

Hey friends, welcome to season 11 of the Sweet Selah Moments Podcast. We are so pleased you found us. Sharon and I pray that these episodes encourage you to learn alongside us how to be still and get to know the God who loves you fiercely. In this season, we are studying the stories of Jesus, particularly as he interacted with women. Today, in episode 153, Faithfully Waiting, we are talking about Anna. Sharon, tell me a little bit about her and where in the Bible we find her story.

I'll tell you what, talk about Faithfully Waiting. This woman waited all her life basically. It's a beautiful story, Nicole. And she appears right after the birth of Jesus. But by the time we see her, she's been alive for over 80 years. So she lived most of her life in obscurity, like most of us do. And I've been looking at the Psalms lately because I'm teaching a Bible study on it. And Psalm 103, 15 to 17 says this, it says, Our days on earth are like grass. Like wild flowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows and we're gone, as though we had never been here. But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear him. And I thought, well, that's a little depressing that I won't be remembered. Although with the love of the Lord enduring and heaven waiting me, it's not that bad. But you know what? Little Anna, who was obscure, is still being remembered. What is that? I just love how much God loved and loves the obscure. You know? And so we're going to learn about Anna today, first through reading the Word, and she'll be introduced that way. And then we're going to just talk about her because she's a fascinating character and one of the first women that we meet after Mary and Elizabeth in the beginning of the Gospels. So I'm going to start and read Luke chapter 2, verses 21 to 24, and then you will skip over the Simeon part of the story, which is about a guy, and this is Jesus in directions with women this year, and read 36 to 40. And we're reading in the New Living Translation. So here it is. Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. Then it was time for their purification offering as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child. So his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, if a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord. So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord, either a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Faneuil from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of 84. She never left the temple, but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. When Jesus' parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

That's it. That's Anna. She shows up very briefly, and then we never hear from her again. I wonder how long she lived after she held Jesus and told everybody about him,

because obviously she had a job to do, and she did it. She was telling everyone, so she wasn't shy. Or maybe she was shy, but she wasn't shy about this.

I don't know. I know. I did wonder. I wonder how long she did live after that, because the one section I had looked at said that she could have been 84, or as old as 104, depending on where if she had lived that long after she'd been married, or if they were counting her whole years altogether. Well, good grief. Wow.

She could have been really ancient.

She could have been very, very old.

And you know what? When you earn over a hundred year status, people do listen to you, because they're kind of stunned, right?

Right.

And surprised.

Right. You are living history. You've seen so much in your lifetime.

Right. Well, let's just talk about it for a minute. Just kind of what we learn about her. Kind of a sad story, I think. Right?

Yeah.

Only seven years. I have had 46 with Ray Gamble and I don't feel like I've had long enough yet.

That's so sweet. I know only seven years. And I wonder if in that time they had any children because I'm not mentioning the story.

They're not. And I'm assuming they didn't because she never left the temple.

Right.

And it is possible she raised kids in the temple, I guess. But basically, a woman back then, if they didn't marry again, had no way to support themselves. They just did not. And in Anna's case, there must not have been brothers and sisters that would have taken her in as the maiden aunt or what. Well, she wouldn't have been a maiden aunt, but the widowed aunt or sister or whatever. There seemed to be no one to take her.

Right.

So I see her as alone, very alone. And yet, God calls her prophet, isn't that fascinating?

She's one of only a handful of women in the Bible that are called the prophetess. There's only a few others. There is Mariam, who was the sister of Moses, Deborah, the judge, Hulda, the wife of Shalom, and then Isaiah's wife and Philip's four unmarried daughters are the only other women that receive the title of prophetess in the Bible. That's pretty cool. That's a very tiny little club.

It's a tiny club. There may have been more that didn't make the Bible, but yes, yeah. And so a prophet speaks about God. They forth tell and they foretell. So they're talking to you about God in the present, and they're talking to you about God in the future. So my thought is if Anna never left that temple, Nicole, and she spent her life fasting and praying, she made a life choice early on not to be bitter but to be better.

Oh, wow.

Right?

Yeah.

I mean, you could be like, are you kidding me? Seven years, probably no kids, obviously no other family, and destitute. But here she is talking about the Lord, praying, fasting. She basically devoted her entire life to God.

She did. It's true there. There doesn't seem to be any bitterness in her. And I had written that down too, that she seemed full of hope. She was so excited when she saw the baby, when she saw her Messiah. She could have been better, you know, not having a husband and then waiting so long to see this Messiah. She didn't say, finally, there he is. I've been waiting till I'm 100. She was so full of joy. And I love how she got to proclaim that in the temple. What a special moment for her.

It was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. And then, as a prophet, she didn't shut up about it either. You know, I find that fascinating about the birth story. The shepherds, when they saw Jesus, they went and told everybody too. It's like God chose the people with mouths. Well, everybody has mouth. The people that used their mouths to talk.

Yeah, they'd be most likely to get out there and get the word spread. Yeah.

I've always loved that about the shepherds. They were, you know, accosting people practically. Guess what? We just saw the Messiah. And it's the same way she told everyone about it. So God used her in such a beautiful way.

Well, and think about it, if she was at the temple for all those years and she never left the temple, it said, and then she was always fasting and praying, people were used to

seeing her there. People were probably used to having her pray for them or whatever her role was at the temple. So I think she would have been a very honored and respected person. That if she said, hey, this is the Messiah, her words would have carried some merit of...

So much weight.

Yes, okay, if Anna says it, it's probably true.

Right, exactly. She spent an entire life being faithful. And sometimes you think, what's the point? Waiting on God, like she waited all those years. There's a testimony in that trust that is beautiful and it makes your words worthy of listening to. So I just, I love how obscure Anna is being talked about today by you and me. And I really like to meet her in heaven.

I know, and it's, her life was a faithful living. It wasn't like she did anything extraordinarily, extraordinaire. She just faithfully waited, served, loved God, prayed. Do you know what I mean? Just her faithful life built so much into this story of being able to tell people, he is the Messiah, because of the way she lived.

Yeah, you're right. It's not like we have the Book of Anna, right? You know, she didn't write gobs of stuff down, right? She didn't, you know, heal lots of people, right? You know, it wasn't flashy, I guess.

Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. So that's beautiful. It is beautiful. Well, each time when we look at the women of the Bible, because this is our very first one, and Anna's our very first one, we're going to look at the woman's story first. And then the next thing we're going to do is, why do we learn about Jesus? We look at it from the perspective of Jesus. And I thought, well, Sharon, Jesus is an infant in this story.

I thought the same thing. But he's here.

So in later episodes, we will hear how he responds to things. At this point, he's not responding much because God made flesh, humbled himself into a baby that was helpless, couldn't move, you know, on his own. I mean, if there was a fire near him, if his mama didn't lift him away, he'd be a goner. I mean, his legs didn't work yet, right? Well, I guess they kicked, but they didn't work to get him out of danger.

To run, yeah.

Yeah, he couldn't eat on his own. I mean, a human baby is so helpless, and that is how God came first. Helpless. Talk about humility.

What a position he put himself in as God, to be in that, in the most vulnerable place you can be as a human, to be a baby. He didn't come in as a warrior king right away, or as someone who was strong that didn't have to rely on parents, that may or may not get it right.

And these parents didn't have servants. They didn't have backup. Mary and Joseph were miles and miles away from their family, on their own, no job initially, because whatever carpentry Joseph had in Nazareth wouldn't have followed him to, you know, Bethlehem. So he had to start over again. So he didn't just put himself in the hands of a human mother and father. He put himself in the hands of a poverty stricken mother and father.

A humble mother and father. They didn't have a lot of margin for error, you know? There wasn't a lot of buffer there. But they were faithful. They brought him to the temple and followed the requirements of the law. I think that's so sweet. We see in the little things, again, kind of like Anna, that they didn't have all the big, flashy extra things to take care of Jesus. What they did have, what they could do, they did faithfully and quietly.

And, you know, that's, God always seems to choose the least likely. You know, Aaron knew how to talk, but God chose Moses to lead Egypt, to lead them out of Egypt. David was the youngest kid, all the things. So I love how the Lord is really not impressed by credentials and, you know, money. He looks at the heart.

It's not what we think we can offer God. It's what he can do in us with our little, like the widow with the two penns, like our little offering. Exactly.

And Mary and Joseph were his choice. So the other thing I love about this story, sort of from God's perspective anyways, is God kind of reassured Mary and Joseph at the temple, both with Simeon, the man that was a prophet that spoke about Jesus coming, and then with Anna. You know, even though of course they knew Jesus was miraculously birthed, they still were living in dire straits. They still went through the messiness of birth. And I think that it would be easy to start doubting, right? I mean, pretty soon they're going to be fleeing to Egypt. That doesn't seem like a great plan that before Jesus is two years old, they're trying to kill him, right? So I think it would be easy for them to fall into kind of, is this really from God? Is this, you know, what is going on? So at eight days old, they're reassured again. Oh, yes. God has his hand all over you and your baby. And I love that reassurance.

That's so beautiful. And you think about what happens eight days postpartum, where I think the reality of having a new young human kind of hits you really hard as a mama. I'm like, what am I going to do? So maybe that was a perfect time for her to hear from this beautiful older prophet, to come over to her and be like, oh, this is the Messiah. That would have been a really special moment, I think, for Mary.

And a reminder of the joy.

Yes.

Right? Because she's tired. Mary's, I'm sure, exhausted. They had that long journey.

Oh, yeah.

And then I can't imagine giving birth in a stable.

No, it sounds horrible.

I know.

I just figured out nursing without your mothers and your aunts and people to help you. I mean, all the things a new mama has to go through by herself in a foreign land. It's just, it's amazing. Mary was such a hearty little thing.

She was, bless her. So anything that strengthened her and reassured her is gift. Gift indeed. And it's like every step of the journey, even though God allowed it to be hard, every step of the journey, there was reassurance. And isn't that our God?

Oh, yeah.

I've had that over and over again in my own life, that when it gets really, really tough and I'm feeling drowning-ish, there'll be a little something that says, I'm watching, I'm still here, and you're mine.

You're not alone in this.

Right.

And then he has a plan. He's such a kind God.

He is, he is, he is. So I love that. So that's kind of what I learned, you know, about Jesus, about God, from this. Did you have anything else, or that was kind of your thing, too?

More God, because Jesus isn't infinite at this point, but I just love how that whole time he was with Anna, he sustained her all those years, and he provided this safe and beautiful life for her at the temple. Because like we were talking about, we don't know if she had children. And back then, if a woman didn't have a son to care for her or a family to go back home to, she was in big trouble. Like she had no other way to make, to keep herself alive, to feed herself, to shelter herself. So I said, it's beautiful that God

brought her to the temple. And they were, it's a safe place for her to live. I don't know about food, how she got food, but she fasted a lot. So maybe she didn't eat very much, but I'm assuming that someone provided for her. Maybe people she prayed for, maybe the temple did. But just that she didn't seem too bothered by her needs. And a little blurb we saw about her, that God, it was mentioned that she was taking care of. I think that's so beautiful that God sustained her all those years, freed her from having to worry about it. So she could just pray and fast and just focus on God and be with the God that she so desperately loves and was looking forward to seeing his son.

You know, we might meet her in heaven and she might say, don't feel sorry for me. I had 80 or 100 years where my focus could be God himself.

And how many of us can say that without being, I thought about that. I said she had such a beautiful, uncomplicated life.

Yes.

I was like, oh, poor thing. Like that's it. She's fasting and praying with no husband. That sounds kind of lonely and bleak. But then if you think about those on those sweet Selah days or those moments where you're just completely sitting in the presence of God, it is such a beautiful moment. I don't get them enough. Imagine a life, 80 years just with God, serving him, praying, seeing him move and people around you like, my gosh, she got such a good glimpse of heaven.

She did.

She did.

She really did.

What a beautiful life God gave her.

So she might not want to trade us.

No. She's like, no, it's okay. You can keep all that chaos.

I'm cool. I love it.

So sweet.

Oh my goodness. Well, I love this story. And I love the stories of Jesus. And every episode is going to be so much fun to call it.

It really is.

So how we're going to end these is we're going to each share a story ourselves. And I thought this time it'd be fun to talk about old people, because Anna was old. She was. And valuing them, and what older people who have influenced us. So I'm going to share a story of a woman that influenced me my freshman year of college. My parents told me that as long as I lived under their roof, I could not drive to West Point to see Ray, who was a cadet. I think they wanted to just kind of keep the reins on me, but I was desperately in love with Ray Gamble. And so I moved out from under their roof so I could go visit Ray. Ray, and I mean, it was so safe there. They had guards on the hotels where the girls stayed. They were on like the eighth floor, but anyways, it was like Rapunzel in a tower. But my parents didn't know that, so I respect it now. I didn't then, but anyways. So what do I do? I don't have money. So I saw an ad for a lady with multiple sclerosis who needed someone to live with her and could have free room and board for helping her get ready for bed and making meals for her, things like that. So I met Georgia Smith, and she at first to me was this shaky old person.

Because you're this young spry.

Right. Who had a lot of trouble in her life. Her husband had left her with the multiple sclerosis and everything, and she was very much alone. But what happened over the course of a year is she morphed into not an old lady that I had to help, to a friend. I did not know you could be friends with old people. I thought you were just very polite to them. She became such a good friend. We shared our hearts with each other. We really did. And she let me pray with her and draw her closer to the Lord as well. And, oh my goodness, it was such a learning growing year for me, not only in the practical nursing care one has to do that I've used over and over with other older people now. But more importantly, to see the soul. Mrs. Smith was not that broken body. Absolutely not. Mrs. Smith had a soul, and she was she was funny. She was delightful. And it's the first time I really saw past the exterior and saw the soul. So that's that's my story of of growing up a bit and understanding that the real person is not their flesh. It's it's somewhere inside. There really is a spark of life that God gives you that represents a real person.

That's so important because I think we kind of stay in our little age group sometimes. You know, all of us, as we grow up, like you're with your your peers and you're in class and school. And you're kind of like, oh, well, that that's an older person. Well, that's a small child. But really, we all are the same inside and we all have these beautiful stories. And you do kind of see the exterior first and go, well, no. And we don't all live close to our grandparents and great grandparents anymore. We don't live in the same house as them. Yes. My parents and grandparents grew up in the same house as their grandparents. So they had that wisdom. They had the generations. We don't have that because our jobs make it so that people can live anywhere now. So there's kind of that breaking up of the family, which is sad. I know it's good to find an older person to get to know.

How about you? What's your story?

Oh, my great aunt, my great, great aunt Frances.

Great, great.

Great, great. She was 104 when she died.

Oh, speaking of old age.

Speaking of old age. So she might have been the same age as Anna. She was such a neat woman. When we moved to New Hampshire, we ended up buying her home from her a few years later. But she was one of the first relatives that lived close to us because we were military. And my dad was. And so we moved all over. We were never close to family. And it was really special to have a relative close by. Every Friday night, we'd have beans and like little smokies, or she'd make us waffles in the world's oldest waffle making machine. And she'd make them one at a time. And then she'd give that to my dad, but always my dad first. Always the man first. And she'd have my mom go get your man a cup of coffee. And she'd look at him and she'd go get him some coffee. She was so funny. And we'd all watch that one person eat the waffle, then the next person eat the waffle. So it was always an experience.

Oh, so it was a long meal.

It was a long meal.

Oh, wow.

And we always hand washed all the dishes afterward. But she was such an amazing woman. She was 104. She had outlived her husband, similar to Anna. She'd outlived her child. Her daughter had died from breast cancer. She'd outlived her friends two times, she said, because all her friends had died. She made a new group of friends in their 80s when she was 100, and then they had all died. So she's like, I've outlived two groups of friends. And she could have been a pretty bitter, miserable, true thing, but she wasn't. She took it as her mission to be a prayer warrior. She said, I'm still here because God still has something for me to do. She's like, I'm ready to go home, God. I'm ready anytime, but you still have me here because you still have something for me to do. So she modeled such a beautiful life of praying for people, faithfully praying for people. She would pray for missionaries too, and she really sparked this love of missions in my heart when I was younger, because she would faithfully pray and write letters and emails to all the missionaries. So she didn't waste away and sit away in her rocking chair, grumpy that she was still here. She still lived.

That's so beautiful.

She still used her time. She reminds me a lot of Anna, just faithfully waiting to go home to be with her husband and her daughter. But while she was here, she wasn't going to, you know.

She wasn't going to do nothing. She prayed.

She did.

And boy, when we get to heaven, we're going to wish we prayed more. I'm convinced when we actually see the barriers that are broken down in prayer.

That's going to be powerful.

Yeah. Oh, what a beautiful testimony.

She was so fun.

I love it. Oh, my goodness. Well, this was so fun, and we're so glad you guys are joining us as we look at how Jesus interacts with women. And next time, we'll talk about him when he's a little older and he's more able to interact. So, but let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, I just so thank you for faithful, quiet examples of women who love you and who can teach us so much from the way they live their lives. Lord, help us remember we don't have to be fancy to be loved by you or to be used by you. And use us, Lord, this week and the week's end. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thanks for listening in today as we studied God's Word and learned more about Him. If you ever need us to pray for you, please reach out to us at Nicole at [sweetselah.org](http://sweetselah.org). If this podcast has encouraged you, we would be so honored if you would take a minute to leave a review or share it with a friend. If you would like more information about us, please go to [sweetselah.org](http://sweetselah.org) and have a look around. And of course, please join us next time for another episode of the Sweet Selah Moments Podcast. Next time, we're doing episode 154, When God is Silent. Take care, friends.