



DATE: January 10, 2010

TEXT: Luke 2: 36-40

TITLE: "Lessons from Luke VI: Anna"

This morning we are wrapping up our Advent series in Luke. We have looked at men and women who encountered the baby Jesus. Last week we looked at Simeon and saw a man who had waited a lifetime to see and worship the Lord. This morning we are going to look at Anna and see the picture of one other person who worshipped the Lord Jesus. I will share 4 lessons as we look at this woman of God.

Lesson # 1 Note the privilege of age. READ verses *Luke 2:36-37*

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Anna was at least 84 years old. The Greek could also be translated to say that Anna was widowed for 84 years... that's how the King James translates this verse. In either case, Anna was a very elderly woman, especially in that day and age.

Age is a great privilege and a great blessing to the church. John Quincy Adams, when he was quite elderly was approached and asked this question "**How is John Quincy Adams today?**". He responded...

John Quincy Adams is well, quite well... but the house in which he lives at present (referring to his body) is becoming quite dilapidated. It is tottering on it's foundation, times and seasons have nearly destroyed it; it's roof is pretty well worn out, it's walls are much shattered, and it trembles with every wind. The old tenement is almost uninhabitable and I think John Quincy Adams will have to move out of it soon...but he himself is quite well, thank you.

If the Lord blesses us with a long time on this earth we all come to the point where the tenement that we are inhabiting begins to wear out. I read this week these descriptions of how we know when we are getting old.

We know we are getting old when....

....your dreams are reruns
on the airplane you are offered coffee, tea or ensure.
you sit down in a rocking chair and you can't get it started
your mind makes commitments that your body can't keep
that little old grey haired lady you help across the street is your wife.
you read The Total Woman and you fall asleep.
everything hurts and what doesn't hurt, doesn't work
you sink your teeth into a juicy steak and they stay there
a pretty girl walks by and your pace maker opens the garage door

That's how you know you are getting old.

On a more serious note... let me say I believe the greatest models of mature Christian faith that we have are men and women who have walked with the Lord for decade after decade. I don't want to mention any specific names because I will forget someone... but let me say I see the Nomad class and the Ambassador class faithfully come to Sunday School every single week. What a blessing these men and women are to our church. These men and women are the lifeblood of our church. Their wisdom and faith is an example to many generations that have followed them.

Our society, through television and movies, has glamorized youth. I was watching T.V. the other night and learned that I was in the midst of a personal tragedy. I didn't know it before I watched this commercial but by the time the commercial was over I realized that I had a very serious personal problem. This commercial was for hair transplants. I am experiencing the terrible tragedy of hair loss... oh woe is me... where can I go and spend a lot of money to recover from this terrible tragedy. The greatest compliment you can receive is this "**you don't look a day older**". Let me say that's a tragedy. What we have done is take away our models for young people. I grew up loving and respecting my Grandfather. He was probably the greatest role model I had and probably, in my

immediate family, the greatest example of Christ that I had. A society that lowers the value of age takes away models from young people.

Our church calls our Session members Elders on purpose. They are not just a Board of Directors. An Elder does not just govern the church... Elders are called to be spiritual leaders and models for the church. Not perfect...none of us are perfect... but growing in faith and obedience.

Anna had walked with God for at least 84 years. She is for us a great example of faith. Think who are your examples of faith. Give them a call and thank them.

Lesson # 2 Note the purity of Anna. READ *Luke 2:37*

“and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”

Soren Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, stated "**purity of the heart is to will one thing**". Anna had one will. Anna was a focused woman. Literally thousands of babies passed through the temple every year... How did Anna recognize Jesus as the messiah? Because she was focusing her life of God.

Paul in Philippians 3:13-14 states this

I do not regard myself as having laid hold of (spiritual maturity) yet. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead I press on toward my goal for the prize of the upward call of Jesus Christ.

Isn't that a great goal for 2001. Each and every one of us need to press forward into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't allow the past to stop our future growth. Be focused of Jesus.

One of the most popular Christian authors of our day is Max Lucado. He tells this story....

I saw a manger in a mall. Correct that. I barely saw a manger in a mall. I almost didn't see it. I was in a hurry. Guests were coming. Santa dropping in. Sermons to be prepared. Services to be planned. Presents to be purchased.

The crush of things was so great that the creche of Christ was almost ignored. I nearly missed it. And had it not been for the child and his father, I would have.

But out of the corner of my eye, I saw them. The little boy, three, maybe four years old, in jeans and hightops staring at the mangers's infant. The father, in baseball cap and work clothes, looking over his son's shoulder, gesturing first at Joseph, then Mary, then the baby. He was telling the little fellow the story.

An oh, the twinkle in the boy's eyes. The wonder on his little face. And why is it that out of a hundred or so of God's children only two paused to consider His Son?

Purity and growth in faith comes from recognizing the presence of Jesus in our lives. Anna recognized the baby Jesus as the messiah of the world. Our challenge is to stop being so busy with life that we fail to focus on Christ. Let us stop and see the manger. Let us stop and see the cross... not just once in a while but every day that we live.

Lesson # 3 Note Anna's patient, persistent prayer. *Read Luke 2:37-38*

and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Decade after decade Anna had faithfully prayed. Anna gives us the secret of ageing as a servant of Jesus Christ. The secret is prayer.

Anna had not had an easy life. She had been married only 7 years. The text indicates that she had no children. Today that is sad... back then that was a tragedy. There was no welfare system. It was the family that cared for the women and the elderly. Everyday of her life had to be a struggle just to get enough to eat. What did she do? She prayed. She did not let bitterness take over. I know some people who have allowed bitterness to eat away at their life. We all know some seniors that examples of faith and love for the Lord... but we also probably know of some seniors who have allowed bitterness and anger to take over their lives. They are angry. Angry at life, angry at other people and often, angry at God. It is a tragic, very, very sad picture. Anna did not fall into that trap. She praised God. She worshiped God every day. She prayed and maintained her intimacy with

God. She is an example for us. Persistent, patient prayers.

When your prayers seem to be bouncing off the ceiling and going nowhere... keep praying

When your marriage has little joy and seems to be a never-ending struggle... keep praying

When your job brings no satisfaction and is going nowhere... keep praying

God blesses persistent payers of faith. It will take a while... maybe a long time.... but keep praying

Finally, lesson # 4 Note the continuing ministry of Anna. *READ Luke 2: 38.*

“Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Anna was not alone. Simeon spoke to Mary and Joseph... Anna spoke to the people around them. She was a witness for Christ. The lesson is this... a person is never too old to serve the Lord.

As Billy Graham has said, there is no such thing as retirement for a Christian. On the contrary, I believe when a person gains the wisdom of age and maturity they have the responsibility to share that.

Over the years a number of people have said to me **"I served when I was young... it's time**

for the young people to take their turn". That is a sad statement. Of course roles change. When a person serves the church they should not be locked into that task until the return of Christ. But we are all called to serve. Seniors are the lifeblood of a church. Youth provides the vitality and enthusiasm in a church, new ideas and new servants... both are needed.

Anna encountered the baby Jesus. She was focused on God and therefore was able to recognize the Savior. Let that be true with us. We too can encounter the living Lord. He is still with us and He still speaks to us and guides us. Let us, daily encounter our Lord.

AMEN