

Joy in the Glory of the Lord

Isaiah 35:1-10

Introduction

So far in this Advent season, we have seen the hope we have in the Son of Man, the assurance that He will return and establish His kingdom in power and glory. We have seen the peace we have with God thanks to the forgiveness of sins through the broken body and shed blood of the Branch of Jesse. We saw how we will live in His total peace in His righteous kingdom at the end of the age. Today, our focus is Joy.

A Picture of His Coming Kingdom (Isaiah 35)

Verse 4 says, *Behold, your God will come with vengeance*. This is obviously a picture of the end of the age, when Christ returns as the Conqueror, who will *rule with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15)*. We see a land that was a wasteland, now made fertile and lush. This is the remaking of creation. We see infirmities and illnesses done away with. This is because we will each have an incorruptible body. We see a highway called the Way of Holiness. No unrighteous person will be there. We see no lion or ravenous beast. All will be peace and safety. The ransomed of the Lord are singing with everlasting joy. The multitude around the throne will sing praises to God for eternity.

We Long for that Joy

Yes, this is a great picture. This is what we hope for, where we will live in God's peace forever. We look forward to that joy. Advent is a time of looking forward to the coming of the Babe in the manger but it is also looking forward to His coming at the end of the age. Oh, how we long for that joy. In fact, the hymn we sang for the opening, "Joy to the World", was not written as a Christmas hymn. It's a celebration of the coming King at the end of time. There is no mention of Mary, Joseph, the Baby, manger, or anything we usually associate with Christmas. It is about how the Lord remakes and rules the world with truth and grace. This is a picture of the exalted, conquering Christ.

We Live in Affliction

Life in this world is nothing like this. This fallen creation is a wasteland. We are weak, with infirmities and illnesses. The way of the world is not holiness but the opposite. This world is anything but safe. But there's more to this passage when we dig down below the surface.

Jesus Applies this Prophecy to Himself

In our Gospel lesson, we heard Jesus apply this to Himself: *"Go tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:4-5)*. He's saying that this prophecy was fulfilled in His first coming. How is that possible? Was it just a partial fulfillment?

Another Way of Looking at Isaiah 35

Luther says: *This chapter speaks of the establishment of the church out of the remnants of the synagogue. By the Spirit the prophet promises many grand things concerning the church, things which under the form of the cross are hidden from the world; and therefore the promises must be understood under the guidance of the Spirit (LW XVI 25:299).* All these blessings are blessings the church experiences now while it is in the wilderness.

Invisible Victory

In **Revelation 12**, we see the story of the woman and the dragon. The church must hide from Satan in the desert. The church is portrayed in **chapters 19** and **21** as the Bride of Christ and is illustrated by the New Jerusalem, a glorious city. When in the desert, the white robes of righteousness are hidden underneath rags to show how the glory of the church is hidden from the world today. The world looks at the church and sees something that is despised. But just because our victory is hidden doesn't make it less real.

Real Victory

- We see the fertility of the church in the gifts of the Spirit, obedience, love, humility, etc.
- Christ is revealed to eyes formerly blind to spiritual truths.
- The spiritually deaf hear the Gospel.
- Idolaters who limped along in superstition now walk upright in faith.
- Spiritually dry land is watered by the Word of God.
- The Highway of Holiness is where people walk by the light of the Word.
- The redeemed will walk there and spend their time in perpetual and eternal praises for the Redeemer will abide forever.

The church is redeemed of the Lord, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and goes on happy and rejoicing in gladness. The joy we have is very real as the victory is real, the victory won for us by Christ on the cross 2,000 years ago.

Means of Grace

We partake of all these blessings when we partake of the Lord's Supper. As He feeds and nourishes us on His body and blood, He opens our eyes to the joys that are ours through Him. And we rejoice in His glory, the glory of the cross. Rejoice in the glory of the Lord.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
