

“The Baby Jesus in the Temple”

(Luke 2:22-38)

Introduction

➤ About twenty-five years ago, when my three boys were just little (while Amy was gone to our church’s women’s retreat), I went to our local library and checked out the movie “Old Yeller” (first released in 1957). I thought it would be a wholesome and fun movie night with just “dad and the boys.” I hadn’t seen it in a long time, and the boys had never seen it. It was great – until the end. As you may remember, at the end of the movie, the 14-year-old older brother (Travis) went to shoot his dog (Old Yeller) because it contracted rabies. The mother was going to shoot the dog but, since it was his dog, the older brother decided he should shoot him. As he held the gun up to shoot Yeller my boys asked, “Is he going to kill him daddy?” I said, “No. Just watch.” During the tense moment (that seemed to last forever) my boys kept looking at me just to be sure. I, extremely confident, kept assuring them, “It’s alright. Just watch. Trust me.”

Then, to all of our surprise – no one more surprised than me! – Travis shot Yeller ... dead. My boys, looking as if they had just suffered the worse betrayal in human history, just stared at me in confusion and disbelief. I was in stunned silence. Then, I simply said, “Ok, I guess he does shoot Yeller!?” When I told Amy what happened, she told me that I was thinking of an episode of Little House on the Prairie where Pa was going to shoot their dog but didn’t at the last minute. Perhaps needless to say, to this day, my boys are a bit skeptical when I tell them “trust me!”

➤ I was reminded of that story while studying for this sermon. For Joseph and Mary, on their way to the temple with baby Jesus, were in for a surprise – in their case, it was a wonderful surprise.

Luke 2:22-38 ~ “And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.’ ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.’ ³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.’ ³⁶And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

➤ This biblical narrative unfolds in three distinct scenes.

A. The Dedication (vs.22-24)

➤ At first glance, these verses can seem rather insignificant. It is simply a narrative passage describing the event when Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple. However, as we will see, these verses reveal significant information concerning the earthly parents of Jesus Christ in the earliest weeks of His earthly life.

1. Mary and Joseph's obedience (vs.22-24)

- We must never see obedience to the Lord as a trivial issue, nor should we be insincere in our obedience to Him. We must be deceived into thinking that we only need to be obedient on “the big things.” For oftentimes, a person’s real faithfulness (their true integrity) is seen in how they respond to “the little things.” We must not presume that God does not care about (or is not aware of) the little things in life. And must not consider any sin, or act of disobedience to God, to be no big deal. While all sins do not carry the same consequences, all sin is equally sinful. Oftentimes, it is the seemingly “little” compromises that have catastrophic results or lead us to even more grievous sins.

Luke 16:10 ~ “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” (see Lk.19:17)

- One such “little thing” – at least from our perspective – is Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to the temple *“according to the Law of Moses”* (vs.22). Luke tells us that *“the time came for their purification”* (vs.22). In the Old Testament (*“the Law of Moses”*), God instructed that after a woman gave birth to a boy she was considered “unclean” for a total of forty days (seven before the circumcision and thirty-three after), and sixty if it was a girl (a subject that we will not discuss here). Mary’s ceremonial “uncleanness” was symbolic of the need for cleansing from sin. For the first forty days of Jesus’ life on earth, Mary could not *“touch anything holy”* or go into the temple.
 - ✓ Illust: “While she was unclean, a woman could not touch anything sacred or holy, nor could she go to the temple. Her ceremonial uncleanness tempered the natural joy of bringing a new life into the world (Jn.16:21) with the sober reality that the child, like its parents, was a sinner (Ps.51:5)” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 2:22-24).

Lev 12:1-5 ~ “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²‘Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. ⁵But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.’”

- So, after the forty days of purification was completed, Mary and Joseph *“brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord”* (vs.22; *“present” [paristēmi]*). What a scene! Mary and Joseph dedicating the incarnate Son of God to God the Father in the temple of God. I imagine that they felt like a donkey in the Kentucky Derby. Perhaps like John the Baptist felt when he baptized Jesus (Matt.3:14), or how Peter felt when he was to wash Jesus’ feet (Jn.13:8).

But Mary and Joseph were being obedient to the commands of God: *“(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’)”* (vs.23; Ex.13:1-2). They were not only dedicating Jesus to God but dedicating themselves to the Lord as well. Their act of obedience, in dedicating Jesus to God, was a sacred pledge of allegiance to God – promising to do their part in raising this child as *“holy to the Lord”* (vs.23). While many may read these verses as insignificant, we can be assured that this act of obedience was not insignificant to Mary and Joseph. And our acts of obedience to the Lord should never be insincere or viewed as trivial.

2. Mary and Joseph's poverty (vs.24)

- Another part of their obedience to the commands of God is seen in verse twenty-four: *“and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord”* (vs.24). In the book of Leviticus, it is stated that after the days of purification, a sacrifice was to be given to the Lord. The sacrifice was to be *“a lamb a year old for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering”* (Lev.12:6). However, if the couple could not afford a lamb they could offer *“two turtledoves or pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering”* (Lev.12:8).

Lev 12:6, 8 ~ “And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering ... ⁸And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”

- When we read that Mary offered a sacrifice to the Lord of “*a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons*” (vs.24) it indicates that Mary and Joseph were relatively poor. This beautifully shows their dedication to the Lord. Not only did they offer a sacrifice to the Lord, as God commanded, but they also gave out of their poverty.

This, again, is a great example for us all. For we deceive ourselves into thinking, “If I just had more ... then I would be obedient (or faithful).” This, I believe, is a common misconception in American evangelicalism. People often think, if not outright say, “I simply cannot afford to give a tithe or offering to the church.” In doing so, they are (unwittingly) saying, “I’m too poor to obey God.” God measures our obedience in percentages not dollar signs. That is, God looks not to the amount of the gift (God does not need money) but the sacrifice of the gift. The tithe (10%) is not equal giving, but equal sacrifice.

Luke 21:1-4 ~ “Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ²and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³And he said, ‘Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’”

Luke 16:10-13 ~ “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” (see Mal.3:8-9)

B. The Declaration (vs.25-35)

- In this long passage (vs.25-35), we encounter a man named Simeon. This is the only time in Scripture that we encounter this man. Yet, this does not hinder us from knowing a great deal about this man. As we shall see, Simeon was a godly and faithful man who was used mightily by God. We can outline Simeon’s life in four ways.

1. Simeon’s character (vs.25)

- The first indicator of Simeon’s character was his name. Although Simeon was a common name in biblical times, and certainly not everyone named Simeon was godly, in this Simeon’s case his name is especially appropriate and meaningful. The name “*Simeon*” (*Symeōn*; *šim’ōn*, Hb.) means “one who hears or listens”, “obedient one”, or even “God has heard.” To be sure, Simeon lived up to his name. While the Bible does not explicitly state that Simeon was an old man, it seems likely as we read that he prayed, “*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace*” (vs.29).

We know that he was (living) “*in Jerusalem*” (vs.25) when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to be dedicated. We also, more importantly, know that he “*was righteous and devout*” (vs.25). These two words “*righteous*” (*dikaio*s; “just”) and “*devout*” (*eulabēs*; lit. taking hold well, circumspect, cautious, or pious), and not used in combination with any other person in Scripture.

Simeon was a true worshipper of God. He was not merely religious nor a false believer. Contrary to the movements of “carnal Christianity”, “cheap grace”, or “easy-believism”, which have plagued Christianity in recent decades, Simeon’s faith in God was real, and so was his devotion to God’s Word. He was not merely a Jew “outwardly” but one “inwardly” (Rom.2:28-29).

- We also learn that he was “*waiting for the consolation of Israel*” (vs.25). In other words, Simeon was waiting for the coming of God’s Messiah. For only the Messiah could truly bring “*consolation*” (*paraklēsis*; comfort, encouragement, or help) to God’s people. This describes the truth and depth of Simeon’s faith. Even though many centuries had passed since God proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, Simeon believed God’s Word that the Messiah would come – and so he waited patiently. The Old Testament prophets declared that God would indeed bring consolation to His people. For example,

Isa 49:8-13 ~ “Thus says the Lord: ‘In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, ⁹saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; ¹⁰they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. ¹¹And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. ¹²Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene.’ ¹³Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.”

Isa 61:1-3 ~ “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to grant to those who mourn in Zion – to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.”

Luke 4:16-22 ~ “And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’ [Is.61:1-2]. ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”

- What does this tell us about Simeon? It tells us that He had put his faith in Jesus Christ (i.e., the Messiah), before Jesus was even born! He believed in the Messiah *who was still to come*. He did not have the advantage of the Gospel stories – the miracles of Jesus, the crucifixion, the empty tomb, the resurrection appearances – he only had the promise(s) of God. Like Abraham before him, Simeon “*believed God*” (Rom.4:3; Gal.3:6; Jms.2:23; Gen.15:6). As far as Simeon knew, he would likely never (in his lifetime) be able to see the face of the Messiah.

Heb 11:1 ~ “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

- Furthermore, we learn that “*the Holy Spirit was upon*” (vs.25) Simeon. This does not mean that Simeon had some ecstatic or charismatic experience, but that he was especially anointed and led by the Holy Spirit of God. This is the enabling (empowering) work of the Spirit in Simeon’s life. Like we are called to be always “*filled with the Spirit*” (Eph.5:19), this describes Simeon as being under the control and influence of God’s Spirit.

2. Simeon's revelation (vs.26-27)

- The Holy Spirit had *“revealed”* (*chrēmatisō*; instructed, warned; see Matt.2:12, 22; Heb.11:7) something pretty special to Simeon: *“that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ”* (vs.26). What a revelation this would have been for Simeon. It is possible that this was an answer to his prayers, longing for the coming Messiah. It is likely that, after receiving this revelation, Simeon wondered every day: “Is it today, Lord?” We are left to image his joyous daily anticipation.

And we are to reflect this same attitude with regard to Christ's Second Coming. It is so easy, in our culture, to be so busy and/or distracted that we do not contemplate the fact that Christ is coming again (maybe even in our lifetime). We can go for days, weeks, months, or more without even thinking about the Second Coming of Christ – let alone longing for it. God's Word exhorts us to be ever vigilant as we anticipate the Lord's Return.

Mark 13:32-37 ~ “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵Therefore stay awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning – ³⁶lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

Rev 22:20 ~ “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

Titus 2:11-14 ~ “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”

2 Peter 3:11-13 ~ “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

- According to God's sovereign plan and pleasure, forty days after Jesus was born (Lk.2:22; Lev.12:3-4), the day came for Simeon to meet His Savior face-to-face! Led by the Spirit (*“in the Spirit”*, vs.27; Rev.1:10), Simeon *“came ... into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law”* (vs.27). This was certainly not a coincidental meeting. There is not chance or luck or accidents in the realm of God's sovereignty. God not only foreknew and foretold this meeting, but He arranged and directed it. And what a meeting it was!

3. Simeon's prayer (vs.28-32)

- When Simeon laid eyes on the baby Jesus, he must have been overwhelmed with joy and wonder. The day he longed for had finally arrived. He was able to see the face of the Messiah. And, more than that, he was able to hold the Messiah in his arms: *“he took him up in his arms and blessed God”* (vs.28). The first thing Simeon did when he held Jesus in his arms was to *“bless”* (*eulogeō*; to praise or thank) God (vs.28). Simeon knew that this was the fulfillment of God's promise – to him personally, to the nation Israel, and for all people. Simeon knew that the promised Messiah had been born, and Simeon knew that Christ was the Savior for all who would believe in Him.
- In his euphoria, Simeon burst out in prayer to God: *“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel”* (vs.29-32). Simeon could now die in peace, for his eyes beheld the Savior from God (Phil.1:21). As we see so often of the prayers in the Bible, Simeon's prayer was neither self-centered nor a list of things he wanted God to do for him. His prayer was the expression of doctrinal truths and praises to God.

Notice that in his prayer, we find that God's promised salvation was not only for the Jews but also for the "*Gentiles*" (vs.32). This was contrary to what many Jews believed in Simeon's day. They wrongly thought that the Messiah was only the Savior for the Jews (Acts 1:6). We see in Simeon's prayer that he knew God's true plan of salvation was always for all who would ever truly receive Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior. Not to save us from our enemies, but to save us from our sins against God (Lk.1:77; 3:3; Matt.1:21; Jn.1:29).

Rom 1:16 ~ "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (see Rom.3:28-29; 9:24-26; Eph.2:13-22)

Gal 3:26-29 ~ "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

4. Simeon's prophecy (vs.33-35)

- This is why Joseph and Mary "*marveled*" (*thaumazō*; amazed, astonished; see 2:18) "*at what was said about*" Jesus (vs.33). But Simeon was not done. After his prayer of praise to God, he then "*blessed*" (*eulogeō*; vs.34, 28) Joseph and Mary and gave this sobering prophecy: "*...Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed*" (vs.34-35). This is the "bad news" of the Gospel. While Jesus is the Savior for all who believe in Him, He is also the Judge for all who reject Him (see Is.53:11; Jn.1:11).

Luke 9:21-22 ~ "And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²²saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'" (see Lk.17:25; 20:17)

John 3:18-19 ~ "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."

John 3:36 ~ "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

1 John 5:11-12 ~ "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

1 Cor 1:22-23 ~ "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles"

- Simeon spoke explicitly about what had only been implicit so far in the Gospel of Luke. That is, since Jesus has come to save people from their sins those who reject Him will die in their sins (Jn.8:24). Jesus is the only way in which we can be reconciled to God, and so to reject Jesus is to remain at enmity with God (Rom.5:8-10). Jesus is the one and only Savior from God, to reject Him is to refuse God's saving grace and remain condemned under God's wrath.
- With this, Simeon added a special sobering note for Mary: "*(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also)*" (vs.35). As the birth of Christ is a glorious event, we must never lose sight of the fact that the Son of God came to die on the cross for our sins (and, of course, rise from the dead). This would be a special (unspeakable) pain for Jesus' mother, as she would literally watch her son be crucified (Jn.19:25). While a spear would literally pierce through Jesus' body (Jn.19:34), a sword would emotionally "*pierce through [Mary's] soul*" (vs.35).

Mary's pain would be culminated, intensified, at Christ's crucifixion, but it did not start there. She of course knew that her Son was hated and vilified. She knew that Jesus had many enemies who not only did not believe that He was the Messiah, but vehemently and violently rejected His claim to be the Son of God. And it is likely she knew the Scriptures which revealed that the Messiah would first come to suffer and die (see Ps.22; Is.53:3-5; Lk.24:26-27, 44-46).

C. The Devotion (vs.36-38)

- The experience of this occasion with Jesus in the temple is not yet over. A trip that started off in obedience to the law of God, has been met with a man named Simeon and now a woman named Anna: *"And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem"* (vs.36-38)
- As we saw with Simeon, these verses reveal a few important details about Anna.

1. Anna's character (vs.36-37a)

- The fact that Anna *"And there was a prophetess"* (vs.36) which does not mean that she predicted the future (like a fortune teller or palm reader today) but that she proclaimed the Word of God. She is one of very few women were called a prophetess in the Bible (Miriam, Ex.15:20; Deborah, Jdg.4:4; Huldah, 2Kings 22:14; and Philip's four daughters were said to have prophesied, Acts 21:9). It seems as though Anna had some form of an ongoing prophetic ministry (perhaps her husband was a prophet, like Isaiah's wife in Is.8:3). Her father, Phanuel, named her *"Anna"* (vs.36; Greek form of the Hebrew name Hannah) which means "favor" or "grace".
 - ✓ Illust: "That Anna was a member of the tribe of Asher is noteworthy. Asher was one of the ten tribes that formed the northern kingdom and were taken captive by Assyria in 722 B.C. But the so-called ten lost tribes were in fact not lost. Before the fall of the northern kingdom, in response to letters from King Hezekiah of Judah (2Chron.30:6), *"some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem"* (v.11). Their descendants would be among those who were carried away captive to Babylon, and returned to Israel after the exile" (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke; 2:36-38*).
- While we deduce that Simeon was old, there is no doubt about Anna's age: *"She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four"* (vs.36-37a). Some believe this to mean that Anna was eighty-four when she saw baby Jesus in the temple, others interpret this to mean that she lived eighty-four years after her husband died making her more than one-hundred years old. Both interpretations confirm that she was *"advanced in years"* (lit. "she was advanced in her many years"). This wonderfully shows that Anna was a faithful and godly woman – for decades and decades. She is an example to us all of faithfulness and perseverance. And she continued serving the Lord even in her old age. We too (as we are physically and mentally able) must serve the Lord all our lives long. For there is no "retirement" from Christian service, from worship, in this lifetime.

2. Anna's piety (vs.37b)

- Here godliness is repeatedly stated in just a couple verses. First, we see that she was a *"virgin"* (vs.36) when she got married, and then we read that *"She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day"* (vs.37). Anna was not about to live a monastic or self-serving life in her old age. The fact that she *"She did not depart from the temple"* (vs.37) likely means that she lived on the temple grounds, which also highlights her prophetic ministry. It seems that while she lived on the temple grounds she also never left. She was in the temple every day for decades!

- We read that she worshiped God day and night, seemingly every day of the week. The Greek word translated “*worshipping*” (*latreuō*) could also be translated “serving” or “ministering” (see Lk.1:74; 4:8). So, the idea here is not that Anna just sat around the temple singing worship songs all day. She worshipped God by serving Him in the temple.

And her worship of God was marked by “*fasting and prayer night and day*” (vs.37b). In this context we see that her fasting was not merely a ritualistic or hypocritical religious act (as we see from the Pharisees – Lk.18:12; Matt.5:16-18), but an expression of heartfelt devotion to God. Fasting, often coupled with prayer, is to be a spiritual discipline of self-denial, reminding us of our supreme love for and dependance upon God. Anna dedicated herself wholly to the Lord. The worship of God was not merely one aspect of her life; it was her life. She was preoccupied with God and fully devoted to Him – her life was quite literally consumed by her worship of God.

3. Anna’s praise (vs.38)

- By God’s providence, like Simeon, Anna would meet the baby Jesus. And, like Simeon, she would praise God for Him and prophetically proclaim Him as the Savior from God: “*And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem*” (vs.38). She shared the Good News of the birth of Christ with all who would hear. Again, Anna is an example to us all.

Conclusion

- While Joseph and Mary’s trip to Jerusalem was not what they were expecting, it was greater than they could have possibly expected. This was Jesus’ first trip to the temple in Jerusalem as the incarnate Son of God. He would return again later – many times. We see Him in the temple as a twelve-year-old boy (Lk.2:46), teaching in the temple (Lk.19:47; 21:37-38), and even driving people out of the temple (Lk.19:45-46).

In His first trip to the temple, we see the dedication of Jesus as the Christ, the declaration of Jesus as the Christ, and the devotion to Jesus as the Christ. These three scenes serve as exhortations for us to follow.