

1. Our Hope is in the LORD Alone

- a. Anna was old
 - i. Two possibilities for age:
 - 1. widowed 84 years, making her roughly 105
 - 2. widowed up to the age of 84
 - ii. Either way, she is old, and she remained unmarried for over 60 years in order to serve the LORD in the Temple area
 - 1. What does this tell us about Anna?
 - 2. Why would Luke include this information, and not other information about her?
 - iii. The Lord continues to reveal Himself to the weaker ones, not the strong ones
 - 1. She did not trust her youth or strength, but the LORD's promise
 - iv. It is also true that the eldest should be the ones receiving honor from the younger, but here we see a reversal of this in that the oldest ones are honoring a child in a powerful way
 - 1. This reality would have jumped out at readers of Luke's day: an old prophetess was honoring a child and going about proclaiming His greatness!
 - 2. We have lost the depth of this meaning in our culture
- b. Widowed at a young age
 - i. married for 7 years before her husband died
 - ii. This would have made her around 20-21 years old when she was widowed
 - 1. She did not remarry
 - 2. Look at what she gave up: children and honor, hope and future in her world, the opportunity for comfort and ease within a family to help her
 - iii. She dedicated herself to the LORD for the remainder of her days
 - 1. We don't know what she went through in those 70 years since her husband died,
 - 2. The point is that whatever she went through, she learned to love the LORD and to wait for His redemption
 - 3. She did not place her joy or fulfillment in having a husband or having the honor of a great family, but in the LORD alone – at great cost
- c. Old widowed Anna had nothing for her strength but the LORD alone: no family, no vitality of body, no husband to cherish her or affirm her – Her relied fully upon the promised love of God

2. Those Who Wait on the LORD Will Renew Their Strength

- a. Anna was a pious Jew, like Simeon, who trusted in the LORD and awaited the fulfillment of His promise – her “old covenant” faith was unfulfilling and lacked the content of the Christ
- b. She recalls her lineage to one of the “10 tribes” of Israel who never officially returned from exile in Assyria (722BC)
 - i. of tribe of Asher
 - 1. daughter of Phenuel
 - ii. Though the 10 tribes didn't come to claim their inheritance officially, some returned out of love for the Lord and His covenant promises
 - 1. Most, however, either were killed out or chose to stay in the pleasant lands of their captors
- c. This keeping and treasuring her place in Israel's history indicated her reverence for the covenant of God
 - i. Imagine having your family stick with it for 700 years!
 - ii. Knowing that her tribe was waning in significance, what sacrifice was it for Anna to forego remarriage after widowhood as a young woman and bearing more children?

1. She treasured the promises of God more than the glories of her family!
 2. She loved the LORD and awaited His promise of redemption more than the honor of her tribe and of her own personal lineage
- d. Luke continues to show the continuity of the arrival of Jesus Christ with the former covenants of Israel, making the newness of the New Covenant attached to and a fulfillment of the Old Covenant
- i. Anna speaks to those “who were waiting for the redemption of Israel”
 - ii. Remnant: those who wait for the LORD (in dependence) receive the joy of His fulfillment

3. There is Great Value in the Church in Women Who Proclaim the Word of God

- a. Anna was a prophetess
- b. Prophetesses, like prophets, spoke the Word of the LORD
 - i. This was different than the prophets of the OT who wrote Scripture, for none had appeared in Israel for the past 400 years, since Malachi
 - ii. It was, however, evident that she understood the promises of the LORD’s redemption from the prophetic word given in the OT and that she proclaimed His Word in the Temple
- c. She is not the first or the last prophetess of God’s people
 - i. Deborah (Jdg 4), Miriam (Ex 15), Hulda (2 Kings 22), Isaiah’s wife is called “prophetess” in Isa 8
 - ii. The Holy Spirit speaks the Word of God through women as well, gifted by Him for such a purpose as the revealing of God’s character and promises and the building up of His people (1 Cor 14)
 - iii. While women were never priests, working in the official intercessory ministry on behalf of the people, they did prophesy and speak the words of the Lord
 1. It should be pointed out that the prophetesses mentioned in the OT spoke to mixed audiences, it appears
 2. Anna, too, spoke to “all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”, a group of people whom must have included men and women
 3. Luke often shows pairs of men and women who are effected by and responsive to Jesus
- d. As the Church, we are to listen to the Word of the LORD which comes through women as well, for some are gifted by the Lord to prophesy
 - i. Acts 21 – Philip’s four daughters prophesied
 - ii. 1 Cor 11:5 – women are expected to pray and prophesy, but under submission (head covered) to elders, and not in the public gathering of the entire local church (1 Cor 14:29-35)
 1. Thus, some women are gifted to speak the Word of God for the building up of the Church, but always under the authority of the elders for the purpose of the judgment of such prophecy
- e. Luke emphasizes, for his day, the role of women in the Lord’s plan of redemption in Christ
 - i. As such, there is great honor for women in this great story
 - ii. Though no women were given apostleship by Jesus, women were revered and honored, listened to and respected, and many knew, wrestled with, and spoke the word of the Lord into various situations where it was particularly needed.
 - iii. We would do well, church, to strengthen and support and heed the LORD’s word through the women among us who are gifted to know and proclaim His Word in wisdom

4. Those Who Wait on the LORD Pray Expectantly and Find Answers in Jesus

- a. Anna's Primary Ministry Consisted of Prayer and Fasting
- b. Though a prophetess, Luke does not include her words but rather speaks of her "serving in fasts and prayers"
 - i. Fasting is the expression of an expectant longing in prayer
 1. It is not merely going without food, but dedicating oneself to prayer with a longing for God's fulfillment of His promise
 2. It is to remind ourselves that "we shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"
 3. In the NT, after the resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit, fasting is only mentioned in the context of consecrating elders and missionaries for the particular work of the ministry of the Word locally and abroad (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23) – promise to witness and for Him to build His church
 - ii. What was the content of her prayers and the goal of her fasting: "the redemption of Jerusalem"
 1. Anna so desired the fulfillment of God's promise of redemption for His people that she spent every day, long into the evenings, in the Temple praying and fasting for the LORD to redeem His people
 2. This is similar to Simeon's phrase "consolation of Israel" and is used in the OT several times (Isa 40:9; 52:9; 63:4)
 3. It is also what the disciples on the Emmaus road were awaiting, and somewhat disappointed when they believed that Jesus failed to bring it to pass (Luke 24:21ff)
 - iii. "day and night" does not mean that she never left, but rather that she was so consistently present it seemed as though she never did
 1. She was a constant fixture in the Temple courts
 2. The presence of Jesus in the Temple is important prophetically (Mal 3:1), and Anna the prayer and faster sees His significance (Ps 68?)
- c. Her praise of God was released when she saw Jesus, the answer to all those who were "waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem"
 - i. Prayers answered? No more fasting!
 - ii. Note that Jesus commands His disciples not to fast while He was present, but they returned to fasting when He ascended until He comes again (Mark 2:18-19; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)
 1. When Jesus was present, He was the answer to their prayers, the special intervention Himself, the fulfillment of God's promise
 2. When Jesus left, and His physical presence was taken away, they were to ask for the Holy Spirit, and their fasts became an expression of their desire to see His Kingdom come completely
- d. The significance of Jesus' appearance at the Temple is seen by the one who has awaited it with prayer and fasting – those who longed for God's promise to be fulfilled and saw it in Jesus
 - i. Notice that the ceremony of Jesus' dedication and the ritual surrounding it are hardly given mention
 - ii. It is the declarations of two old people who have awaited the Messiah, redemption of His people, that is emphasized

Conclusion: What is the reason that Luke tells this brief story about Anna?

The Divine King's arrival is hope for men and women, the humbled and the honored, no matter your age or position

The Divine King brings joy for all people

- a. Note that Anna rejoiced and there is a general feeling of expectation being met, of promise being fulfilled, and the ensuing joy that arrives after awaiting a promise
- b. This joy is intensified in Anna because of three things:
 - iii. Her loss – widowed
 - iv. Her time of waiting – 70 years
 - v. Her reliance upon the LORD – prayer and fasting
- c. Along with Mary, Elizabeth, and the angels, there is great joy in the arrival of the Divine King and the consolation and redemption that He brings

Luke is showing Theophilus, and therefore us, that the glory of the old covenant is passing away and the glory of the new covenant is beginning to shine brighter because Jesus has come to redeem God's people.

- a. Both Simeon and Anna seem to be indicative of the old that is passing away, with joy in fulfillment of promise, but passing away
- b. Jesus takes the center stage now as the new Temple, the worker of a better covenant, the true Lamb of sacrifice, bread of life, etc.

COMMUNION: The Old Covenant has passed away and behold the new has come! Our redeemer, the fulfillment of God's promise to rescue and redeem His people has come, died, and lives for you today to hold you secure in the hand of God. There is no threat that can remove you from His love, no failure that has frustrated His joy in you because you are in Christ. We eat and drink this morning remembering His death, not as the sorrow of our sins, but as the joy of our redemption!

Bread: **Luke 22:19** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Jeremiah 15:16 - Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.

Cup: **Matthew 26:27-29** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

We live in between the promise of the Wedding and the fulfillment of that great Wedding day

Revelation 19:6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."