

Joy to the World

Advent

[Isaiah 35](#)

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then 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; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; ¹⁰And 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.

REFLECTION

As we meditate on the Advent theme of joy this week, it's interesting to consider that what might unify us is the *scarcity* of joy in our world. As Christians this should give us pause, since we are meant to be people marked by joy. Isaiah tells us in verse 10 that "everlasting joy shall be upon our heads." **How do you typically strive to fill the gap between what you have and what is missing?**

Isaiah reminds us that joy is found when we realize there is a greater plan at work. When we feel the presence of purpose (C.S. Lewis), we are able to experience joy even during difficult times. We can better understand how Jesus was able to feel joy on the cross (Hebrews 12) when we move the focus from ourselves to what God is doing in the world. **How have you experienced joy in the midst of despair? How did it give you insight on your calling to be a co-laborer with God?**

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is a great representation of what Isaiah describes as joy. Scrooge moves from someone focused on himself to one who brings new life to desert and parched areas (v. 1,6). Like Scrooge, our joy is found not through our pursuit of it, but by pursuing what God is doing. Consider how this candle of joy can unify us when live out what Isaiah is saying. As we encounter people this week who are hurting, alone, or feeling forgotten, let us be the ones who stop, listen, write a note, call, or help in whatever ways we can. **Reflect with your group or with a friend how God has met you with joy when you have joined him in the work he is doing in the lives of others.**