

Wednesday, May 20th Bible Study Notes
Cedarville United Presbyterian Church Facebook Live
Text: Luke 2:22-38 (Anna)

Check-In:

- How are you feeling today? How is your self-care?
- Margie Donlon – 24 ways to help during quarantine
 - We've looked at several of them – see her article for more info
 - Joe Carter, *How To Manage Stress During The Coronavirus Crisis*

Tonight: looking at anxiety as we look at Anna's story

- Anna shows us what it means to simply live a faithful, ordinary life before the Lord
- Society teaches that bigger and greater and more is better
- It is easy to fall into guilt about whether we're doing enough for God.
- Easy to fall into anxiety with the chaos around us now – lots of anger, lots of changing rules, lots of disagreement about what rules should be followed
- How do we live in such a way that anxiety does not overcome us – especially since we are told this is going to be a marathon and not a sprint...could be a second wave...vaccine may be 18 months ago...how effective will it be?

Who Is Anna?

- Anna was from the tribe of Asher:
 - Asher was one of the tribes of Israel taken captive by Assyria in 722 BC
 - 2 Chronicles 30 – "some men of Asher...humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem."
 - Anna comes from a line of people who were faithful
- Anna was called a prophet:
 - Not because she could predict the future, but because God called her to tell His truth
 - The OT mentions four prophetesses: Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron; Deborah, the judge; Isaiah's wife, who is unnamed; and Huldah, whom King Josiah consulted.
 - The NT refers to Anna and the four daughters of Philip in the book of Acts as prophetesses
- Anna was a widow:
 - After seven years Anna's husband died, which could have been a sentence of poverty unless there was a kinsman-redeemer, like Boaz was to Ruth, or family to care for her.
 - After her husband died, she spent a lot of time fasting and praying in the temple.
 - It is possible Anna lived in one of the temple rooms in the outer court. In each temple there were rooms set aside for priests when they came to do their two weeks of annual service. Not much more than a spot on the floor for a bed and a roof over her head.
- Anna spent great deal of time in worship:
 - Temple worship took place daily in the morning, early afternoon, and evening
 - Scripture read and proclaimed, sometimes the psalms were sung.
 - The rest of the time she spent in private prayer and regular times of fasting.

Living Like Anna

- Anna's life is simple but profound—she was continually faithful, was not driven or striving to achieve (contrast Martha), and was steady and devoted
- Anna can teach us what it means to take some deep breaths and continually trust God

- Anna was an ordinary woman. Spent time in prayer and worship and fasting, and therefore she was ready to do the work that God had given her when the time arrived.
- Easy to say, “but what did she achieve?” What she achieved was closeness with God, and an opportunity to proclaim who Jesus was and would be.
- Do we orient our life, thoughts, words, and actions to God and His word? Our lives aren’t going to have constant mountaintop experiences, but we’re instead going to spend a lot of time walking on the prairie.
- We’re going to have less in common with David or Moses or Deborah and more in common with Anna. A steady, stable walk with God.
- We worship God in everything we do in our daily lives—porch-delivering groceries, helping with food pantry, visiting someone at a nursing home (once it’s okay again), mowing the lawn for an elderly neighbor, sending cards or letters of encouragement, etc. And our own personal practices—praying for others, studying scripture, reading a daily devotional.
- Serving the Lord is living each day as a Christian and taking the opportunities that come our way for service to others and for proclaiming Christ to those around us.

How To Move From Anxious To “Anna”

- Anna had a lot of reasons to be anxious – widowed at a young age, in poverty and depending on others for necessities, being female in that time period gave her almost no rights
- We have reasons to be anxious right now as well:
 - Lots of anger in society – protests, violence, threats
 - Changing rules, disagreement over which rules to follow
 - Getting restless and tired of being at home – want to “go somewhere” but also must make choices about risk
 - What makes you most anxious?
- Not as easy as “let go and let God” – can sound trite and can make you feel guilty if you can’t
- What Anna did – she continually leaned into God...day by day...nothing dramatic
- Things we can do:
 - Care for our bodies – trying to be calm after 3 cups of caffeinated coffee isn’t going to work; are you eating well, exercising or stretching, going to bed at a normal time, drinking enough water, getting outside if possible while still social distancing? What is going well and what can you do to care better for your body? (see PDF under the notes in the Stay-At-Home tab for the deep breathing cards)
 - Care for our minds – trying to be at peace after watching news coverage all day isn’t going to work; are you limiting media and finding creative, interesting things to do? What is going well and what can you do to care better for your mind?
 - Care for our souls – are you engaging in prayer and Bible study? Lectio Divina?
- Though they all work together, caring for our souls is vitally important – one time of prayer and Bible reading isn’t going “cure all that ails us.” But as Mike Bickle says, “Put your cold heart in front of the fire of His Word, and the fire will get into you in time.” That also could be anxious heart, fearful heart, etc.
- We are going to end with Lectio Divina...let me know if it would be helpful to have some videos of those on YouTube or posted to our Facebook page. Also see the Stay-At-Home tab for a PDF on Lectio Divina and more passages.