

Third Wednesday in Advent – 2022

Wednesday, 12/14 at 11 am & 7 pm

Knowing Jesus

Makes All the Difference

Text: Isaiah 35:1-10 NAS 1995

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: On these Wednesdays in Advent, we have been focusing on passages from Isaiah:

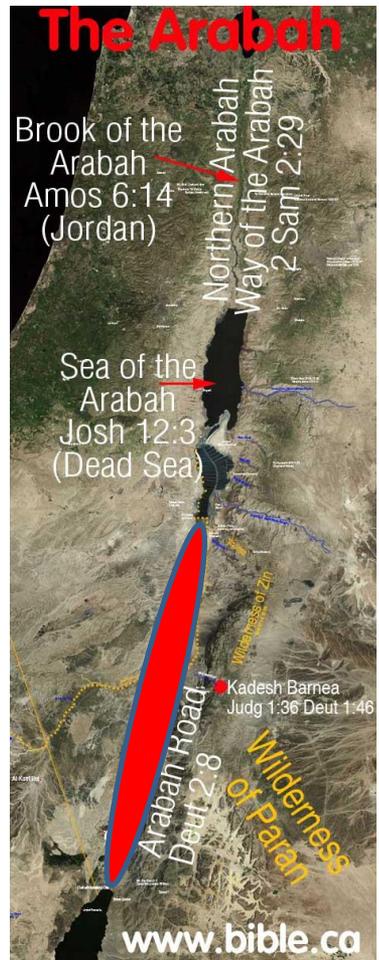
- **Week 1: Isaiah 2:1-5 – You Are Invited.** That is what God wants us to say to unbelievers: *You are invited to gather with us at Bethlehem to receive the Christ.*
- **Week 2: Isaiah 11:1-10 – The Amazing Party.** That title is pointing to the amazing eternity for believers. *When we finally arrive at the party, every negative of this life will be gone forever.*
- Today is week 3: **Isaiah 35:1-10 – Knowing Jesus Makes All the Difference.** In today's reading, let us notice how things that are ♦barren, ♦depressing, and ♦disabled are radically transformed through Jesus.

1. **From Desolate to Glorious:** ¹ **Isaiah 35:1** The wilderness and the desert will be glad, And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; Like the crocus ² It will blossom profusely And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon [*mighty forests*] will be given to it, The majesty of Carmel [*beauty*] and Sharon [*vegetation*]. They will see the glory of the LORD, The majesty of our God [*in the Christ*].

a. Wilderness, desert, Arabah: Those are areas that are dry and desolate – *without water and vegetation*. The Arabah near Israel is the dry valley between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea (**the area in red on the map**). Sometimes our own lives can feel dry and desolate, but, *for us who know Jesus*, let us remember how blessed we are!

b. Crocus, joy, glory: Dr. Kretzmann noted that the “**crocus... rapidly covers the waste places of the [plains] after the beginning of the rainy season, making the whole surface of the land appear like a carpet of flowers.**” Let’s think: We

were all dead in our sins and hell bound, **but now** – by *God’s grace*, we are ▶ alive in Christ, ▶ forgiven, and ▶ members of God’s kingdom, **so let us be filled with joy!** Isaiah was pointing to the Messianic era – *the first and the second comings of the Christ!*



2. **Much Encouragement:**

a. **³ Encourage the exhausted and strengthen the feeble.**
 // Sometimes life can wring us out like a wet dishrag – *leaving us feeling exhausted, empty, and unable to go on*. At all such times, let us remember ▶ our present blessings and ▶ the MUCH GREATER ones yet to come!

- b. **⁴ Say to those with anxious heart, “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.”**
// Those who know Jesus **are IN this world** but **are not OF this world**. Even though believers are unwanted and even attacked, the Lord knows, and He will come – *according to His perfect timing* – to put down our enemies and rescue us forever! With His first coming, *He won the victory*. With His second coming, *everyone will become fully aware of His victory!*
- c. **⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.** // **▶**The blind seeing, **▶**the deaf hearing, **▶**the lame leaping, **▶**the mute shouting; *Jesus did all such things to prove He is the Promised Messiah!*
- d. **For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah. ⁷ The scorched land will become a pool And the thirsty ground springs of water; In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass *becomes* reeds and rushes.** // Is there a difference between someone who knows Jesus and someone who does not? The text is trying to give some examples of *amazing change*:
- i. The dry wilderness and Arabah will not only become damp, *but a pool and springs of water!*
 - ii. A place too dry to live for jackals, which are wolf-like animals, will be transformed into a place they frequent. Since those amazing changes are coming for believers, *let us live with much encouragement!*

3. **An Amazing Eternity:** In this section, notice the separation between those who know Jesus and those who do not.
- a. **8 A highway will be there, a roadway** [*a place where all traveling difficulties have been removed*], **And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean** [*all who have rejected Jesus*] **will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way** [*God's way*], **And fools will not wander on it.** // In other words, those who know Jesus *diligently try to live lives that are pleasing to Jesus. And what is a fool?* Someone who is rejecting God – even though he is constantly ▶breathing, ▶living, and ▶eating the kind blessings of our God.
- b. **9 No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there.** // All that puts fear within believers in this life will be gone forever!
- c. **But the redeemed will walk there,** ¹⁰ **And the ransomed of the LORD will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.** // Redeemed, ransomed: Only one thing could buy us back and set humanity free – *the sinless living and sacrificial dying of God's own Son (Eph. 5:2)*. What is our rightful response? ▶Joyful shouting, ▶everlasting joy, and ▶great gladness!

Let Us Pray: Dearest Jesus, we are so blessed (1) to know You – *by grace, through repentance and faith*, and (2) to be right with the Father through Your perfect living and sacrificial dying – **TYSM!** As You love us, *so help us to love others by telling them who You are and what You have done for them!*

Website: www.BLC7500.com; **YouTube and Podcast:** Benefit from the Bible
Facebook: Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma; **Pastor:** RevRLGreen@aol.com
7500 State Road, Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230