

Touched by Jesus- Simeon and Anna

For the last nine years, from Christmas until Easter, we have studied the life of Jesus; His birth, His works, His ministry, His teaching, His parables, His love and caring, His crucifixion and resurrection as reported in the four gospels. We have studied each of the gospels separately and at other times collectively.

Today, we will begin our special series of studies on the life and ministry of Jesus by looking at individual lives whom Jesus touched as told in the four gospels. We will try to look at their background, what their lives were like before they found Christ, how they were changed, and what their lives were like after they met Jesus. In conclusion, each week we will look at how coming to Christ might affect us and those we love in similar ways.

Today we will look at two people who met Jesus very early in His life but were none the less dramatically impacted by their single encounter with Him. Their names are Simeon and Anna.

25 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. **26** It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. **27** Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple complex. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for Him what was customary under the law, **28** Simeon took Him up in his arms, praised God, and said: **29** Now, Master, You can dismiss Your slave in peace, according to Your word. **30** For my eyes have seen Your salvation. **31** You have prepared [it] in the presence of all peoples— **32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to Your people Israel. **33** His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about Him. **34** Then Simeon blessed them and told His mother Mary: "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed — **35** and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, **37** and was a widow for 84 years. She did not leave the temple complex, serving God night and day with fastings and prayers. **38** At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:25-38 (HCSB)

Imagine the scene with me for a moment. Just like any day, there were people going in and out of the temple complex. It was not just a place of worship, paying tithes and offering of

sacrifices, it was a gathering place. During the day, there were always people coming and going. That's why Paul always went to the synagogue first when he entered a town. He knew there would be people, Jewish people, gathered there.

Mary and Joseph had come to the temple to do what was "customary under the law." Maybe some people had stopped to look at Mary and Joseph's baby. Maybe they even commented on how cute their baby boy was. But, as far as we know, as much as is recorded in scripture, no one else had any idea who this baby was. No one else had even an inkling that God was among them. They just went about their own "business" as usual.

So what was so special about these two elderly people? How could they have had such insight into spiritual things that they saw what so many others could not see? **Simeon:** (3 clues)

Righteous and devout- Of course, this does not mean that Simeon was perfect. It does mean that he loved God and lived his life intentionally and consistently toward faithfully serving and obeying God. Though we know all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, it is possible and reasonable that one has grown so much in his faith that righteous and devout are accurate and reasonable descriptions of his character. God's word called Simeon righteous and devout.

Looked forward to Israel's consolation-

Israel had suffered much since the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death. They had rebelled against God and suffered severe consequences at the hands of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Various combinations of invasions, persecution, poverty, death and slavery had gone on for nearly nine centuries.

Though most Jews probably somewhat knew of prophecies relating to a Messiah who would come. Most of them probably by the time of Christ had lost all hope or didn't really care.

But Simeon, because of his faithfulness and obedience to God, sincerely hoped and looked for "Israel's consolation." It had been "revealed to him by the Holy Spirit" that he would live to see Messiah come and thus bring the opportunity for Israel to find relief from their bondage and oppression in their coming Savior.

Holy Spirit was on him Please note that the Holy Spirit was on and not in him. Prior to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did not reside in believers, but He certainly moved, led, taught, and empowered servants of God. (ex. Elijah and Elisha)

The Holy Spirit was on Him in that He knew Messiah was coming. And, it was the Holy Spirit who led Simeon to the temple that day.

Anna:

Did not leave the temple complex

It can be reasonably assumed that Anna had been given a small chamber to live in somewhere in the temple complex. Did she have no children or grandchildren? Or did they come to see her at the temple? All we know is that she was a prophetess and obviously one of great character and credibility. It would have been a great honor for anyone to have been given such a great privilege as to live in the temple complex. And what did she do in the temple? All we know.....

Served God day and night- fastings and prayers

She never left the temple complex. Did she have any other duties? We don't know. All the bible says is that fasted and prayed, day and night, every day. What a powerful and wonderful blessing she must have been to those priests who faithfully served! What a blessing it would be to have an Anna in the Lord's church today!

I'm not necessarily suggesting that any of you ladies come move in to the church. But I can realistically envision the powerful impact of someone or several "someones" praying all day every day in and for this church, its leaders, and its ministries, praying that God would reveal Himself in powerful ways igniting passion for Him and renewed hope in America's consolation.

Thanked God and testified about Him

At the very moment she met Jesus, she started praising the Lord and testifying about Jesus. How natural for her to know what she knew and see what she saw and to be compelled to begin doing the two most basic and important things we all should do as Christ- worship and witness. She thanked God then she immediately began to tell others what she knew. She didn't know a whole lot, but what she knew she unashamedly proclaimed to others.

Simeon and Anna were so impacted by their one encounter with the very young Jesus that they considered their lives completely fulfilled. Simeon basically said, "I'm ready to die. There's nothing else I want to see, learn, know, discover, find or do. I don't want to see the Grand Canyon or Niagra Falls. I don't want to be rich, famous or powerful. I'm content, fulfilled and complete."

Simeon and Anna found and knew who Jesus was because they were righteous and faithful. But they also found Him because they were looking for Him. And looking for Jesus wasn't just an occasional curiosity, it was a lifestyle priority. It mattered more than anything else that they see Him. They lived for that. They hungered for that.

I'm afraid many then and today just miss or even protest the identity and divinity of Christ. And, I don't think for most that it is genuinely a problem of belief. For most, it is a problem of unwillingness to surrender control, or Lordship of the individual's life from self to the Savior. They may cloak their rebellion in atheism, evolution, or even religion, but the problem is much simpler than that. It's just sin. Sin kept many from recognizing Messiah in the temple that day and sin will keep you from finding Him today. Sin then and sin now keeps many from not only seeing the Messiah for who He is but also from experiencing a real, life-changing, relationship with Him.

What can we learn from Simeon and Anna's life and experience with Jesus that would help transform us into truly devoted followers of Him?

Be touched by Jesus:

1. Righteous and devout

It's one thing to know and be known by Christ. It's another thing to live righteously and devoted to Him. Many, if not most, want the free ticket to heaven but are not willing to follow Christ on a daily basis. That's a shame because, even if they are truly saved, they are missing so much of what Christ has promised for the here and now.

I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance. John 10:10 (HCSB)

Jesus, in this verse, is talking primarily about the here and now.

2. Look forward to America's consolation

There are a noisy few in powerful places; government, media, education who are bent toward turning America away from God. They have accomplished much of their evil, Christ-hating

agenda. You must look forward to, hope, and pray for America to be restored to her blessed nation status.

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chron 7:14 (KJV)

Notice: “If my people.” God is not expecting the ungodly, haters of Christianity, to humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and repent. He is calling for us, the true church, those who are truly His, to do so. Then we will begin to see healing in our land.

3. Be full of the Holy Spirit

How do I do that? It’s just as much what you don’t do as it is what you do. Much of being filled with the Spirit is the result of how we walk, how we live. It is the result of the choices we make each day.

15 Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise— **16** making the most of the time, because the days are evil. **17** So don’t be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. **18** And don’t get drunk with wine, which [leads to] reckless actions, but be filled with the Spirit: Eph 5:15-18 (HCSB)

As we begin to deny worldly, fleshly desire we will begin to be more and a vessel that God can use and fill. We may not even notice, but others will.

4. Be faithful

You don’t have to camp out at the church, but you need to be faithful. If your car ran half the time, you’d get rid of it. If your spouse was faithful $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time, you’d get rid of him/her. Is it not reasonable that our Creator, Lord, and Savior require faithfulness of us.

1 Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship.¹ Romans 12:1 (HCSB)

5. Fast and pray

I, your pastor, am calling you the church to a new year of more frequent and fervent fasting and prayer. In scripture, fasting is often coupled with preparation for a time of prayer. We need to pray more spontaneously as well in organized, scheduled prayer meeting.

9 But as it is written: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has never come into a man's heart, is what God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Cor 2:9 (HCSB)

What keeps us from experience what God has prepared for us? Many things, but one great thing: lack of fervent, frequent, faith-filled prayer.

Who would be an Anna?

6. Worship God and testify about Jesus

Much of our zeal, courage and strength to testify about Jesus as we are commanded comes from our sincere, passionate, and faithful worship. As we give thanks and praise God, as Anna did, we will naturally become more filled with the Spirit which will lead to boldness and confidence in sharing our faith.

12 Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit. **13** Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways, and sinners will return to You. Psalms 51:12-13 (HCSB)

David understood this perfectly. He realized, through a spirit of repentance through worship, that he needed to get cleaned up, prayed up and stirred up, then he could and would appropriately lead others to the same experience.