Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Testifying to Jesus: Anna
Scripture: Luke 2:36-38
Code: 42-31

We're looking at Luke's gospel and we're tracking through the incredible story of the birth of Jesus Christ, this astonishing and astounding reality that God came into the world in human form, in the form of a baby, born to the virgin Mary, and all that surrounds that. We have seen the birth of Christ from its historical perspective, the actual events that took place. We've seen it from its prophetic perspective, the myriad of prophecies that were given in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the birth of Christ.

We've seen it also from its theological perspective, diverting our attention to the first chapter of Hebrews we got the divine theological commentary by God on the birth of Christ. We have also seen the birth of Christ from the covenantal perspective. That is to say, what did the birth of Christ have to do with the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the great New Covenant? We've looked at the birth of Christ from all those perspectives and it's filled our hearts and minds with wonder.

Every week when I've prepared to preach on Luke, I've been more and more literally astounded at the great realities that unfold in this gospel. And I can but share with you a small part of the wonder that fills my own soul. Particularly now as we're looking at chapter 2 verses 21 to 39, we are looking at another perspective on the birth of Christ and that is the perspective of the true Jew in that day, the remnant. As I told you this morning, it is quite remarkable that the eternal God of the universe, the creator, the one true and living God, the controller of history, the one who is writing history which is really His story, the consummator, the true and living God who will bring history to its conclusion, the God who created the universe and will some day uncreate it, the God who is responsible for everything that is, that great massive God who knows no limits but who is infinite has designed to reveal all His revelation in one book. The world is full of books, but only one is the revelation of God. And all the promises of the coming of Messiah are contained in one book, the Old Testament. It is a book of promises, promise after promise after promise. And the heart and soul of all those promises is the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Amazingly, one book, the Old Testament, contains all the messianic promise that was ever given. All the covenantal promise that was ever given. And even more amazing, that one book was given to one small group of people, the nation Israel. And even more amazing, out of that small nation, there was only a tiny remnant who believed it at any given point in their history. At any point along the way, there were so very few who ever believed it.

I had occasion a few years ago to have a ministry in England, south of London and it was at a place called Pioneer Hall, which was just the name of this particular venue where the conference was held. And it was a conference for theological students from Cambridge and Oxford and King's College, the theological institutions of the Anglican Church in England. And it was a gathering after their school year in which they had been assaulted by liberalism to bring them back to the truth of the Word of God, to wash their minds, as it were. That was its design.

One of the gentlemen who was teaching, along with myself, was a fine New Testament scholar by the name of David Gooding. And David Gooding, who has many refreshing thoughts about the time of the birth of Christ, has written this, "Israel has never been a nation marked by unqualified obedience, anymore than other nations have. When they came out of Egypt, singing their songs of redemption, no one had dreamed that hidden in the hearts of most of them lay as yet unformed thoughts of sheer rebellion against God, their Redeemer. But the wilderness by God's deliberate intention exposed them."

Isaiah knew this. He knew that human nature is the same in all ages, and Jeremiah knew it and said, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And even the prophet Isaiah...says Gooding...as he looked forward to the consolation of Israel knew that beneath the outward forms of religion they're lurked still in many hearts the same spirit of rebellion, and he knew that the first defect of the coming of Christ would be to provoke their hidden rebellion into open antagonism. In a sense...writes Gooding...Christ had to do that for there could be no consolation of Israel until the latent rebellion against God had been brought out into the open and had been recognized for what it was, repented of and forgiven," end quote.

You know, when you look at the history of Israel, David Gooding is right, it's so sad. One book given to one people but only this tiny little group of people believed it, this little remnant. And as I said this morning, there weren't many in the remnant because when the whole ministry of Jesus was over and all the believers in Jerusalem gathered in the upper room, there were only 120 of them. But among that little remnant that took the Old Testament seriously and believed it was an old couple Zacharias and Elizabeth, he was a priest and she even came from the priestly line as well, was a young couple, Joseph and Mary, who were righteous teen-agers, were some shepherds sitting on their haunches, as it were, watching their sheep out on the hillside in Bethlehem whom the angels came. And we meet in Luke chapter 2 a couple of more people in the remnant, namely Simeon, and old man, and Anna, an old lady.

As I said this morning, none of them were any note. I mean, there were thousands of priests in Israel and certainly Zacharias was not a particularly distinguished one. He, in fact, lived in a little Judean village, not in the mainstream of things at all. Joseph and Mary were from that lowly and despised place called Nazareth which was up there by where Gentiles lived and far away from religious

feelings that were generated around Jerusalem. And the shepherds were the commonest of the commonest and the lowest of the low. And Simeon is a nobody. We know nothing about him at all, and so was Anna.

But in this section of Scripture, something very important is happening because in tradition and as well, that tradition was founded upon revelation, it was essential that any truth be confirmed by two or three witnesses. And Luke has just given us the truth that God had been born in human flesh, that the Son of God, the Son of the Most High God has come into the world, the Savior of the world and King. It's important that that be confirmed by witnesses, they have to be righteous witnesses. So, so Luke picks three...the parents, Simeon and Anna. They're righteousness is not arguable, it's clear. Joseph, the Bible says, was a righteous man even though he was probably 14-years or so in age. And Mary was righteous, we know that from her Magnificat. Zacharias was righteous and so was Elizabeth, it says that in chapter 1 verse 6.

And Simeon was righteous. Look back at verse 25 it says, "This man was righteous." What that means is he was justified, he was right with God, his sins had been forgiven because he had repented and believed. Not only was he righteous but it also says, and this is a wonderful word, he was devout. The Greek word is cautious, that was to say he was careful in carrying out obedience to the Law of God so he was justified and sanctified. He was looking for the consolation of Israel, the consoler who is the Manacham, that's the rabbi's word for the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit was on him. And we heard this morning from the testimony of Simeon how Simeon affirmed, verse 28, when he picked up the little baby Jesus there in the temple, blessed God. He said, "Now, Lord, Thou doest let Thy servant, Thy bondservant, depart in peace according to Thy Word for my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

We had the testimony of Joseph and Mary to the identity of their child. That was indicated when they named Him Jesus, as Gabriel had told them, for He was the Son of the Most High God who would be named Jesus for He had come to save His people from their sins. They also indicate their knowledge of who He was in presenting Him back to God, as much as Hannah did with Samuel, realizing this was a miracle child from God. They knew this was a virgin-born miracle child, literally the Son of God and they went to the temple and gave Him back to God. And so clearly they affirmed who He was, and so did Simeon.

A couple of things we didn't cover when we were talking about Simeon this morning that I just would like to brush over again, if I might. I want you to notice verse 30 and I think it's important just to throw this in if for nothing else for the tape down the road when people listen to the account of Luke and they might miss this. Simeon recognizes that God is a saving God. He says, "My eyes have seen Thy salvation." He connected salvation with God.

I think today we particularly connect salvation with Jesus Christ. In fact, if you were raised in Roman Catholicism, that's very much the experience you had. Now the way it works in Roman Catholic theology is God...God doesn't come across as a saving God at all, He comes across as a judging, condemning, very hard, very threatening God. And you certainly wouldn't want to go to God for salvation. Jesus in Catholic theology is gentler and a little milder but after all, He made a whip and cleaned out the temple and He had some pretty scathing maledictions for the Jewish leaders of His time and Jesus can also be pretty tough. Jesus spoke very forthright against sin and when He comes in the future He comes literally to blast sinners with the fury of His wrath. So Roman Catholic theology says, you know, if you want salvation and forgiveness of sin, the best person to go to is Mary, she's real soft and gentle and if you just go to Mary, she's very easy to win. You get Mary on your side and Mary will talk to Jesus and nobody can resist his mother, not even Jesus. Mary will convince Jesus and Jesus will convince God and He'll save.

Nothing could be more contrary to the truth. In fact, you will be even told that the saints would be more likely to be able to convince Jesus to soften up a little bit on you then He can talk to God about your plight. The fact of the matter is the Bible always presents God as a saving God. It's His nature all the way through Scripture. From the Garden when He said, "Adam, where are you?" He's been seeking to save. And that flows through all Scripture. I remind you of Luke 15, a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost son, every time they were found, all of heaven rejoices. God is by nature a Savior. We're reminded of that here. This isn't something foreign to God.

I keep thinking back to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 where he says, "If any man is in Christ he's a new creation," verse 17, "and old things pass away and all things become new." And then in the next verse, verse 18, "All these things are from God who is reconciling the world to Himself." They're not foreign to God's nature, God is by nature a Savior. That's who He is, God saves sinners. No other deity in all of sciences of religion is like that.

And not only is God a Savior but Simeon says God has prepared a salvation for the world. "He's prepared it in the presence of all peoples so that the Messiah is a light of revelation to the Gentiles as well as the glory of the people Israel." That's why later on in the gospels Jesus told the disciples to go into all the world and...what?...preach the gospel. There's never to be an isolated message, it was never to be a message that was only for Israel. And when God called Israel to be a nation, He didn't call them to be the end of the plan of salvation, He called them to be the means of it. He didn't call them so that they could receive it all, but rather so that they could take it all to the world. And that great reality is what Simeon unfolded here really for the first time, salvation would come to the Gentiles. But Simeon knew his Old Testament and he believed it. He was a fundamentalist, he was a literalist, he believed seriously the Old Testament. He believed what Isaiah said and Isaiah had prophesied that repeatedly that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles.

And then you remember his testimony. Both Joseph and Mary were amazed when they heard what was being said about Him. I may have said this morning, inadvertently, that Joseph is not called the father of Jesus, but here he is. I didn't intend to say that, I think it may have leaked out as I later listened to an echo of my voice in one of the services. But he is here called the father and mother, and of course in an earthly sense, not in the sense that he actually fathered the child. But they were amazed at the things said about Him. Obviously what they were amazed at was that salvation would go to the whole world.

And then something else amazing, as we just reiterate, verses 34 and 35, that with this child would come some negative things. There will be a negative response. There will be a separation. He would be for the fall and rise of many in Israel. He would be the dividing line, the point of demarcation. There would be on the basis of Jesus Christ many who would rise to eternal life and many who would fall to perdition by how they responded to Christ.

He would also be not only for separation but for opposition. He would become severely opposed, and we talked about that. There would be affliction, verse 35, a sword would cut to the very soul of Mary as she saw both her Son distance Himself from her, as she saw her Son mocked and finally murdered. She also would have a sword pierce her own soul when she saw her beloved nation Israel reject their own Messiah. And then finally there would be revelation...the separation, there would be opposition, there would be affliction, there would be revelation as...because of Jesus hearts would be manifest. In other words, hypocrisy would be exposed, apostasy would be exposed. And we talked all about that.

And that's essentially what the quote was saying that I read you from David Gooding, that when Jesus came there was a test going on. You can go back to Deuteronomy chapter 8 and you'll find there that the wilderness wandering was a test, it was a test to find out what was in the hearts of the people of Israel. And if that was a test, how great a test was the arrival of Messiah? How great a test. What God did in sending the Messiah was to bring the Savior, but at the same time He provoked the surfacing of the hidden rebellion, the hidden rebellion against God that was pressed under superficial Judaism and works-righteousness and legalism came out. Jesus pulled the lid off and all the filth of the hypocrisy and apostasy came to the surface to such a degree were they wicked, to such a degree were they apostate, to such a degree were they hypocritical that they actually executed their own Messiah and Savior. That's how profoundly wicked they were under the surface. It looked to religious.

It does so today. You can go to the land of Israel and you will see religion like few other places and you will see a serious orthodox Jews genuflecting at the Wailing Wall. And you can go into the little synagogues that are tucked here and there, you can participate by standing and listening as they genuflect by the hour through their prayers and cycle through their prayer shawls and as they fastidiously study the Law, as they go through all of the routine and ritual. And it all looks so religious

and it looks so as if it were devoted to God, and the fact of the matter is, under the surface is a frightening and deadly apostasy and hypocrisy that is clearly manifest in the fact that they will not acknowledge their Messiah. That's the true condition.

This is news, I think, to Mary and Joseph. I mean, they expected the Messiah to come and all the Kingdom promises immediately come to pass. But that isn't how it's going to be. Here we are two thousand years later, they still haven't come to pass and the heart of His people is still set against Him and therefore it's revealed to be a heart of hypocrisy and apostasy.

And so, Simeon testifies to the Messiah. This is the child. The Spirit of God confirmed it. Hear the whole story from Joseph and Mary. Then the Spirit of God inspired him and gave him this which is called the nuncdimittis, this wonderful hymn of praise which he identifies this little baby as the light of the Messiah, the glory of the Messiah coming to the Gentiles and to Israel.

The last human witness is introduced to us in verse 36. Let me read that to you. "There was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years having lived with a husband seven years after her marriage and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

Now here is the third in this little trinity of eye-witnesses to the reality of t he Messiah. And again, so little is said about her and yet behind the scenes so much is indicated here. And I hope I can kind of squeeze it in in just the next few minutes, I won't keep you very long tonight.

Let's start in verse 36. "And there was a prophetess, Anna." By the way, same as the Hebrew Hannah, no difference, no difference. In fact, if you go back to 1 Samuel 1 and look at Hannah, you'll see that she was characterized by prayer and fasting and so was Anna. The Hebrew name is a lovely name. In fact, you might want to think about that next time you have a little girl, the name means grace. And this Anna had been graced by God. She had been graced by God to be a prophetess.

Now what is a prophetess? It's not somebody who predicts the future, not a fortune teller, it's not somebody who works on the psychic hot line. It's simply somebody who is...somebody who speaks. She was a teacher. She was a speaker. She spoke God's truth. She spoke God's Word. She may have been a teacher of the Old Testament to other women. She is not a source of divine revelation. There is no revelation that has ever come from her, none comes in this passage. But she was known as one who taught, one who spoke.

If you go in to the Old Testament, there are only three women who prophesied. One is Miriam, Exodus 15, a sister of Moses. The other is Deborah in Judges 4, one of the judges before the monarchy in Israel. And the other is a woman named Huldah. You only have three and if you study Miriam and you study Deborah and you study Huldah, you don't find an ongoing prophetic ministry such as you do with the men who were prophets in the Old Testament who were largely life-long prophets. You find that they prophesied at some event or some moment or some important time.

To put that in to perspective, in Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 3 it refers to Isaiah's wife as a prophetess. Same way it does to Anna. If you study the book of Isaiah and the history around Isaiah, you don't have any record of anything that she ever said. So she didn't get any revelation from God that was intended to be passed on. There is no record that she prophesied on any occasion but she's called a prophetess and most Bible scholars assume that she is, most of the traditional scholars I should say, assume that she is a prophetess in one remarkable sense, and that is it says in Isaiah 8 that she is a prophetess and it says, "I approached the prophetess," the wife of Isaiah, "she conceived and gave birth to her son, the Lord said to me, 'Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.'" Not a particularly choice name in any age. And that name was prophetic, "For before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

Name him, you're going to be plundered, is what it boils down to because that's exactly what's going to happen. This nation is going to be plundered.

So, she is identified as a prophetess in the sense that her child is sort of a prophecy by name of what is coming. Now such use of the term "prophetess" is a title for Isaiah's wife and she knows that it doesn't necessarily indicate an ongoing prophetic ministry or any divine revelation. And again as you look at Miriam, Huldah and Deborah, they don't have any ongoing ministry described in Scripture, but God occasionally and at times did use women. Even in the New Testament the daughters of Philip prophesied, it says. And God does use women to teach. Occasionally using them in remarkable moments of redemptive history for remarkable purposes.

I say all that not to discount the purposes and role of women but only to emphasize that this is not the normal purpose of God. We know that, for example, the 39 books of the Old Testament, none was written by a woman. We know that Esther and Ruth are named for women but we have no indication that they were written by women, certainly not by the women whose name they bear. And of all the books written in the New Testament, none is written by a woman. Of all the Old Testament prophets with an ongoing prophetic ministry and revelatory ministry, none is a woman. Of all the apostles of the New Testament, none is a woman. Of all the elders of the church, none is a woman. And so God has designed as it's clear in the New Testament that He would work through the man who is given headship, as it were, even from Adam on, according to 1 Timothy 2, and that the woman would come alongside to help. But she would be delivered from any second-class status because though she is

not the head, and maybe not the spokesman, and not the one who speaks for God in the assembly of the people, she is the one who by virtue of raising children has the greatest amount of personal influence. That's why Paul says she'll be saved through her childbearing.

This dear lady is a prophetess and it could mean nothing more than that she was a teacher. And I have suggested that. Perhaps even a better option, it means at this moment in time she becomes a teacher. She becomes the prophetess in the sense that speaks of this child as the Messiah. And maybe it's this very moment, verse 38, when she came up and found Joseph, Mary, the baby and Simeon and was informed that she begins to speak of Him to all those looking for the redemption of Jerusalem and fulfills that title. We don't know. It could be that she in the past had been a teacher. It could be that it designates this great moment in her life.

Now she is further identified for us, and just an interesting note, Anna the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. Phanuel is the name Penuel, also Peniel...P-e-n-i-e-l, another Old Testament name...of the tribe of Asher. Now you say, "Is this important?" Yes it's important, I want to tell you why it's important. I can always find these kinds of things and they fascinate me.

Asher...does that name ring a bell? Asher was one of the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Remember the kingdom was split after Solomon's reign? Ten tribes went north, two tribes stayed south and the south was Judah and Benjamin, all the other ten tribes went to the north. In 722 B.C. the northern kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians. And that really was devastating. The ten tribes went north and in 722 B.C. Assyria came under Sargon II and destroyed them and carried them away captive. Their capital city was Damascus, the northern kingdom was taken captive and never returned.

Now have you ever heard anybody talk about the lost...the ten lost tribes of Israel? It's a very popular sort of anti-semitic theory. In fact, it goes so far as to say the ten tribes that were taken away captivity migrated across the north of Europe and came across the English Channel and ended up in England and it's us. That's what the Worldwide Church of God taught for decades and decades and others have taught. British Israelism it's often called.

So the question has always been, you know, if the ten tribes were all taken away, critics would say, and they never came back, when you come to the book of Revelation in the end time, you've got 144 thousand witnesses and you've got 12,000 from every...what?...tribe. So you can't take that literally if they're all gone.

Let me help you with that a little bit. This lady is long after 722 B.C. This lady eight centuries later is of the tribe of...what?...Asher. In 721, around 721, 722 when this event happened, the ten northern tribes did go into captivity but prior to that there had been a steady migration of those people down into the southern kingdom. If you know your history of the northern kingdom called Israel, you know

that there were how many good kings? Zero. They were deep into idolatry. There wasn't one good king. There was a remnant of believing Jews up there who weren't happy with that. And there were those who wanted to be a part of the temple. And so there was a steady migration downward because of the city of Jerusalem, because of the temple and because of the priesthood. They came to the south so that by the time the northern kingdom was taken into captivity, there were people from every tribe, families from all ten tribes who had systematically migrated south. In fact, in the thirtieth chapter of 2 Chronicles we read, verse 6, "Couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes and even according to the command of the king saying, 'O sons of Israel, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel that He may return to those who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria.'" There's a warning...turn back to God, turn back to God.

Part of that turning back to God was going south. In verse 11 it says, "Some of the men of Asher, and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." And that's just one little glimpse of a rather steady migration so that eventually all twelve tribes, people from all twelve tribes had migrated. Particularly that occurred also during the revival under the King Josiah, as well as throughout the years, as I noted.

So that when 603 comes or 602 and you have the first deportation of Judah, the southern kingdom, the north is gone now, the southern kingdom is taken in 603 to 597 and finally in 586 three deportations to Babylon, all those taken to Babylon represented all twelve tribes. At the end of 70 years of that captivity when they come back, there are people from every tribe that come back under Nehemiah to establish themselves in the land so that 700 or so years later this woman still knows she is of the tribe of Asher. And they knew it up until then. When they stopped knowing it was in 70 A.D. when all of the massacre of the Jews, a million one hundred thousand Jews were killed in the slaughter of Titus Vespasian in 70 A.D., the destruction of Jerusalem, and over the next series of years, 985 Palestinian towns were literally massacred. And in the massacre and destruction of the temple and the slaughter that followed, they lost the records, they were all destroyed. And today Jews don't know what tribe they're from. This lady was from Asher, just a little reminder that the ten tribes weren't lost, they're still there, they're still around. They don't know what tribe they're in, God knows...and there's still enough from every tribe that in the future there will be 12,000 selected during the time of Tribulation to preach the gospel.

By the way, Asher is a good name, it means happy. And Asher was the second son of Leah's maid Zilpah and the eighth son of Jacob, according to Genesis 29 and 30.

Well, let's meet this little old lady, daughter of a man named Phanuel out of Asher. She was advanced in years. In fact, she lived with a husband seven years after her marriage. Now they got married young, right? We've already gone over that. Mary typically, the virgin Mary would have been betrothed to her husband at the age of 12 or 13 and let's assume that this lady got married when she

was 13 which was pretty traditional. And she lived with her husband for seven years, till she was 20 and she was widowed. Then it says in verse 37, "As a widow to the age of 84." Now this is a little bit of a difficult translation here.

Some versions say she lived as a widow for 84 years, do you have that? Which would make her 104. That is possible that she was 104, it's also possible that she was 84. And you can sort of take your pick. This is an older person, even at 84...at 104, pretty remarkable. And what is especially remarkable about her is at the end of verse 36...verse 37, "She never left the temple." That's an emphatic statement.

Now, the only thing we can surmise from that, the reasonable thing to surmise from that is that she lived there. Around the temple grounds there were some apartments. They were normally dwelling places for priests, around the outer court. You know, when a priest came to do his two weeks of service at the temple, he needed a place to stay. They had quite a number of these, porticos around the temple. It just may well have been that because she was a widow so many years and because she was continually at the temple, they just decided that she was so devout that they would just provide a place for that widow in the temple and she never left. She wasn't there idly, she was serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

Now I would say this is fairly singular lady, wouldn't you? She didn't have a very complicated life. Never went anywhere. She was singularly and completely devoted to the service and worship of God. Again it doesn't say anything about her teaching here, that's why I tend to think that the prophetess idea had to do with this one moment in her life at the age of 84 or, if you will, 104. And she was in the temple all the time, serving through her prayers and fasting.

Fasting associated with prayer is a matter of self-denying focus. I would encourage you to think about the fact that fasting in and of itself doesn't have any particular virtue. Just saying "I won't eat." But when you are so consumed with a spiritual enterprise or prayer that you have no interest in eating, then fasting takes its appropriate place.

Here is a passionate woman. Here is a woman who all these years, I mean, it's pretty amazing. I mean, she's been doing this for 64 years? She's been doing this for 84 years? This is a fixture in the temple. Since the time of her widowhood she's been there? She's a part of this remnant. She's one who takes the Old Testament seriously.

What do you think she's praying about? She's praying for the Manacham, the consoler of Israel, the Messiah. She's praying for the fulfillment of Abrahamic promise, Davidic promise. She took the Old Testament seriously. She believed all the promises that filled the Old Testament. She believed in the coming of Messiah. And she's there and she's praying and fasting for it to come to pass. You know, believe me, the remnant knew they were small and they knew there was apostasy in Judaism. They

knew that the Pharisees were corrupt legalists. They knew that the Sadducees were corrupt liberals. They knew that it wasn't right to politicize the Old Testament like the Zealots did and think it all resolved in overthrowing the Roman yoke. They knew that. They knew what it was to know God. She knew God. She believed the Old Testament. And all the years of her life since she was widowed she apparently had no interest in marrying...no interest in marrying anybody else. I mean, you talk about spiritual devotion, this has got to be...this has got to be the most devout person on the pages of Scripture. You know anybody else that prayed and fasted for 64 or 84 years? Now if you're going to...if you're going to find a witness, this is a pretty incredible one. If anybody knew the mind of God and the heart of God, she must have.

And it says in verse 38, "At that very moment she came up." What very moment? The very moment that Simeon was uttering this prophecy. Herod's massive temple, this is a huge courtyard, thousands of people milling around and already Simeon who doesn't know Joseph and Mary, and Joseph and Mary don't know Simeon and God by His providence through the power of His Spirit brings them together and the whole story is told from Joseph and Mary to Simeon, the Holy Spirit confirms it and he launches in to this great testimony to the identity of the baby and at that very moment the Spirit of God providentially, powerfully moves this old lady who's there all the time into the presence of this little couple and the baby and Simeon. And again, Luke's typical understated way it just says "she came up and began giving thanks to God."

Well, there must have been something between "she came up" and "began giving thanks," like they told her who this was, right? Luke assumes that you would know that, certainly. Simeon surely knew her. Simeon was a righteous devout man looking for the consolation of Israel. Simeon was a temple goer. And anybody who had been there that long would have been well known and who lived there known to everybody and had been there literally for decades. And Simeon may have seen her and said, "Anna...Anna...Anna, come...come." Then it all unfolded to her and all that she had been praying and fasting for burst upon her mind and she began giving thanks to God. And all those many, many years of petition turn now to praise. Her praise is added to the praise of Zacharias, the praise of Mary, praise of the angels, praise of Simeon and she...she's filled with praise and thanks to God. She began giving thanks to God.

You can only imagine after all these many years of one focus in life, God and His glory, praying and fasting for the salvation of Israel. It says it at the end of verse 38, she was a part of the people looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. There wasn't going to be any redemption in Jerusalem until the Redeemer came. She had been praying and fasting all these years for the Messiah to come and bring the promised redemption and fulfill the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

And then she becomes the prophetess. "She continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." From then on this little woman who had spent all her years talking to God started talking to everybody else. God had answered prayer. The Messiah had come and

she knew who they were, believe me, she knew. She knew the remnant, they knew each other. They knew who the justified and sanctified believers were. She continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Everybody anticipating salvation, everybody anticipating that the promises of the prophets would be fulfilled, that the promises to Abraham and Moses and David would be fulfilled, she knew Simeon, surely, one of the godly remnant, she knew...she may even have known Zacharias and Elizabeth, that's speculation but possible, and now she has seen the Messiah.

God's timing is so amazing, so thrilling and so incredible. Her testimony, crystal clear, no questions. Not a moment experience that she began to doubt, but she continued to speak of Him to all those looking for the redemption of Jerusalem, the remnant.

And so Luke gives us three witnesses to indicate that this indeed is the Christ, the Son of God, the Son of the Most High, Son of David, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world...parents, old Simeon and Anna. There is a transition in verse 39, "And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city of Nazareth."

Something is left out there. You know what's left out? The whole story of the wise men. That will be for next time.

One other little note. In verse 40, here's a far greater testimony even than the testimony of Joseph and Mary or Simeon and Anna, just a note we'll get to. "The child continued to grow and become strong, increased in wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him." The word "grace" here, loving favor, the favor of God was on Him. The greatest testimony that will ever be given to the identity of Jesus Christ comes not from Joseph and Mary, comes not from Simeon and Anna, comes not from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the greatest testimony ever given to the identity of Jesus Christ in all His glorious perfection comes from the Father whose favor is on Him and who said of Him at His baptism, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." That is the greatest testimony to who is this child. And that testimony will unfold as the story goes.

Father, thank You for tonight, just a refreshing time to wrap up this great section of Scripture. Thank You for the blessing of music to encourage our hearts. And, Lord, we can only ask that You would put within us something of the spirit of Anna that we might continue to speak about Christ to anyone and everyone looking for redemption. Such a great word, redemption, to buy back, to redeem. The price of redemption has been paid, the death of Jesus Christ. Redemption is now offered to sinners. They can be bought back, as it were, from judgment, bought back from perdition, bought back from condemnation and God Himself who justly held them as guilty before Himself and to be condemned paid the price to buy them back. Father, help us to be like Anna. On the one hand our lives singularly devoted to you, on the other hand, continuing to speak of redemption to all who will listen.

Thank You for the testimony of Luke to the glories of this child, who is our Lord and Savior in whose name we pray. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).