there in the temple in Jerusalem. We're told, worshipping God day and night. She was devoted to him. She was in continual thanksgiving to God. And she showed that by prayer and fasting.

She was in that, we might call that perpetual spirit. Of worship of God. She knew that God was good. That God had been good to her. She was content with her lot.

Her particular lot in life. She knew that God loved her. And whether, as we can bring that to our present application. Whether it's in in-person worship.

[ 22 : 42 ] Or through the way that we're worshipping. Through technology. Through the resume technology. Well, we're still to be constant in worship before God.

Think of the early church. That was how they were featured. That they met together frequently. As we're told in Acts 2.42. The believers were devoted to the fellowship of the church.

In Hebrews 10.25. We were given that call. Not to give up meeting together. And surely that speaks of that desire.

Yes, to worship God. First and foremost. And yes, to do it in fellowship. One with another. And indeed. In the quiet of your own hearts. Even in your own small corner.

In your home. I mean, Anna had that desire to worship God. To come before God. She had that desire to be in the temple. To worship God. Even along with others there in the temple.

[ 23 : 42 ] And I pray that's your desire. To worship God. To first and foremost. Give God the glory in worship. Your whole life be a life of worship to God.

That you truly are seeking first. The kingdom of God. It's your desire. And consistent desire. To honour him. Even as you worshipped him. Even as Anna honoured him.

And worshipped God. And gave praise and thanks to him. Because finally. She was a faithful proclaimer. As we're told there in verse 38. Coming up at that very hour.

She began to give thanks to God. And to speak of him. To all who are waiting. For the redemption of Jerusalem. I mean, in Anna's devotion to God.

And her constant worship of God. It was a natural, if you like. A divine logic. To give thanks to God for Jesus. And there in that temple.

[ 24 : 42 ] She as that prophetess. Had been given the special insight. The special revelation. Concerning who the baby was. Whom Simeon had already given thanks for.

She's there in the very place where Mary and Joseph have brought Jesus. And in God's perfect timing. Anna's there as well. And she gives thanks for the Saviour that had come.

This woman who'd lived her life with a spirit of thanksgiving. And she's now expressing that thanksgiving. And seeing the Lord Jesus.

There in the temple in Jerusalem. The temple of God. And if you like. She's not just giving thanks to God. Vertically.

She's giving thanks to God horizontally. She's proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus.

She's showing that she has that missionary zeal. She's proclaiming to others.

[ 25 : 39 ] The hope of God's people. You see that in verse 38. She spoke about the child. Just a few months before. There in Bethlehem.

It was the shepherds who spoke about Jesus. They'd seen Jesus in the manger. They spoke about Jesus. And their missionary zeal. And now here's this elderly woman.

She's doing exactly the same. She's spreading the news about Jesus. She spoke about the child.

As a faithful proclaimer of Jesus. Isn't that the duty of all?

Who are God's people? To speak about the child. As is revealed in scripture. Jesus. The one who came from heaven to earth. Who came in human form.

Who came and who was born in Bethlehem. The child who came to save his people. The child who came to redeem his people from sin and from Satan.

[ 26 : 37 ] The child who came to give his people that hope and a future. It's the child who became man. The man who died in Calvary.

To save his people. Of course we do speak about the child. Because that's the most wonderful news to give. Both at this time of year and at all times of year.

It was Anna in Jerusalem. She had given good news. The good news to others. She was in many ways quoting from the passage we read in Isaiah 52.

She was giving that good news to all who were looking forward to the redemption. Redemption of Jerusalem. The redemption of Israel.

She was proclaiming the fulfillment of God's promise to all who were seeking. Seeking the Messiah to come to redeem Israel.

[ 27 : 34 ] This time of year has been for the children in many ways an open door to proclaim this good news. But of course we're not just restricted to a once a year time to proclaim the good news to tell of Jesus.

We've been given a 52 week year, a 365 day year opportunity to tell of the Lord Jesus. To tell of him whether by word or by action.

Word and witness. It's your responsibility. My responsibility. Whether we're ministers of the word. Whether we're followers of the Lord Jesus. Well we're all followers of Jesus.

When we proclaim him. When we love him. When we seek to serve him. But we've been given this responsibility. To speak of the Lord Jesus. To tell others of the saviour.

To tell others of the hope that's within the heart of each one of us. So don't let these opportunities pass you by. You might look even at this year that's almost ended.

[ 28 : 40 ] And we might. And we can look back. I can look back at the many missed opportunities that God gave to tell and to give a word for Jesus. I say that with sorrow in my heart.

Because I'm sure we all have that sorrow in our hearts. When we look back and realize that we didn't speak of the child. We didn't speak of Jesus as we ought.

But let's use even this time of year. Even as we're thinking this morning of resolution. Have that resolution in your heart. Even as this new year is about to come upon us.

Have that resolution. To tell of the Lord Jesus. By your words. By your actions. To show forth the Lord Jesus. To tell others.

That he is yours. And that you are his. And so be encouraged then in this account of this lady Anna. Anna.

[ 29 : 36 ] The faithful servant of God. Anna. The faithful proclaimer of God. Anna. The faithful worshiper of God. May that be you. A faithful servant.

A faithful worshiper. A faithful proclaimer. Of the good news. Of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Blessed us. His word. Let's pray. Our Lord. Our God. Our Heavenly Father. You teach us so much. From your word. Concerning our duty.

Our responsibility. To proclaim the Lord Jesus. Lord. Open our mouths. So we might surely tell. Of the Saviour who came for us.

Open our hearts Lord. To receive him. And may all who have. Worshipped you this evening. Know your blessing upon them. You are enabling. You are strengthening.

[ 30 : 31 ] To proclaim. The good news. Of the Lord Jesus. Hear us Lord. As we. As we continue. And worship before you now. We pray these things.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.