

Text: Isaiah 35:1-10

Theme: Rejoice

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Old Testament Lesson of Isaiah chapter thirty-five verses one through ten.

Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today and are rejoicing in the gift of good health. Today, we light a candle that is different than all the rest. It is pink rather than the usual blue. It is that way because it is the candle of joy. We light it today to remind us of the joy that Christ gives to us in our lives. What gives you joy in your lives? I am sure that list could be endless. There are lots of things that give you joy. For example, your moms and dads give you joy in the things that they do for you, grandparents and great grandparents in the gifts and advice that they give. We can have joy because of the good health that we have and all of the blessings of food and drink that God provides. What else gives you joy? In our text for today, we see how Christ gives us joy. How does Christ give us joy? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Rejoice, why? Some rejoice in physical blessings

The people of Israel in Isaiah's time had very little joy in our text for today. The chapter before our text ends on war and the complete and utter destruction of Israel because of their sins against the Lord. The people were fearful. Their hands and knees trembled because of the terror to come. Yet now, the Lord comes to them, not in judgement but with words of comfort. He says, 'Be strong. Strengthen your feeble hands and your weak knees.' They can rejoice because their desolate, war-torn wasteland is made into a fertile land that is overflowing with good things. The effects of their sins are removed and they can rejoice once again. They rejoice in what the Lord did for His people.

The same is true of us. We rejoice in what the Lord has done for us and continues to do for us. There are many things in the world that we can rejoice over as they bring us joy. As we gather today with friends, we can celebrate the friendships that we have with them. We can rejoice in the family that we have been given, that we have moms and dads who love and care for us. We can rejoice in our teachers, that we have been well educated and learned the things that they would have us learn like math, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. We can rejoice because of the physical blessings that we have been granted. That we have food and drink in abundance, that we have the freedom to vote for the people that we want to represent us rather than living in a dictatorship where we have no say at all. We have indeed been richly blessed by God.

But we are snared by sins/fear/foolishness that causes us to tremble

Yet, even in the midst of our rejoicing, we often have weak hands and knees that tremble. We tremble because we know that even in the midst of all of these blessings, we are still stained by our sinful natures. We all have those pet sins that we love to do time and time again that we are ensnared by. Our Lord should indeed come to us and utterly destroy us because of our sins. These sins rightly should bring judgement upon us and make our lives into desolate wastelands as we suffer the effects of living in a sinful world, surrounded by sinful people.

Even the good blessings that we rejoice over are affected in this wasteland. We see all of these good blessings that we rejoice over fading away, even as our sinful nature strives to put its trust in them. As much as we may enjoy and rejoice over their friendship, alas friends can, and often do, change. They may tell rumors or gossip about us and quickly lose our friendship. Moms and dads are not always around forever to care for and protect us. Our good health? That very quickly fades away as we get older as aches and pains set in. Our money seems to never last and is quickly gone. The wonderful education we have received we quickly forget about as our mental faculties fade away. Our sinful nature tries whatever it can to place its trust in a wide variety of things but they all fail and fade away. People, our morals, our

health, our money, our possessions, the world that we live in, everything becomes a desolate wasteland scarred by sin and its effects.

Rejoice that Christ has come. The Lord prepares the salvation of His exiled people, Redeems you by grace alone and has prepared for you a new way of life.

In the midst of this sin filled, desolate wasteland, the Lord promises that the wasteland will be made new again. More than made new, the wasteland will flourish and be fruitful once again. The Lord does for the people what they, and we, can never do for ourselves. He prepares a way of salvation for the people called the Holy Highway. That way of salvation is found in and through Jesus Christ. God takes on our flesh. Jesus enters into His creation; He enters into our sin filled wasteland to make it new again. In the wasteland, He takes the desolate wasteland of sin, undoes all of its effects, and makes it flourish with new life. He makes the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, Jesus even raises the dead to life again. Ultimately, Jesus undoes everything that could ever make us weak and fearful as He goes to the cross bearing our sins, taking upon Himself the full wrath of God in our place, and shedding His blood to give us the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation of our souls, and life forever with Him.

Because of the work of our Lord, our wastelands of sins are undone and we have new life. We have salvation forever. God has given us new life in and through Jesus Christ. Rather than coming in judgement of our sins, He lays that judgement upon Jesus and continues to bless us and give us even more reason to be glad. He has destroyed sin, death, and the power of the devil. He has given us new life. He strengthens our weak knees and feeble hands with His Holy Spirit, that we can live as His people in His mercy, grace, and forgiveness. As we prepare for His coming this Advent season, both Christmas and His second coming, let us rejoice that the Lord does indeed strengthen our weak hands and feeble knees in the eternal joy that He has given to us.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.