

Calvary Hanford

The Three Wise... Women

A Christmas 2006 Series



*Elizabeth: It's Wise to **Wait** on the Lord*

*Mary: It's Wise to **Worship** the Lord*

*Anna: It's Wise to **Witness** the Lord*

Anna

Text

Luke 2:21-24 & 36-38

Topic

Anna gave a witness of the Lord as He was presented at the Temple

Title

The Witness Presentation Program

Luke 2:21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord

Luke 2:23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "*Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD*"),

Luke 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "*A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*"

Luke 2:36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

Luke 2:37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.



Luke 2:38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Introduction

Three wise *women* are teaching us this Christmas season:

1. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, taught us the wisdom of waiting.
2. Mary, the mother of Jesus, taught us the wisdom of worship.
3. Anna will teach us the wisdom of witness.

Anna witnessed the Lord as He was brought to the Temple as an infant forty days old. Then she gave a witness about him by speaking of Him to others.

The order is important: First she saw the Lord herself, then she spoke about Him to others. The order may seem obvious; but it is also instructive.

Christians are called upon to witness for the Lord. They are called upon to speak about Him to others. Ask most Christians and they will tell you that witnessing is the most difficult thing about their relationship with the Lord.

Perhaps it is hard to speak about the Lord to others because we are not first seeing the Lord for ourselves.

Let's explore that this morning. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Approach The Lord And Witness Him For Yourself, and #2 Appreciate The Lord And Give A Witness Of Him For Others.

#1 Approach The Lord And Witness Him For Yourself

We're catching-up with Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus forty days after His birth in Bethlehem. Jewish families went through several ceremonies after a baby's birth:

1. First, if it was a boy, came circumcision. Every Jewish boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth.

Circumcision symbolized the Jews' separation from Gentiles and their unique relationship with God. After eight days had passed, Mary and Joseph took the child to be circumcised. They named him Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. They did not go to Jerusalem for this ceremony; instead, a local priest most likely performed it in Bethlehem.

2. Then there was the ceremony of the purification of the mother. For forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter, the mother was considered ceremonially unclean and could not enter the Temple. The offering, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," was prescribed for those who were poor. Joseph and Mary had little from a material standpoint, but their lives were rich in spiritual treasures.
3. The next ceremony was the redemption of the firstborn. A firstborn son was presented to God forty days after birth. The ceremony included buying back, or *redeeming*, the child from God through an offering. We think of presentation in terms of a baby dedication or an infant baptism. It was something quite different. This was a ceremony paying the Lord a ransom for your son. He had to be redeemed from the Lord as if he were a slave. It reminded the Jews that God had redeemed them when they were slaves in Egypt by the slaying of the Passover lambs. As a result, they belonged to God and parents bought them back from God to raise on His behalf. Through this, the parents would acknowledge that the child belonged to God, who alone has the power to give life. Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to God at the Temple.


Thus we read,

Luke 2:21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord

Luke 2:23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "*Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD*"),

Luke 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "*A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*"



The normal offerings were a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or pigeon for a sin offering. The priest would sacrifice these animals and declare the woman to be clean. If a lamb was not affordable, the parents could bring a second dove or pigeon instead. The nature of their offering shows us that Joseph and Mary were relatively poor.

Joseph and Mary encountered Anna during their presentation of Jesus. From her description we want to glean some things about approaching the Lord to 'see' Him for ourselves.

The first thing we learn about Anna was that she was a [prophetess](#). We tend to think of prophecy as *foretelling* the future. It also means to *forth tell* the truth already revealed. God had raised-up this godly woman to do both – which was itself remarkable, seeing as there had been no prophet in Israel since Malachi closed-out the Old Testament with his promise of the coming of the Savior.

Anna saw Jesus literally – with her eyes. But her words indicate that she saw Jesus spiritually – by faith – as she predicted His mission on earth. She saw Him completing His work on the Cross as the One who would redeem Israel and set them free.

We want to see Jesus. By 'see' Him, I don't mean that we literally see Him, with our eyes; I mean that we see Him spiritually, by faith. We do it the same way Anna did – through the Word of God. In her case, she received the Word of God as a prophecy. In ours, we receive the Word of God in the completed Scripture, the Bible.

When you read, or hear, the Bible... Do you see Jesus? Do you see Him born to save lost mankind; crucified for you personally; risen from the dead; coming again? Do you see the full scope of His glory?

Most do not. They think of Him as a great teacher; or as a philosopher; or as a social activist. He was God in human flesh, sent into the world to resolve once-and-for-all the problem of sin. You must 'see' the full scope of who He was and is.

We're told some other things about Anna:

Calvary Hanford
Believers changed to bring change -

Luke 2:36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

Luke 2:37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

Her family details remind us that the account is a real, historical narrative. The Bible is not afraid to give details. If you think that the Bible is full of contradictions, or inaccuracies – it's not!

The phrase **of a great age** used in conjunction with the other numbers seems to indicate she was much older than **eighty-four**. She may have been a **widow** for **eighty-four years**, making her at least one hundred years old. The retirement Anna was looking forward to was in Heaven, not on earth.

She served God with **fastings and prayers night and day**. If indeed she was widowed at a young age, then she had been serving God this way for her entire lifetime. She saw God in her being widowed; she embraced Him in it; she served Him despite it.

We don't know what life holds. Sometimes, it holds suffering and tragedy; loss and loneliness. But you can see the Lord in it as you look forward to the promise of His coming for you. You can serve Him – whether it be through **fastings and prayer**, or in some other way or ways He determines.

You're told that Anna **did not depart from the Temple**. She lived there! Her life was all about serving the Lord.

It causes us to ask two questions:

1. First, Have you ever entered the Temple, so to speak? Have you ever accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior?
2. Second, If you are a believer... Where are you at, spiritually, this Christmas season? Have you departed from the Lord – even in a small area in your life?

Remember that we are exploring the reason or reasons why we do not have a more dynamic witness for the Lord. It begins with first witnessing Him for ourselves. We need to be like Anna. We need to



be seeing Jesus in the Bible; serving the Lord on a daily basis; and submitted to His plan for our life.

#2 Appreciate The Lord
And Give A Witness Of Him For Others

Day after day, for as many as eighty-four years, Anna had hung around the Temple. She'd seen thousands of mothers purified; thousands of babies presented. Then, one day, she saw the Lord Himself – God in human flesh. *It's a good thing she didn't sleep in!*

We want to learn some things from her about giving a witness of the Lord to others.

Luke 2:38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.


I joked about her not sleeping in... But the first thing you learn is to be where you are supposed to be. Anna came *in that instant*. She was right where she needed to be; right where God wanted her to be.

It causes us to ask, Am I where I need to be spiritually? Am I saved? Am I walking with the Lord?

It also encourages those who are saved, and who are walking with the Lord, that He can use you to give a witness of Him at the most ordinary of times. Anna had seen baby dedications for decades. It was commonplace for her. But suddenly God could use her to give a witness in her everyday, ordinary activities.

She *gave thanks*. It's because of Anna's thankfulness that I titled this section, appreciate the Lord. Until you learn to give thanks always, whether you are abounding in blessings or being abased with buffetings, you won't have much of a witness.

Anna *spoke of Him*. It may seem obvious, but we should speak about Jesus. He should be the theme. We get too easily sidetracked talking about other aspects of the Christian life. Even prophecy, as exciting and interesting as it is, should be focused on the coming of the Lord Himself, not just on current events.



The ultimate message we have is the message of salvation. Anna spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. As Jesus was being presented for redemption, Anna let everyone know that He was, in fact, the one who had been promised to redeem all of them once-and-for-all from the slavery of sin. He would pay their ransom and free them to know and serve God.

The verse specifies those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Does that mean Jesus was only a Savior to Jews in Jerusalem? Does that mean His work was somehow limited in its scope to a chosen few?

Not at all. Anna's witness was limited in its scope. Her audience was Jews who visited the Temple. Her audience was Jews looking for redemption by going through the rituals of Judaism. She could tell them that the One Who would fulfill all the symbolism of sacrifices and offerings was now on the scene.

Those she told could in turn go home to all the regions of Israel; and to all the world; and tell the same message.

Your audience is limited. It's your family, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, fellow students. But as you share with them, the message is multiplied.

It might seem that those folks are not looking for redemption. Maybe not on the surface. The Scripture says that all have sinned; it says all need to be saved, or they will perish eternally. It also says that God has put eternity in our hearts. We are wired to understand that there is a God. Creation is designed to reveal Him. We are each born with a conscience that we have spiritual need.

Human beings are indeed slaves needing to be redeemed; and they know it at some level. Our privilege is to speak to people about their Redeemer. Their Redeemer lived; and He lives!

Let's talk for just a moment about this idea of being redeemed. It is one of the many metaphors the Bible uses to describe the condition of human beings from God's perspective. They are slaves to sin, needing to be set free. But they can only be set free if someone who



is not a sinner pays their ransom. Jesus is the only One who can qualify to ransom you from sin.

- being changed to bring change -

Another metaphor I like is that of being saved, or rescued, from a hopeless fall. You've probably been following the tragic story of the three hikers lost on Mount Hood in Oregon. One has been found dead in a snow cave. His two friends are believed to have fallen into a deep crevice and might not be found until spring.

According to an article I read on-line at CBS News, the hiker who was found (and I quote),

"...was laying on his side with his head on his pack... And he had taken off his right glove and he folded every finger back except the [finger with the] signature ring and put it out."

There he was, with his hand exposed so that he could be identified. The whole scene reminds me of a Scripture about spiritual rescue.

It pictures you, as a sinner, having fallen into a deep pit from which you cannot escape without help. God is portrayed seeking you, to rescue you. God reaches down to help you; He reaches down to pull you out and up to Himself. Isaiah puts it like this:

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you,
So that He will not hear.

If you have not been born-again, then you are in that pit. God is reaching down; His hand is right there. He's calling to you – through His Word and by His Spirit.

All you need do is reach up to Him.



Calvary Hanford
- being changed to bring change -