

Advent: Jesus, Our Joy Guaranteed!

Jerry Cisar — December 11, 2022

Text: Isaiah 35; Matthew 11:2-6; James 5:7-9

Introduction

Advent reminds us of our finitude, our limitations. We wait upon the Infinite One, the limitless One and therefore we have joy!

Jesus is the guarantee of our hope, so even though we have longing that remains unfulfilled, we have **joy** in the waiting. *Jesus' guarantee sustains joy in our waiting.*

LIVE THE STORY

In the month of December, our community groups take a break. However, the following questions are great to discuss with someone you know.

- How is it different to think of Advent as the start of the Christian year compared with how we usually think of the New Year?
- What might the metaphors in Isaiah 35:3-7 that describe the wilderness experience mean in our lives?
- Do you ever have times when you know what you ought to do, but just can't. How does Isaiah 35 and Matthew 11 speak to that?
- Have you had times when, like John the Baptist, your expectations of what following Jesus would involve got smashed? How has God used those unexpected experiences or how is He using them?
- What are the things that might keep you from experiencing joy? Have you said them aloud to God in prayer? How might this advent reflection on joy inform these?
- Where is the highway, or way of holiness, which Isaiah describes? Is there anything surprising about that for you?
- How does the harvest represent joy? Why is patience essential to joy in waiting for the harvest?
- How might the Judge standing at the door be either good or bad?

I. Promised Joy (Isa. 35)

- A. Joy and rejoicing presume sorrow and sighing, just as the beauty of the dawn presumes the darkness of night.
 - i. In the desert, being parched preceded gladness. In the wilderness, emptiness or barrenness preceded rejoicing and shouting for joy.
 - ii. Israel had plenty of sorrow and sighing from the captivity until the coming of Christ.
 - a) Isaiah 9: 2-3, 6-7
 - b) It's little wonder John had questions about whether Jesus was the One to bring all this.

II. Surprising Joy (Matt. 11:2-6)

- A. John's expectation of Isaiah's promise was different than his experience.
 - i. John may have missed that all the things Isaiah describes happen in the wilderness.
 - ii. The highway will be *there*, in the *wilderness*!
 - a) We will learn obedience in the wilderness, not in places of abundance. (Heb. 5:7-8)
 - b) We expect highways to be in the places of prosperity and abundance, not the places of lack and suffering.
- B. Elizabeth Packard's path to "an indescribable emotion of joy" was through a wilderness.
- C. The joy God has for us is surprising because we can have it while we wait and because it will come out of what seem to be the most unlikely circumstances.

III. Waiting Joy (James 5:7-9)

- A. Joy comes with the harvest! Yet, we must be patient.
 - i. Patience stands in contrast to grumbling.
 - ii. Philippians 4:4-5
- B. The Judge is standing at the door.
- C. Ours is a waiting joy