

God's Big Announcement Series

Jesus is Appreciated (Lk. 2:36-38)

By
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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Jesus is Appreciated

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Mother Nature

1. Before there was a dog park in Owen, we took Dexter to the dog park in Thorp. Normally, we would be the only ones there. However, on one trip there was another older couple who brought their larger dog at the same time. Dexter was happy to have another dog to play with.
2. As I was talking with the man, he started to admire the amazing design of dogs. He finished his thoughts by saying, "Mother Nature made sure they have everything they need." I knew this was an opportunity for a spiritual conversation. I wanted to turn the topic of conversation to God, and I wanted to use a question to do so. I discerned this man was probably not a Christian or a person who believes in any sort of God. Those who use the idea of Mother Nature do so because they don't believe in any God. Mother Nature, science, the natural processes, and evolution typically stand in the place of God.
3. I had a few ideas of where I could take the conversation next, and I was thinking about which direction would be most helpful and what question I could use to move the conversation in that direction. I was having a difficult time thinking of how to word the question I wanted to ask. Unfortunately, I wasn't as prepared as I should have been, and I had to get my mind going and focus on the topic at hand. I didn't expect to have an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with a person I had just met; usually those conversations take time.
4. Too much time passed and the conversation moved on before I had the chance to ask a question to turn the conversation toward God. He changed the subject and started talking about something else. As the conversation went on, I didn't get another opening to turn the conversation toward God. I missed my chance.

B. This experience reminded me how important it is for me to be diligent all the time in my interactions with others. I need to be alert and ready. I need to have my eyes and ears open for the opportunities around me to make a difference for Jesus. After the conversation, and on the drive home, I thought more about how I could have navigated that situation more effectively. Now, I have a question ready to go if anyone else starts talking about Mother Nature. I hope to be ready next time.

C. In Luke 2:36-38, we discover that we can be part of God's big announcement to the world by following the godly example of Anna. Anna is a mature and godly person who responds to the birth of Jesus in a healthy way. Disciples can learn what it looks like for us to devote our life to the worship and service of God. As we're going to learn, Anna talked to others about Jesus.

II. The Life of Anna

A. So far, God has announced the significance of the birth of Jesus and the importance of Jesus' identity to Mary, and we've seen how Mary responded to her pregnancy. In both cases, God is making a big announcement about the birth of Jesus. Through Gabriel, we learned the basic

identity of this special child who was to be born. The child is to be named Jesus as an embodiment of the salvation God promised, and this child is going to be God's unique King through whom He will rule the world. Through Mary, we learned that God the Father is performing more mighty deeds in and through Jesus, and Jesus will bring many good benefits to God's people. God is fulfilling His promise of mercy in Jesus. Through Jesus, God's people receive God's assistance and help. Now, we will observe the way anyone who is looking for how they can be restored back to a healthy relationship with God can appreciate Jesus and what He's provided to humanity.

- B. Mary and Joseph bring baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem as an act of obedience to the word of God (Lk. 2:21-24, Lev. 12:6-8, Ex. 13:1, 13:11-16, Num. 3:13, 18:15-19). They name the baby Jesus, in obedience to the messages of Gabriel (Mt. 1:21, Lk. 1:31). As Jews who followed the Law given through Moses, Jesus is presented to God in the temple, and the appropriate sacrifices were made. It is in this situation that the identity of Jesus is confirmed through two elderly testimonies from Simeon and Anna. The Holy Spirit brought Jesus and His family into contact with Simeon and Anna.
- C. Another announcement is made about Jesus; this time, it is through Anna. Here is what we learn about the life of Anna:

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband for seven years after her marriage,³⁷ and *then* as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She did not leave the temple *grounds*, serving night and day with fasts and prayers. (Lk. 2:36-37)

- D. Luke begins this announcement by filling us in regarding who Anna is, and he provides us with background information about her life (vv. 36-37). God communicated some of His messages through Anna ("And there was a prophetess, Anna", v. 36). Anna is a female prophet—an individual who demonstrated her credibility of being able to speak for God. Anna is a person through whom God gives messages, and Anna then communicates the message of God to others. Anna must have demonstrated a supernatural element to the divine messages she communicated with one hundred percent accuracy while always pointing people to the God of Abraham and the Bible. These are the basic qualifications of true prophets according to God's word (1 Sam. 3:19-20, Dt. 13:1-5, 18:20-22, Jn. 4:19). Luke is telling us that Anna is a confirmed and accurate source for getting the messages of God. Her stamp of approval about Jesus is significant.
- E. We also learn that Anna persevered and remained faithful to God, even amid the significant difficulties of her life. Her commitment to God is strong and proven to be genuine. Anna got married but lost her husband after only seven years ("had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage", v. 36). Tragedy struck, and Anna was forced into a much more difficult life: not just losing her husband, but now having to survive on her own at a time when women did not have many opportunities to provide for themselves. Anna lost one of the most important people in her life, and she lived many years under challenging circumstances ("She

was advanced in years", v. 36 and "a widow to the age of eighty-four", v. 37). It is possible that Anna lived as many as sixty-five or sixty-six years of her life on her own as a widow.¹

F. Anna's life was anything but smooth, easy, comfortable, and filled with enjoyable blessings of God. Yet, despite all the difficulties and disappointments Anna experienced in her life, she directed her life toward the things of God. We get two descriptions from Luke that demonstrate her deep love and commitment toward God ("She did not leave the temple grounds" and "serving night and day", v. 37). The hardships Anna experienced didn't diminish or destroy her positive attitude toward God. Anna gave herself completely to the service of God and was always in the temple serving in various capacities. She cared for the people of God who were coming to the temple by communicating God's word to them as a prophetess, fasting and praying for the people of God as an intercessor, and spoke about the things of God with people who came to the temple—including the birth of Jesus. Anna gave herself fully to the worship and service of God.

G. Apparently, Anna had been living this way for a long time since the loss of her husband. She was actively serving in this way even when she was eighty-four! Anna had been on a long journey with God, and her heart was shaped to delight in the things of God. Through her long history of faithfulness, Anna serves as a significant Godly example for others to follow. She clearly had developed God-honoring heart attitudes over the years, which is why she reacted to Jesus the way she did. Anna was consistently faithful, even in her old age. Anna personally pursued God outside of corporate official temple services and led a spiritually disciplined life ("serving night" and "with fasts and prayers", v. 37).² While it is safe to assume Anna participated in the worship services and activities of the temple, her service and worship of God was not reserved to these organized services. Anna devoted her life to God in a personal and intentionally way.

H. God has decided to work in us and change our hearts slowly over time (Phil. 1:6, 2:13). Transformation happens little by little, step by step. The Holy Spirit works in us over the course of our entire lives. Due to Anna's years of faithful worship and service to God, she was able to live a strong life of dedication and commitment. Every disciple is on a journey of being transformed by the Spirit of God so they will invest their life in the worship and service of God, like Anna did. We all need to learn and grow to invest our life in the things of God in an ever-increasing way.

I. Usually, we begin the Christian life by taking small steps of small sacrifice. We might begin serving God by taking a few minutes out of our day to pray for another person (perhaps taking one person/family a day from the church directory). As we grow, we might develop the habit of serving God's people by regularly performing a specific task within the ministries of our local church, or developing a relationship with a neighbor for the purpose of influencing them for

¹ This calculation is based on the typical age when women got married. Girls could be married by 12 or 13. We don't know at what age Anna got married but if she followed the typical pattern, she would have spent about these many years as a widow. Some commentators think that the 84 years mentioned were the years Anna lived as a widow and that she was 105 years old. Richard C. Blight, [An Exegetical Summary of Luke 1–11](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 105.

² Leon Morris, [Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 107.

Jesus. A person may begin by serving in ways that do not require spiritual knowledge, but will eventually move to tasks that require some experience and maturity with Jesus. Perhaps a new disciple will help greet people at the door or work in the kitchen, but will eventually grow to disciple another person using one of our Four E Disciple Making Bible Studies. Whatever our personal path of growth looks like, it starts small and grows larger over time.

- J. The deeper we go with Jesus and the more our hearts change to value and find joy in God, we will organize more of our lives around the worship and service of God. Eventually, one day, perhaps in retirement, we will grow to be like Anna and devote the entirety of our time to God. The more a disciple walks with Jesus, the more of themselves they will give to Jesus. This is how spiritual growth works. This is all part of how God transforms us.
- K. The Holy Spirit says this type of reaction is the natural next step for those who receive the salvation provided by Jesus through Zachariah's announcement:

⁷⁴ To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of *our* enemies, Would serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. (Lk. 1:74-75)

III. Anna's Reaction to Jesus

- A. Once we understand what is happening with Anna, Luke then draws our attention to how Anna reacts to Jesus (v. 37). Like Mary, Anna can serve as a positive example of how to respond to Jesus that disciples can follow. This announcement about Jesus coming through Anna indicates both the significance of the birth of Jesus and instructs us how to respond to the birth of Jesus. Luke is using Anna for both purposes.
- B. Despite the challenges of Anna's life, here is how she responded to Jesus:

³⁸ And at that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak about Him to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Lk. 2:38)
- C. God worked out events so that Anna was in the temple, at the right time and location, for her to encounter and join Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and baby Jesus ("And at that very moment she came up", v. 38). Once again, we see the powerful influence of God working in the life of Jesus. God is bringing events and people together in His oversight and control (sovereignty) to accomplish His purposes. God is clearly at work in the life of Jesus. Simeon and Anna meeting Jesus as His parents obey God's word by bringing Him to the temple is one of the many ways in which God is working in the events of Jesus' life.
- D. There are two elements mentioned in Anna's reaction to Jesus. The first is that she professes openly the honor of God and/or Jesus through praise, thankfulness, or an acknowledgment of what He is doing through Jesus ("and began giving thanks to God", v. 38).³ Anna is using her words to publicly praise and thank God for Jesus. It seems this is something new that she is doing in this situation, because this thankfulness toward God began at the time of her encounter with baby Jesus. This likely isn't the first time Anna gave thanks to God, but the first time she gave thanks to God for Jesus.

³ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 2:38 "thanks"

- E. It is interesting to note that we don't have any of the words of thanks and praise Anna, the prophetess, offered to God. Luke records and shares the inspired words of Simeon with us (Lk. 2:29-32, 34-35), even though He was not considered a prophet—only a Spirit filled righteous and devout individual. We hear from someone who is not a prophet and we don't hear the words of the prophetess. Luke only provides us with the statement that Anna openly professes something about God and what He is doing with Jesus. We also see that Anna responded to Jesus by continuing to talk about Him ("and continued to speak about Him", v. 38). The words being proclaimed to God about Jesus by Anna continued to happen from that moment forward. Anna talked about Jesus to the people of God who came to the temple. Through Anna, God continued to make His announcement about Jesus to those who were not part of the events themselves.
- F. The impression Luke leaves with us about Anna is that she communicated about Jesus with whoever was interested in listening ("to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem", v. 38). Anyone who was interested and open in hearing about the salvation God was providing in Jesus could talk to Anna. Whatever information Anna had about the baby Jesus, she happily shared it with anyone who would listen. There was a group of worshippers at the temple whose hearts were set on seeking God and knew that God had promised to provide a redemptive act that would buy them back to God in salvation.⁴ It was this group of people that Anna spent her time talking to.
- G. As disciples who also recognize and appreciate the significance of Jesus, we can and should follow Anna's example—in service and in speaking. We covered service already, so here we are going to focus on the speaking element of Anna's response. Disciples can follow Anna's example and talk about Jesus with anyone who is interested.
- H. As disciples, as we live a life of obedience to God, we will have opportunities to tell others about Jesus, and we should be prepared:

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be in dread, ¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who disparage your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. (1 Pet. 3:14-16)

- I. Disciples should be prepared and ready to have conversations about Jesus with others ("always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you", v. 15). If a person isn't ready or capable of having these conversations because they don't know very much about Jesus or don't know how to effectively talk about Him with others, the place to start is to learn more about Jesus and His message. The best place to start is a careful and repeated reading of all the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There are many good resources available that can help us learn more about Jesus. A few good resources include *Person of Interest: Why Jesus Still Matters in a World that Rejects the Bible* by J. Warner

⁴ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 2:38 "the redemption"

Wallace, *Too Good to Be False: How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality* by Tom Gilson, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* by Gary Habermas, *The Incarnate Christ and His Critics: A Biblical Defense* by Robert Bowman and J. Ed. Komoszewski *All the Teachings of Jesus* by Herbert Lockyer, and *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* edited by Joel Green.

- J. Healthy disciples use whatever opportunities they are given to talk to others about Jesus. The more conversations we have, the better we will get at communicating Jesus. In these conversations, disciples take what they know about Jesus and use it to help others better understand who Jesus is, hopefully moving them closer to a relationship with Him. In these conversations, disciples can correct misunderstandings, remove challenges, provide new information, answer questions, and present Jesus as the person He claimed to be. Helping others develop a love and appreciation for Jesus is all part of Jesus-centered conversations. Let's keep our eyes and ears open for opportunities to turn our conversations to Jesus.

IV. God's Inspired Announcements About Jesus

- A. While we've only looked at three of God's big announcements concerning the birth of Jesus, there are more. Luke provides us with a list of nine supernaturally inspired statements about the birth of Jesus. This list includes the announcements of Gabriel (Lk. 1:26-38), Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39-45), Mary (Lk. 1:46-55), Zechariah (Lk. 1:67-79), an angel (Lk. 2:8-12), a host of angels (Lk. 2:13-14), two by Simeon (Lk. 2:25-32, 2:34-35), and Anna (Lk. 2:38). Luke is supplying many lines of evidence to convinces us that the supernatural fingerprints of God are found all over the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus is a significant event in the plan of God that provides salvation to humanity. Through Jesus, God the Father is doing something important, unique, and special. Luke is getting our attention, so we pay careful attention to Jesus.
- B. God is doing something big in and through Jesus. The repeated emphasis throughout all these announcements is that God is accomplishing His promised salvation through Jesus. The overall message being communicated in connection with the birth of Jesus can be summarized in these words:

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all the peoples: (Lk. 2:30-31)

- C. Jesus being the special person through whom God's salvation is being offered to the world is the message Luke wants us to walk away with. God is saving His people through this baby. This is why various godly people rejoiced, gave thanks, and appreciated the child they had the privilege to encounter. Jesus is a source of happiness for those who recognize His importance. This reaction started when Mary conceived, and it has continued up to the present day. This is what we are celebrating at Christmas.
- D. Through a knowledge of the historical events communicated by Luke, we can realize that God is doing something unique and special through Jesus. Every person has a need to develop the personal conviction that Jesus is the only way to be restored back to a healthy relationship with God. Be encouraged to spend time shaping your thinking about this truth. What we think about Jesus are the most important thoughts we can ever think. They will determine whether God

happily receives us into His presence or casts us away. Jesus said those who love God accept Him as well:

⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you accept glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God? (Jn. 5:42-44)

E. Everyone who loves God loves Jesus too (Jn. 8:42).

V. Conclusion

- A. By reading and learning about the events connected to the birth of Jesus, we can discover that God is doing something special and unique through Jesus. God is providing His promised salvation to the world. God the Father is orchestrating the events connected to the birth of Jesus and is drawing the attention of the people of God to Jesus.
- B. Jesus gives us a reason to be thankful, to worship, and to deepen our love for God. Those who are part of the birth events are given divine insight and receive messages from God about what He is doing through Jesus. Each godly person responds positively to Jesus. Their examples are instructive for us in how we ought to respond to Jesus.