

THE TWELVE VOICES OF



CHRISTMAS

— WOODROW KROLL —

The Twelve Voices of Christmas
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ANNA

VOICE OF THANKSGIVING

LUKE 2:36-38

Anna's people were oppressed and burdened, but she was not discouraged. Any day now God would send the Redeemer He had promised, and she would see Him. One day, as she was praying in the temple, she looked across the courtyard and saw Him – just a baby. And suddenly she knew He was the Promised One. With her spirit soaring, she lifted up her voice in praise and thanksgiving.

The Lord took my husband from me when we had been married for only seven years. But in exchange, He gave me Himself. I was 84 when this story began, and during all the years of my widowhood, God had been much more to me than a husband.

In my sorrow I fled to Him, and He comforted me. In response, I decided to give my whole attention to Him and His work, not to myself. So I dedicated myself to Him – in prayer, in praise and in fasting.

The temple was my constant and most loved resort. I was there daily and never missed a service. I kept all the customary fasts and additional fasts as God led me. I spent hours in prayer each day. God gave me strength beyond my years, and I used that strength in thankful praise to Him.

I was not lonely. People who frequented the temple were familiar with my face and my dedication to my Lord. Among them God had given me friends who had the same kind of joy and expectation I had; they were almost like family. Each of us was scaling a pinnacle of hope and expectation.

We were living in dreadful times. We

saw the moral and religious decay in Jerusalem and in our country. Even in the temple we were surrounded by corruption. People had lost hope, and a sense of darkness and gloom overshadowed their lives.

We earnestly longed for deliverance. Surely, we thought, the redemption God had promised was near! Surely the Messiah would come soon! That expectation put a spring in my step and a radiance in my life.

We had to be very circumspect when we greeted each other or met together, however. This was, after all, a land ruled by Herod. If he had known we were talking about a coming Messiah, about a liberation from his rule, he would have silenced us quickly.

Then one day, while I was in the temple, the most wonderful event of my life took place.

I was standing in the courtyard praying. People were coming and going as they always did. I happened to look up, and across the courtyard I could see a man and his young wife enter the temple carrying a little baby.

No sooner had they entered the courtyard than an old man approached them. I could see them talking, but at first I couldn't hear what they were saying. I noticed the pretty wife look at her husband and then look back at the old man and offer her baby to him. He took the child in his arms and then held him above his head.

He raised his voice, and from across the courtyard I could hear him praising God. I couldn't catch everything he said, but he did mention something about peace and about seeing God's salvation.

I walked through the portico and up the stairs to the level of the courtyard where the couple stood. I approached quietly and cautiously. By then the old man had finished his prayer and had handed the baby back to the mother. He was talking to her, more quietly, so I couldn't hear what he said. But I could see a look of concern come over her face.

There was something different about this child – I just knew it. God had given me supernatural insight at other times, and I sensed that this was happening again. That awareness, plus the unusual behavior and words of this man, came together in my mind in a burst of understanding. This baby was God's salvation. He was the Messiah!

When I arrived where the couple stood, the old man had just finished his conversation with the mother. Without pause, I raised my hands in prayer, giving thanks to God for bringing this baby into the world.

What a celebration it became! Then I introduced myself. "My name is Anna, the

daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher." When I told them I was a prophetess, the couple looked surprised, though they understood what that meant. On certain occasions God had divinely inspired me, by the power of His Spirit, to speak His word to others, to make His will known.

It had been many years since the voice of prophecy had been heard in our land. God had been silent. In fact, we had heard no great prophets since the days of Malachi, hundreds of years before. This young couple was probably astounded to learn that prophecy was again being heard in our land.

I am sure they understood the import of my voice of thanksgiving and praise that day. When I had seen that child, God had opened my eyes. This was the Messiah! I didn't understand everything about Him, but I knew He was the key to our redemption. My words were a doxology to the Father, who had sent Him, the One who fulfills His promises.

After the couple left, I stood in silence. I had looked for and longed for the coming of this promised Redeemer for so long. And now He was here. I was an old woman, but the sight of that baby had given me renewed strength and courage to go on. I would tell about Him for the rest of my days.

I was eager to tell my friends, the ones who earnestly hoped for His coming. I spoke first to a godly woman who often prayed in the temple. "Praise God!" I said. "The Messiah is here. I have seen Him with my own eyes." She looked at me in wonderment. Then I told her the whole

story, and relief and joy came over her. When she left, she seemed to be walking on air. Others reacted the same way. Soon a wide circle of people knew that the Messiah had come.

I don't remember everything I said as one of the twelve voices of Christmas, but I do remember repeating many poems of praise from the great singers of Israel.

"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms" (Ps. 95:2).

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless his name" (Ps. 69:30).

"I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. 116:17).

God gave me the great honor and privilege of being the first one to proclaim the Redeemer. My faith was at last changed to sight, and my hope was turned to certainty. The waning years of my life were devoted to praise and thanksgiving.