

Second Day of Advent
December 4, 2023
Isaiah 35:1-10

The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

35 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. 3 Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. 8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Have you ever seen those videos where a child or an adult that has lived with color blindness receives the gift of those specialized glasses that allow them to see color for the first time? The tears of joy, the shock and disbelief of seeing color for the first time that gets expressed with the shape of their mouth and the entirety of their body ... it's as if they have received a gift beyond anything that they'd imagined!! If you haven't seen one of these videos, I encourage you to do a search for one and watch it ...

This year this line from Isaiah speaks to me: *"5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy."* This overwhelming sense of joy that comes to a person when something that seems "impossible" suddenly becomes possible speaks to me this year. As we enter into this amazing season of Advent, this time of celebration as we prepare and anticipate both the earthly birth of Jesus as well as his second coming as Christ, my prayer for us is that we will experience it in a way similar to how we might hear it for the first time. What seems to be impossible is what actually happens ... God loves us so much that he humbles himself, is born of human flesh, and lives among us (Emmanuel), as well as promises to return at the end of days to bring us all into the fullness of God. Sounds impossible, right?! And yet it's what happens, and what will happen. So try to hear this Good News not as someone that's hearing it for the 10th, 35th, or even 75th time, but as someone who's eyes are being open to see it for the very first time. Let this joy wash over you. Marvel in the miracle of it all. And prepare yourself to experience the Joy of Christmas!

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