

I. An Easy-to-Miss Story

This is an odd scripture to be reading in the middle of July. Do you know why? Because this story we are looking at and reading today is tucked in at the end of the “Christmas story”. We don’t usually think about the 9lb5oz baby Jesus in the summer months. And we aren’t going to delve into the baby Jesus this morning, but I mention this because that is the context for our story today. The Story of Anna. Anna is there when Jesus is brought to be presented to the temple as a child.

If you are visiting with us today, then you should know our series called Faces of Faith—a summer journey through some bold & lesser known stories in Scripture...they are the faces of our faith. Those who inspire us and remind us that we all play a role in shaping God’s story of redemption and grace. And today that face is Anna

How many of y’all have noticed that all of the faces of faith I’ve shared so far are women? I’m glad you noticed...how ironic that all the lesser known stories of faith are mostly women. I’m going to include a guy or two in the weeks to come, though.

When we think of the Christmas story, we usually picture shepherds, angels, maybe even the wise men. But tucked just after all of that—almost like a postscript—is Anna. A prophet. A widow. An elder. Someone who shows up in three verses... and then disappears.

Why is she here?

Why did Luke think *her* voice mattered?

We know so little about Jesus' childhood. There's the birth story, and then things go quiet until he begins his ministry as an adult. So the fact that this scene is included must mean it is significant. Luke is intentional—he gives Anna a name, a title, and a voice. Which means we should pay attention.

When we meet her in Luke's Gospel, she isn't performing miracles. She doesn't confront kings like the prophets of old. She's not flashy or loud or dramatic. Luke simply tells us: *she never left the temple, but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day.*

And it is Anna who sees the Christ in Jesus and began sharing it with all those who were looking towards the redemption of Jerusalem.

That's what we know. She is an older woman and a prophet and she sees Jesus.

We often think of prophets as people who burst onto the scene with thunder and fire. But prophets are also the ones whispering prayers when no one else notices. The ones who light the candles to hold vigil in the night. The ones who hold grief and hope together in their bodies.

And let's be honest: our world doesn't always honor that kind of presence. We reward noise, speed, and spectacle. But Anna's story reminds us that there is a deeper kind of power—found in the slow, rooted wisdom of those who have learned to listen to the earth, to Spirit, and to what truly matters. Hers is the kind of faithfulness that doesn't perform, but endures. The kind that doesn't shout, but *rings true*

See one of the things I've learned since being apart of Grace...is the term "crone."

Nancy and Sherri introduced me to the terms of the different archetypes or enegeries of

women when they came dressed up a crone's to Kakki's baby shower. See there are three female energies or archetypes or phases...maiden, matron (mother), and crone. I'd heard of maiden, and matron before in fairytales and wedding party line ups... but I had not heard the term crone, nor had I given much thought to the "phases" of women's lives in this way. And I certainly hadn't thought of these stages as a spiritual progressions that they are.

These stages, often used in myth, folklore, and spiritual traditions, represent not just biological aging, but evolving spiritual and communal roles.

The *Maiden* is full of curiosity and becoming—she's learning to trust her voice.

The *Matron* /mother...is the nurturer and doer—giving life, raising families, holding communities together.

The *Crone*? She's the elder. The wisdom keeper. The spiritual guide. The seer.

So this week, I was sitting with Anna's story, still unsure of what this story was telling me...and as you may know, I'm in the "thick of life's demands" phase, between career and parenting and wondering who I am outside of those two demands... and when someone asked me on Thursday at beer and hymns who I was preaching on Sunday, I said Anna....But I'm not sure where I'm going with her story yet. Anna's energy isn't jumping out at me. And then a wise women next to invited me to notice the crones! She's a Crone! Speak to us Crones!

And suddenly it clicked.

I had been expecting Anna to be loud like the other faces of faith. And Anna is showing us another face of faith. A wisdom that sees.

Anna shows us what it looks like to age into spiritual authority.

To become the elder who holds memory, hope, and clarity for the community.

The Crone isn't a woman past her prime—she's a woman who has *grown into her power*.

She doesn't need a microphone to speak with authority. Her presence alone speaks volumes.

She carries the memory of her people. She isn't distracted by the trends of the moment—because she sees with deeper eyes.

In Indigenous and ancestral traditions, the Crone is honored as a **wisdom keeper**, a **fire tender**, a **seer**. She blesses the children—but she also blesses the community. She doesn't just remember what happened. She remembers why it *matters*.

And that's who Anna is.

She shows us that growing older isn't about fading out. It's about stepping into a new kind of voice—a prophetic voice.

A voice that sees the holy in the ordinary.

A voice that tells the truth when the world would rather rush past it.

And Anna doesn't just see the holy—she names it. She recognizes something sacred in the child before her. She sees not just a baby, but salvation.

That's what makes her a prophet. Not because she predicts the future—but because she tells the truth about what already is. That's the ministry of recognition.

In a world in chaos, Anna says: God is already here. Her ability to see divinity in the ordinary is part of what makes her prophetic. She has trained her soul to notice the holy when it appears,

Our culture tells us that our value diminishes with age. That your body, your voice, your presence becomes less relevant. But the gospel tells a different story.

The gospel says: your wisdom is prophetic. Your presence is holy. You've been in the temple—day after day, year after year—through heartbreak, through loss, through seasons of silence. And all of that has formed you.

And we need you not just as mentors—but we need you as spiritual guides, truth-tellers, and vision-holders.

We need you to bless the children.

We need you to name the holy.

We need you to tell the truth when others are too afraid to speak.

As we move through different phases in life, there is often a natural and necessary pulling back.

A desire to rest. A sense that you've "done your part." Maybe even a longing to hand the baton to the next generation.

I deeply honor that instinct. And it is clear that even in old age you are integral to the divine story still unfolding.

Theologian Father Richard Rohr says that there are two halves of life... that the first half of life is about building identity—roles, responsibilities, reputation. But the second half? It's about releasing those things to step into deeper freedom. Deeper clarity. Deeper joy.

He also says “a journey into the second half of life of our own lives awaits us all, Not everybody goes there, even though all of us get older. And some of us get older than others.”

The second half of life isn't about getting smaller. It's about getting wiser and freer—less attached to ego, more connected to Spirit.

Now getting there and crossing that threshold...that I can't tell you about yet. But I can tell you there are lots of fabulous people that have made that journey. That now embody the wisdom and ability to see the world more connected to the Spirit.

And I do think it looks like the Prophet Anna... who doesn't just see the holy she names it. She recognizes the sacred before her...

And I do know that we need you in our lives, and in our communities...

So...who do you know that embodies this kind of wisdom? What does it look like?

Blessing All Phases

To the young ones, still discovering who you are—your questions are holy, and your voice matters now.

To the ones in the thick of life's demands—your presence is sacred, even when it goes unseen.

To the elders among us—your wisdom is a prophetic gift, and we need your voice more than ever.

May we become a church that makes space for all of these faces of faith—because every phase is part of God's story.

God of every season and every soul,

You have always worked through the lives of ordinary people—

those whose names we know, and those whose names have been forgotten by history but never forgotten by You.

You are the God of young dreamers and old prophets, of risk-takers and reluctant leaders, of loud voices and quiet presence.

You are the God of every phase of faith—

from trembling first steps to bold proclamations,

from wrestling with doubt to resting in trust,

from silence in the shadows to shouting in the streets.

Thank You for the faces of faith that surround us—

in Scripture, in history, and in our pews.

For Shiphrah and Puah, who resisted injustice with courage.

For Anna, who stayed faithful through the long waiting.

For the daughters of Zelophehad, who dared to speak up.

For Queen Vashti who dared to say no to a king.

Wherever we are on the path, call us forward, Holy One.

When we are tired, give us rest.

When we are afraid, give us courage.

When we feel alone, remind us that we are part of a great cloud of witnesses.

May our lives become living prayers—

embodied acts of faith, hope, and love

in a world that needs all three.