*“Twelve Extraordinary Women – How God shaped women of the Bible and what He wants to do with you” --Reviewing our March 7th, 2017 study*

**“ANNA: THE FAITHFUL WITNESS**  --Chapter 7

Pastor MacArthur not only points out to us in this chapter but also helps us to see that Anna was “**A LIVING EMBLEM OF** **GOD’S FAITHFULNESS** to His people.” The Word ‘emblem’ caught my eye! Most emblems often do catch one’s eye and catch one’s attention! An emblem is a creative, often colourful collection of concise parts with a specific design. Emblems are used as a heralding device, a “distinctive badge” that draws our attention to a distinctive reality.

The first emblem that comes to my mind is the “Coat of Arms of Canada.” Canada’s “Coat of Arms” is a creative emblem of intricate concise parts all coming together to signify “Royal Authority.” It’s a “distinctive badge,” an emblem, embossed on our passports that calls our attention to a distinctive reality. Our passports carry within it distinction, “Royal authority.” Our passports identify us, protect us and secure assistance for us as Canadian citizens as a distinctive reality.

Now that we have studied Anna, a second emblem now comes to my mind. I will call this emblem the “Claim of Messiah.” A believer’s “Claim of Messiah” is a creative emblem made up of intricate concise parts revealed in the Word of God that all come together to signify “God’s faithfulness to His people.” It’s a “distinctive badge” that not only Anna wore but we wear. It’s a **“LIVING EMBLEM”** engraved on our believing hearts that calls our attention to a distinctive reality. Our believing hearts not only carry within it distinction, “God’s faithfulness to His people” but also carry the “living” power and authority of the triune God. (Jn.14:23) Our believing hearts “sealed with the Holy Spirit” (Eph.1:3-14) also identify us, protect us and secure us as heavenly citizens.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police wear a “distinctive badge” of rank that heralds: “Peace and Order,”

while on the other hand, Anna: The faithful witness wore a “distinctive badge” of rank that heralded: “Salvation and Blessing.”

With this in mind, I have to ask the question, “What then does **“A LIVING EMBLEM”** of God’s faithfulness look like? How would I describe a faith that is “living?” How could Anna be “a genuinely extraordinary woman?” How could she be a faithful witness for so many years in one place? Let’s take a brief look at Anna “as she went about her *daily* normal routine”….

**A** ll faithful believers in Israel were expectantly awaiting the Messiah, looking diligently for Him.

**L** ittle did they realize that the “conquering king” that they were looking for would be born in a stable.  
**I** t was the “humble” “nobodies” in Israel that God chose to be key witnesses of Jesus’s humble birth

**V** ivid understanding of who Messiah was came from God to Mary, Joseph, shepherds, Simeon & Anna

**I** n just three verses, Luke 2:36-38 we see the “final witness” Anna, who recognized Christ’s significance

**N** ever mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, Anna’s brief debut in Luke established a distinct emblem..

**G** od’s FAITHFULLNESS to His people!

**E** mblems are a heralding device, a “distinctive badge” that draw our attention to a distinctive reality

**M** essiah’s coming, salvation from sin, and future blessing of Israel was Anna’s distinctive hope & reality

**B** y God’s grace, Anna wore a “distinctive badge” that heralded: “God is faithful to keep His promises.”

**L** uke introduced Anna as a “prophetess’ whose heart was prepared for the coming of the Messiah

**E** ncouragement and instruction from the Word of God faithfully fell from Anna’s lips to other women

**M** ost likely, Anna had a reputation as a gifted teacher and a faithful encourager in the temple

**O** f the “tribe of Asher”, Anna was part of the believing remnant scattered from the northern kingdom

**F** ew faithful Israelites from each of the ten tribes migrated south by the hand of God (2 Chron.30:6-11)

**G** od still hasn’t rejected His people! He is faithful to keep every one of His promises (Rev.7:4-8; 14:1-5)

**O** ld (84 or 104 yrs.) and widowed, Anna selflessly served God for more than six decades in the temple

**D’** ivine providence graciously made provision for Anna to live in the very presence of God day and night

**S** he was singularly and completely devoted to the service and worship of God through prayers/fastings

**F** asting with prayer shows us Anna’s consuming attitudes of: faith, humility, seeking God, trust & belief

**A** nna’s “AMAZING FAITH” stemmed from the fact that she believed all the promises that filled the O.T.

**I**  *wonder what our lives would look like if we took God seriously that He is coming again(2 Peter 3: 8-18)*

**T** here was no doubt in her heart and in her mind that the Messiah was coming & it would happen soon

**H** er HOPE like Eve’s, was for the Seed who would crush the serpent’s head. (Gen. 3:15)

**F** ull of expectation she longed, like Sarah, for the Seed of Abraham to bless all the nations of the world

**U** ltimate SOVEREIGN TIMING! Anna “happened by” when Simeon took Jesus into his arms (Lk.2:25-35)

**L** istening to Simeon’s declaration that ***GOD IS A SAVING GOD***, even to the Gentiles, Anna gave thanks!

**N** o doubts crossed her mind! Spending a lifetime hiding God’s Word in her heart, she knew truth!

**E** very petition turned to praise! By faith, Anna knew God had answered her Bible saturated prayers!

**S** alvation has come!! Finally, after all the fasting and all the prayers, He “had come in flesh and blood.”

**S** o, from then on, at every opportunity, Anna continually spoke about Christ for the rest of her life!

The “CLAIM OF MESSIAH” was a distinctive emblem that Anna not only wore “externally”, but was an internal reality; engraved on her heart and lived out in her life. This is what made her a “LIVING EMBLEM!” She continually and faithfully pointed others with her lips and her life to the distinctive reality that “God is faithful to His promises!” As a faithful witness and “heavenly citizen” she not only heralded: “Salvation and Blessing” but she lived it out! **By God’s grace** are you, like Anna, wearing a “distinctive badge” that is heralding: “God is faithful to keep His promises?” What are your lips and your lives proclaiming to others?

Our Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord has saved us and is continuing to save souls! As Simeon testified in Luke 2:30, *“God is a saving God!”* ***God is working to seek, save and to sanctify the lost!!*** Anna “literally could not stop talking about Him.”

Ladies, who or what is always falling from your lips? Are you always talking *about* others **or** *to* others about God? Are you faithfully talking *about Him* and *for Him* and pointing others *to Him*? Jesus Christ Himself is full of “grace and truth.” Are gracious words always falling from your lips? (Lk.4:22) Are you speaking the truth to others in love? (Eph. 4:15) Are you going to be like Jesus and tenaciously “testify to the truth” about Him? (Jn.18: 37) Are you a faithful witness “testifying about the Light, so that all men might believe through Him?” (Jn.1:7) Are you a woman of the Word, searching the scriptures so that you can faithfully testify about Jesus Christ alone? (Jn.5:39)

Anna’s distinctive hope and reality was for future blessings for Israel! Anna “took the Word of God seriously. She knew in her heart that the Messiah was coming. She believed ALL the promises that filled the Old Testament! Without any doubts whatsoever her first and foremost prayer was that it would happen soon.” (pg. 138)

Ladies, how are you praying? Are you saturating your hearts and minds with scripture and praying God’s Word and will? Are you a passionate, prayerful woman eager to not only talk to others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His first coming but also passionate to talk to others about His second coming? “The Lord is near!” He is ready to return for His own! (Phil.4:5; James 5:7-11; 2 Peter 3:7-18) Do you believe Jesus Christ is “coming quickly” as a conquering King who will rule and reign upon this earth? Is your first and foremost prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus?” (Revelation 19-22)

Oh to be like Anna, “a faithful witness to the grace and glory of God.” (p.200) Apart from Christ and the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, neither she nor you or I could ever be faithful witnesses of the gospel: Justification, Sanctification and Glorification! Let’s not forget that God always uses imperfect vessels whose lives are “hid in Christ” to “proclaim the excellencies of Him.” (1 Peter 1:9-12) I have had this quote in my Bible for years, “We live out our faith NOT by our might but by His power.” (2 Corinthians 4:7) God’s ongoing faithfulness in our lives moves and motivates us, His people to be faithful!

If you had an illustration of the “Coat of Arms” emblem in front or you, and the “Claim of Messiah” emblem in front of you, you would notice that there is a “crown” signifying “sovereign kingship” at the top of both emblems. You would also notice in the illustrations in front of you that the entire “Coat of Arms” and the entire “Claim of Messiah” rests on a foundation of “rock bed” truth at the bottom of both emblems. For Canadian citizens we rest on the “rock bed” truth of our history as the foundation of our nation. And as “Heavenly citizens” we rest on the “rock bed” truth of “His tory” as the foundation of our faith and His faithfulness!

Anna is just an ordinary woman like you and like me who faithfully pointed others and continues to point us to “the glorious Saviour whom she loved and whom she served.” Anna’s extraordinary faith seen in these three verses in Luke have clearly pointed us to **the faithfulness of our God…“who is truly the extraordinary one!”** O to see how He graciously worked in Anna’s life to be faithful right where she was at, as she went about her normal routine day after day! Anna has pictured 1 Corinthians 10:31 so vividly for us, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God!”

Ladies, it is my ongoing prayer that by God’s grace we too would be women of **“living** **faith”** continually influencing others towards our **“living God”** (Heb. 3:12), to the **“living Word”** (Heb.4:12) and through the **“living HOPE”** (1 Peter 1:3) that we have in Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord -the “**living way”** (Heb.10:20) and by God’s grace and help we would be a **“living emblem”** of God’s faithfulness, salvation and blessing in our lives! (Luke 2:36-38)

“***Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,”*** *(2 Peter 3:7-18)*

Christyn