

## Aged Anna – Luke 2:36-38

### I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. We are doing things a little differently today: Brother Fulton has something he wants to share with the church.
1. So he will be bringing the afternoon message.
  2. And, for those who are watching on line, that service will not be broadcast.
  3. With Austin speaking this afternoon, I will be bringing both our messages this morning.
  4. When asking the Lord for a message to begin the day, I feel led to tease our brother just a little bit.
  5. In the midst of his series on Biblical servants of God who were **under** the **age of thirty-five**, I've decided to examine someone who was **definitely over** the age of **thirty-five**.
  6. Furthermore, we're going to consider an **elderly lady**, instead of a **younger man**.
  7. Some time ago, we looked at Simeon, the old man in this chapter, but today we will consider Anna.
- B. The name "**Anna**" is the Aramaic derivative of the Hebrew name "**Hanna**."
1. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament, the old Greek version, calls the **mother of Samuel** "**Anna**."
  2. And both names speak of "**grace**" or "**graciousness**."
  3. Both the mother of Samuel and this dear, elderly saint, found grace in the eyes of the Lord.
- C. If there was no other point to my lesson than this, it would be a worthy sermon.
1. Real life begins with the grace of God.
  2. Anna's **physical life** may have begun with her mother and Phanuel, her father, but **that** long life was drawing to a close.
  3. Yet, by the grace of God she had another life, which was going to carry her into **our** century and beyond.
  4. Just as the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, "**Ye must be born again**," this lady had been born again.
  5. There is such a thing as eternal life, which is as different from physical life, as night and day.
  6. "**And THIS is life eternal, that people know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.**"
  7. This knowledge and this eternal life are gifts of the grace of God.
- D. Of course, this woman's name was no proof that she had tasted of the grace of God, but in her case, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that **she was** whom she **claimed** to be.
1. And like this lady, "**Except YE be born again, ye cannot see the Kingdom of God.**"
  2. There is a lesson in the name that this lady wore.
- E. But that is only her introduction to us.
1. I would like you to consider three things this morning:
  2. This lady was SEASONED, SANCTIFIED and SERVING the Lord.

### II. First, I hope you understand when I say that Anna was **WELL-SEASONED** by the time that we meet her.

- A. She was the **daughter of Phanuel**, who must have been someone well known in his day.
1. In the Hebrew his name was "**Peniel**" and this was given to the place where Jacob wrestled with the Lord.
  2. The name means "**the face of God**."
  3. In Jacob's case, you might say that he had seen the face of God.
- B. And this Phanuel was of the **tribe of Asher**.
1. Her family's original homeland was Galilee, under the slopes of Lebanon, toward the shores of Mediterranean.
  2. And this is interesting to the history buff.
    - a. It tells us something about the **so-called** "**Ten Lost Tribes**" of Israel.
    - b. They were **not hidden** by God in northern, or eastern Europe, or North America.
    - c. There were people from each of those tribes who weren't lost at all.
    - d. **They knew** exactly who they were, and **God knew** who and where they were.

- C. Also, this lady had been so blessed by God that she had become an elderly woman.
1. *"She was of a great age,"* and *"was a widow of about fourscore and four years"* – **verse 37.**
  2. I think that it is kind of fun to note that the experts light-heartily argue about her age.
    - a. There are some who say that she was a **widow, who was 84 years of age.**
    - b. But there are others who argue that the language suggests that she had been a **widow for 84 years.**
    - c. If that was the case then Anna was no less than 103 years of age.
    - d. If Anna had been married 7 years, and if she was married at the youngest possible age, then:  $84 + 12 + 7 = 103$ . In either case I think that the words *"great age"* are appropriate.
- D. We often hear about people with too much money, too much time, and with a mis-spent youth, who eventually realize that they are getting older.
1. When this thought hits them they have a reaction called a *"Mid-life Crisis."*
  2. And then they do some really outlandish things, sometimes behaving like kids again.
  3. They buy fancy sports cars; they take up new sports like sky-diving and hang-gliding.
  4. Some even take up new sins. For Christians, at least this last point ought not so to be.
- E. Our 40's, 50's, 60's and beyond ought to be some of our best years.
1. In our mid-lives most of us are handed the gift of freedom that we didn't have earlier.
    - a. Our children have grown somewhat, and they are usually capable of living on their own.
    - b. And that means, among other things, there is a bit more spending money and opportunities to use it.
  2. In our mid-lives we have received and can share the gift of perspective.
    - a. We should have come to learn which things in life are really important.
    - b. We should have come to realize that there is an eternity awaiting us, just beyond the grave.
  3. In our mid-lives we have the opportunity for example, of giving and mentoring.
  4. In our mid-lives we should have had enough time to learn who we are and where we are in life.
  5. Anna was well past her mid-life and she was sharing the lessons and opportunities God had given to her.
- F. But you can be sure that her eighty years or hundred years were not a stream of constant delight.
1. She knew what it was to lose her parents to death, and she lost her husband, too.
  2. And she didn't re-marry, which might hint at several possibilities.
    - a. She might have had seven years so wonderful, that she felt that they could never be duplicated, so she refused to marry again.
    - b. She might have thought that no new husband could match her first, so she lived in perpetual widowhood like Queen Victoria.
    - c. Then again, she might have had so horrible a marriage that she couldn't put herself through those prospects again.
  3. And since there is no mention of children, it's possible that all of her kids had died already.
    - a. This is certainly a pain most devastating to any mother.
  4. But then again, it's possible that this *"Mother in Israel"* had not been given any children.
    - a. This may have been the reason that she didn't remarry after the death of her husband.
    - b. No man wanted this barren woman. In either case, Anna was a *"widow indeed."*
  5. Out of these possibilities we see that there **might** have been years of great pain in the life of Anna.
- G. And then, extrapolating backwards, what problems had Israel endured during the previous hundred years?
1. And what painful things has a modern centenarian seen in her lifetime?
    - a. Two world wars and a number of other conflicts almost as bloody and devastating.
    - b. She has seen influenza, AIDS, polio, COVID and other diseases kill of thousands of her neighbors.
    - c. She's witnessed the slaughter of millions of unborn babies, and the legalization and protection of despicable sins.

2. In other words, Anna has had the opportunity to learn how to suffer, and she's seen great loss.
  3. She has been well-seasoned during her lifetime.
- H. But there isn't any hint in these verses of bitterness or despair.

### III. In fact, what we see in Anna is **SANCTIFICATION** and service.

- A. The word "*sanctification*" is a good Biblical word which ought to describe all of our lives.
1. As we have said many times, it literally means "*set apart,*" and it is related to the word "*holiness.*"
  2. It has theological and spiritual significance, but it also has a practical and personal aspect.
- B. Anna had lived a pure and moral life prior to her marriage, or she wouldn't have been accepted as a wife.
1. Credit that to her father and mother if you like. Credit it to the society in which she lived.
    - a. But also credit it to the Lord's protection and to Anna herself.
  2. I don't care what Hollywood or Madison Avenue says about modern social morés.
    - a. And sure there may be a lot of pressure put upon young people by their friends and neighbors.
    - b. Yes, there are some parents who are not as diligent in teaching their children about the evils and dangers of immorality and other youthful sins,
    - c. But ultimately, the choice to be morally pure rests upon the immature and untested shoulders of the young people themselves.
    - d. Many times because they were, or still are, so sinful themselves they destroy their futures before they reach the threshold of those futures.
  3. How absolutely essential it is that parents all be Phanuels, constantly seeking the face of God on behalf of their children.
  4. We can bring them to church, and teach them the Bible.
    - a. We can spank our kids and otherwise punish them for behavior that is pointed in the wrong direction.
    - b. We can watch their friends and outlaw the wicked ones.
    - c. But ultimately it is by the grace of God upon the heart of the kids themselves that keeps them from destroying their lives before they get out of school.
  5. Pray for your children.
- C. Yes, Anna was a virgin when she married.
1. And I would dare to say that she was a faithful wife for the next seven years of her life.
  2. There is no hint of anything to the contrary.
  3. Judging from the only passage in the Word of God where we read about Anna, we might assume that this woman was sinless.
    - a. But we know better, because the Bible says that "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*"
    - b. "*There is none righteous, no not one.*"
    - c. "*There is not a just man (or woman) upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.*"
  4. So Anna was not without sin, but she was striving in the strength of the Lord to keep herself as unspotted from the world as she could.
  5. Oh, that we had the same heart and were as victorious as this lady was.
- D. There isn't enough information here to show us whether or not Anna actually lived on the grounds of temple.
1. I rather doubt that she occupied one of the apartments there, as Joash had done so many years earlier.
  2. There were apartments around the temple but they were designed to be used by the priests and Levites whose turn it was to minister in the temple, for weeks at a time.
  3. But then, on the other hand, this woman may have been recognized as having a ministry there as well.
  4. Certainly, if she didn't actually live at the temple, she was there at every opportunity.
    - a. By that I don't mean that she was there every Wednesday evening and twice on Sunday.
    - b. She was there constantly, encouraging and comforting the women who came there to worship & pray.

- E. This good lady loved the Lord so much that it pained her not to be at the house of God.
1. I'm sure that she had just as many opportunities as anyone, to absent herself from time to time, but *"she departed not from the temple."*
  2. I'm sure that she grew tired and perhaps even angry at the sinfulness and negligence of the priests, but that didn't keep her away from the Lord.
  3. There was no other divinely appointed place for her worship and service.
  4. The temple was the place for her tithes and offerings. There were no other altars accepted by God.
  5. This woman was dedicated unto the Lord and so she was found constantly at the House of God.
- F. But I wonder what her health was like?
1. For example, how well could she see? In what condition were her bones and her heart?
  2. I remember an old story about a man who was serving as an interim pastor at a tiny country Baptist church.
    - a. On his first Sunday he noticed a little old woman, just about Anna's age, sitting down close to the front.
    - b. There was a huge smile on her face, and she watched the preacher with obvious intent.
    - c. During the song service she participated as well as she could, but she wasn't a great singer.
    - d. It wasn't until two weeks had passed before the preacher realized that the woman was completely deaf.
    - e. Despite her poor eye-sight she read lips reasonably well, and they had a short chat together.
    - f. The preacher asked her why she came to church when she couldn't hear anything and understood so little of the sermon.
    - g. She replied that she attended the house of God because it was the house of God.
    - h. She loved the Lord, and she knew that was where God wanted her to be.
    - i. There was a sanctuary built in her heart that responded to being in the house of the Lord.
  3. I think that Anna might have said the same sort of thing.

#### IV. The third word that we might use about Anna is **"SERVICE."**

- A. This lady was a *"prophetess."*
1. There are about ten women in the both Testaments who are called *"prophetesses."*
  2. In addition to the others, besides Anna, there is her namesake *"Hannah."*
  3. The word means that these ladies ministered the Word of God in some fashion.
    - a. There is no indication that any of the ten women, from Moses' sister Miriam to Philip's daughters, that any of them had the prophetic gift of insight into the future.
    - b. And in fact, their gift and office in some cases may have been confined entirely to music.
    - c. But it might also have been that they were teachers of the Bible and helpers to other ladies.
- B. Of course, due to her age and gender, Anna was limited in some of the things that she could do to serve.
1. I suppose that she may have once wished that she were a priest and could offer the blood sacrifices, but then again, I can't imagine any true lady wanting this responsibility.
  2. There are some women who want the preacher's job, but in addition to being unscriptural, it seems to me to be unnatural.
  3. There were probably a lot of things in the temple which ladies like Anna could have done to help.
    - a. But at this late stage in her life, her ministry was mostly confined to serious prayer.
    - b. *"She served God with fastings and prayers night and day."*
  4. By fasting, of course, we're talking about going without food for periods of time, for the purpose of concentrating on the Lord.
  5. Perhaps Anna would go for a day or more without food while she poured out her heart in prayer.
- C. And only God knows how much good that aged lady accomplished.
1. This woman believed in the power of prayer, and with that goes the power of faith.
  2. She believed that *"the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous woman availeth much."*

3. She prayed for the priests who were scheduled to work in the temple that day or that week.
  - a. She prayed for that little old man who had recently lost his wife.
  - b. She prayed for the young woman who had yet to be given a baby.
  - c. She prayed for the peace of Jerusalem and for protection from, and by, the Roman army of occupation.
  - d. She prayed some of the children that she had seen, who seemed so far away from the Lord.
4. And who knows how many of those little children were suffered to meet the Lord as they grew older?
  - a. How many of the sick for whom Anna prayed were eventually healed?
  - b. How many of those in poverty were fed because this lady was concerned and pled with Lord on their behalf, even mentioning them to others
  - c. How many of the wayward were brought back to the Lord through the ministry of one of the priests, because Anna had been so diligent in praying for them.
5. Only God knows what sort of blessing that this one lady had been to the entire nation.
6. And what's more, it is unlikely that even Anna knew, but she continued anyway.

D. Then again, there were answers to prayer about which Anna was well aware.

1. I don't have any doubt that Simeon and Anna were spiritual brother and sister.
2. Notice **verses 25** and **26**:
  - a. *"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.*
  - b. *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."*
3. I don't doubt that Anna was praying for the same things as Simeon.
  - a. She was yearning to see the promised Messiah.
  - b. She was praying for the Lord to keep His promise during her lifetime.
  - c. Anna was praying for the consolation of Israel.
4. When Mary and Joseph brought in their infant son, Simeon instantly knew this was He for whom the righteous had all been awaiting.
  - a. *"He took him up in his arms, and blessed God and said,*
  - b. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:*
  - c. *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;*
  - d. *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."*

E. The prayers of Anna and Simeon did not bring about the incarnation of Christ.

1. *"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*
2. God knew and had planned, from before Creation, when the Saviour was going to come,
3. But through prayer, Anna was privileged to hear Simeon's testimony and to see the coming of Christ.

F. So how did Anna serve the Lord?

1. She used her eyes, her ears, and then her lips and tongue.
2. *"And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."*
3. Anna served the Lord by repeating over and over, *"The Lord has come; the Messiah has come."*
4. She probably knew every person in the city who was genuinely looking for the Saviour, and she told everyone of them that the promise of God had been fulfilled.
5. She was an evangelist repeating the *"good news"* of the gospel as she understood it.
6. But she's only a feeble, little old lady! Yes, and your point is what?

- G. Don't these things basically summarize what the Lord is looking for from each of us?
1. Yes, our responsibilities, capabilities and natural abilities vary.
  2. But every Christian can and should be repeating what we know about the Lord, speaking His name through holy and dedicated lips.
  3. Every child of God should be a powerful prayer weapon in the arsenal of the Lord.
- H. There is one other thing before I stop this morning:
1. Assuming that Anna was over 100 years old, we can see that she lived an exceptionally long life.
  2. And why?
    - a. Wasn't it simply the blessing of the Lord?
    - b. Wasn't it God's reward to this woman for her faithfulness throughout those years?
  3. Among all the other possible joys of life, Anna wanted to see the Saviour.
  4. And the Lord extended her life, and extended her life until her greatest desire was fulfilled in her old age.
- I. Christian, no man or woman can go wrong in using their lives for the glory of the Lord.
1. We can be as useful to the Lord as Anna.
  2. And we too may be alive when the Lord returns.
  3. Praise God for the lessons and blessings that we see in this good woman.