

## **Joy of the Redeemed**

### ***Isaiah 35:10***

December 17, 2023

Read all of Isaiah 35

#### **Verse 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 gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

While I don't preach that often, it seems like it's often the case that when I do, that life gets extra crazy leading up to the event, perhaps in an attempt to steal joy, even as I prepare to preach on joy. Maybe that's you today as well. Not the preaching part, but the extra crazy life part. I know our lives are already so often too busy, and then when you add the Christmas craziness to the mix, we can be at risk of this season of the year being more likely to steal joy rather than adding joy to our lives.

I had Jason read the entire chapter this morning because it's important that when we look at the Everlasting Joy that's referenced in verse 10, that we also consider the context of this verse.

Ivan Mesa says about this chapter in Isaiah, that “Nestled between two chapters of judgment and invasion, Isaiah 35 is a chapter suffused with joy for God's weary people. Despite their sin, God hadn't given up on them. They were still his redeemed people. Sighing would soon give way to singing, and sorrow give way to joy.”

My hope and my prayer this morning is that no matter the season of life that you're in, that in this advent Sunday the week before Christmas, that this passage and this message helps us all to turn our eyes upward, toward the Lord our redeemer. And that with the angels who appeared to the shepherds on that glorious night over 2,000 years ago, that we too will be filled with great joy at the good news that is still relevant and just as good today as it was then...that Jesus Christ is born, and that He reigns, and that He lives, and that He cares for you and for me. That is good news...and that should bring us joy.

Which brings me to the three points I have for you this morning:

4. The Promise of Redemption
5. The Source of Everlasting Joy
6. Joy for This Day

### **1. The Promise of Redemption**

Over the last two weeks we have taken time to look back and reflect on God's Perfect Plan for His people. Not just looking back to the birth of Christ, but to thousands of years before His birth to the promises and prophecies about what was to come. Early tellings of the story of Christmas.

As we look at this passage in Isaiah 35 and consider the advent theme of Joy this morning, for me, the question I asked about this passage is, "where does the everlasting joy mentioned in verse 10 come from?" What makes that kind of joy possible?

In our human nature it makes sense to think that Joy comes through blessing or times of ease, when we're not burdened by the cares of the world, or the stresses of life, of the fears or anxieties of our own heart. When life is good, then Joy is most easily felt and experienced.

But that's not what we read here in chapter 35 of Isaiah. We start out in the wilderness in verse one. In a dry and weary land. The theme of the prior chapter, (chapter 34) is God's judgement on the nations, and then chapter 36 deals with the Assyrian's invasion of the nation of Judah. It's not exactly a recipe for Joy! Or so it seems.

The answer to where does our joy come from is, I believe, given to us at the end of verse 9 and beginning of verse 10 when we read that "The redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing..."

Our ability to obtain gladness and joy in the Lord was made possible by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, when He ransomed by soul from the power

of hell. The theme of redemption is, as we know, a central theme throughout the entire biblical narrative:

- God's redemption is seen in the rescue of Noah and his whole family in the ark and through the waters of redemption that cleansed the world of the wickedness that plagued it.
- It's seen in the Abrahamic covenant when God promises to Abraham that He will make of him a great nation, making a covenant with Him that God would fulfill.
- It's seen in the scene with Abraham and Isaac when God provided the ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's place
- Even after 430 years of captivity, we see God's merciful redemption as He leads His people from captivity in Egypt and away from the grip of Pharaoh, through the red sea and the waters of redemption.
  - In Exodus 6:6 we read this incredible promise from the Lord to Moses when He says, "...I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment."
- God's redemption is seen in the promise God made to David that He would establish an eternal kingdom through David's lineage.
- We see it in the old testament sacrificial system and the shedding of blood through animals sacrifices that points forward to Christ and His redeeming work on the cross, once and for all.
- And at Christmas time every year we reflect on the miracle of the incarnation and the arrival of God made flesh to be with us and to show us the way to salvation.

God has always been faithful to the Redeemed. The Ransomed. "These ancient words from Ex. 6:6 emphasize the gracious initiative of God as the only final explanation for the joy of his people." - ESV Study Bible

Which brings me to the second point this morning:

## **2. The Source of Everlasting Joy**

As we focus on Joy this morning, I'm not going to spend time wrestling with the differences between happiness and joy, and whether it's okay for a believer to pursue happiness, or whether a believer can ever lose joy. There has been much written that can be easily found surrounding these

discussions. But I *would* like us to consider two very basic questions this morning:

- First, what *is* Joy?
- Second, where does Joy comes from?

For both of these questions, I am going to point you toward resources from John Piper that were helpful to me in my study for this morning.

In an article from 2015 entitled, "How Do you Define Joy," Piper explained that words can have different meanings based on how they're being used, but if he were to define Christian Joy as the Apostle Paul used it in his letters, he would define it this way:

"Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world." - John Piper

In a much abbreviated version of the article that accompanied this, the definition he provides breaks down into five key components:

- **A Good Feeling:** Christian joy is described as a genuine emotional experience, distinct from ideas or convictions, and it is not something one can control or decide to feel. It happens to you, which means that the Bible is filled with commands that we do things that are immediately outside our control to do — commands to rejoice, to fear, to be grateful, to be tender-hearted.
- **In the Soul:** Joy is an experience of the soul, the immaterial part of my personhood, that is distinct from the physical effects it may have on the body. The body's reactions, such as tears or a spring in one's step, are not joy itself but rather responses to it.
- **Produced by the Spirit:** Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, as mentioned in Galatians 5:22–23. The inability to produce joy independently underscores its dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **A Sight of Jesus:** The Holy Spirit induces joy by enabling individuals to see the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ. He doesn't just flip a switch, and you rejoice with no mental content whatsoever. The Holy Spirit is given, according to John 16:14, to glorify Jesus Christ, which means the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of my heart to see the beauty of

Christ. When I see Christ in all that he is doing, and all that he is, then my heart is drawn out in joy towards him.

- **In the Word and the World:** The Holy Spirit works through both the inspired Word of God, as well as in the world. We see him in his gifts and in people. We see him in his gifts of nature. We see him in his gifts of food and in all of the good things that our Father in heaven gives to us. The Spirit gives us eyes to see the beauties of Jesus that call joy up out of our hearts.

So how might we define Joy? "Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world."

That definition speaks as well to where Joy comes from, but let's get a bit more specific for a moment.

If I asked the kids 12 and under right now where does Joy come from, I bet I could get some pretty good answers. What do you think kiddos? For those 12 and under, where does Joy come from?

In a devotional by John Piper titled "*Seven Sources of Joy*," he points to the joy that seemed to be so durable in the Apostle Paul, and contends that the Joy that Paul experienced and so often taught in his letters came from these seven sources:

- First, it was taught by Jesus:
  - "Blessed are you when people hate you. . . . *Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven*" (Luke 6:22-23).
- Second, it comes from the Holy Spirit, not our own efforts or imagination or family upbringing.
  - "*The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy*" (Galatians 5:22).
  - "You received the word in much affliction, with *the joy of the Holy Spirit*" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).
- Third, it comes from belonging to the kingdom of God.
  - "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and *joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17).

- We belong to the kingdom of God because we have been redeemed!
- Fourth, it comes through faith, that is, from believing God.
  - “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*” (Romans 15:13).
  - “I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and *joy in the faith*” (Philippians 1:25).
- Fifth, it comes from seeing and knowing Jesus as Lord.
  - “Rejoice *in the Lord* always” (Philippians 4:4).
- Sixth, it comes from fellow believers who work hard to help us focus on these sources of joy, rather than deceitful circumstances.
  - “We *work with you for your joy*” (2 Corinthians 1:24).
- Seventh, it comes from the sanctifying effects of tribulations.
  - “We *rejoice in our sufferings*, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3–4).

Piper says, “If we are not yet like Paul when he says, ‘I am overflowing with joy,’ he calls us to be. ‘Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ’ (1 Cor. 11:1). For most of us this is a call to earnest prayer. Because a life of joy in the Holy Spirit is a *supernatural* life.”

I for one, pray that God will grow me up to see his beauty in the word and in the world, and to more often find myself overflowing with joy as a result. Lord Jesus, may it be so.

Which brings me to the third and final point this morning:

### **3. Joy for This Day!**

Have you ever noticed that it’s easier to see reasons to be joyful by either looking back or looking forward, rather than looking at life in the moment? I can remember a time when God was good and when I had reason to be Joyful. Or, I can read God’s promises for what’s to come when He returns and how joyous that occasion will be and I see how I will be joyful then.

But what about today? Where do I find Joy for today?

At this time of year we are frequently reminded of the heavenly scene in Luke 2:10-11 when the host of angels appear to the shepherds and "...The angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born *this day* in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

Have you ever noticed those words before, "This day?" This day! In our house we have a fondness for these words. Ian struggles to use the words "Today" or "Tomorrow" to refer to the day he is trying to describe to us. When we're trying to tell him about something excited that's coming up or happening in his little world, he will often say, "Wait, you mean we get to do that *This Day?!?*"

And oh what a joy it is when that turns out to be true. When the good news of great joy in his little world is actually taking place on *this day* and he doesn't have to wait any longer than *this day* for whatever it is that's taking place!

While the passage in Isaiah 35 points in part to "that day" of Christ's return that we look forward to, the passage also speaks to the joy that we are able to have *this day*, by the mercy and grace of God!

It says that God will "strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! God will come and save you.'" That's not just joy for that day. When Christ returns we won't have to worry about anxiety or fear at all. No, the passage is giving us reason to be strong and fear not right now! It's giving us reason for joy today!

Joy is found in the person and presence of Jesus Christ and we don't have to only read about that in Luke 2 as if it was a story of another time that doesn't apply to us now. And we don't have to wait for Christ to return for the person and presence of Christ to real to us today! Joy came *this day* for the shepherds, and gladness and joy is available for you *this day* as well, in the person and presence of the Lord.

Psalms 16:11 says "...in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Praise the Lord.

As we close it seemed good to me to end the message by singing together the third verse of "All Creatures of Our God and King". Please stand and join me.

- All the redeemed washed by His blood
- Come and rejoice in His great love
- O praise Him! Alleluia!
- Christ has defeated every sin
- Cast all your burdens now on Him
- O praise Him! O praise Him!
- Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Amen. Let's Pray.