

Something To Sing About!

Isaiah 35:1-10

INTRO:

They say that no book sings like the Bible. Of course it has a wonderful collection of songs in the Psalms, in the prophets and in the New Testament, but it also **deepens** the **quality** of one people's lives enabling them to sing **with** their lives.

So it gives us songs and it gives us singers!

The prophets of the Hebrew Bible very often saw visions of a better day; and when they did, they almost always put their vision into poetry. Not only that, but poetry that's easy to sing. Today we will look at a poem in Isaiah where he sings about a day of glory when the redeemed of the Lord return to Zion. They did so “**with . . . singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads**”.

ME:

I love to sing! You would never know that because I like you too much to allow you to be subjected to my singing! I don't always feel like singing, though. Sometimes life only has trouble to offer and who feels like singing then? Maybe blues singers and old time country singers.

YOU:

Do you like to sing? How about when things are not looking so bright in your life? What do you sing when there is nothing to sing about? Perhaps God can help us with that through this song by Isaiah.

Let's pray together before we begin the song...

GOD:

Isaiah 35:1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. 3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then 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; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. 8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 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 joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

WE:

We can look at this poem in three ways, First, it was a vision of Judah's return from Babylonian exile. This seems to be what the prophet had in mind when he spoke. Second, it might refer to a day yet to come, when the Jews will be at peace in their homeland. Third, we might apply it to those times in our own lives when we have returned from some kind of physical, emotional, or spiritual exile.

Let's think about why the prophet is singing!

I. Isaiah sings about a Blossoming Desert 35:1-2

Everybody's life has desert places. If you have not had one yet, just wait; *you will!*

This reminds me of a computer group I used to go to in Tidewater. In encouraging us to be sure to back up our computers regularly we were cautioned that there were two kinds of people in the world:

1. Those whose have had a hard drive die
2. And those who will!

In the same way, if you have not traveled through a desert in life yet, you will someday.

We pass through typical and devastating losses. At their worst, these deserts seem to be unending. We search in vain for any sign of hope and beauty. And when some well meaning friend points out that all is not lost, we find it a little tough to believe. Perhaps we even resent them for saying it.

Then, by grace, flowers begin to bloom in our desert. Sometimes we see them even as they unfold. We often slowly recognize something that has been building for a while. One way or another, the dull, hopeless places in our lives start to “**blossom abundantly.**”

II. Isaiah then sings about a Fearless People (Isaiah 35:3-7)

Nothing puts a brighter song in one’s soul than the sense of certain victory. That prospect of victory *must be spectacularly certain, though!* The prophet is completely sure of the victory . . . because he knows it is God who will come with a vengeance. Isaiah sees a victory that will break through all the circumstances of life. **Is Isaiah speaking symbolically when he tells of blind eyes being opened and the lame leaping like deer? Or is he dreaming of a day when the full glory of the lord will be revealed?** We do not know, but some suggest that every area of life takes

on a sense of **joy** that used to be unimaginable once we lay hold of the goodness of God.

Christians have joyful songs celebrating the wonder of our relation with God. Think about Christmas season with songs such as the spine-tingling Handel's Messiah. In contrast to this, in 2011 comedian Steve Martin performed a song on The Late Show with David Letterman that he called "**the entire atheist hymnal**" (on one page of paper).

He called it: "**Atheists Don't Have No Songs.**"

*Christians have their hymns and pages,
Hava Nagila's for the Jews,
Baptists have the rock of ages,
Atheists just sing the blues.
Romantics play Claire de Lune,
Born agains sing "He is risen,"
But no one ever wrote a tune,
For godless existentialism.
For Atheists there's no good news.
They'll never sing a song of faith.
In their songs they have one rule:
The "he" is always lowercase.*

Of course, his humor is meant to entertain us—and it does. But what a contrast to a piece of music that moves hearts and masses across the board. Handel’s Messiah is arguably one of the most soothing expressions of Christian doctrine ever produced.

I think it makes all the sense in the world that both *mysterious tears* and *profound joy* accompany Handel’s Messiah. For this Messiah brings with him an invitation unlike any other:

Come and see the Father, the Creator, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. Come and see the Light, and the Overcomer of darkness, the One who wept at the grave of a friend, and the one who collects our tears in his bottle even before he will dry every eye. Christians, let’s sing our songs!

III. Finally, Isaiah sings a song about a superhighway (Isaiah 35:8-10)

When Isaiah walked down the road, he thought it was a perfect road when it was free of dangerous beasts and animals. It was ideal when it was laid out in a way that, “**not even fools**” could go astray. This road is more than a well laid out highway; it is “**the Holy Way.**” It is more than just a safe path to travel. It’s the kind of path that John Bunyan would write for every pilgrim. It is a road that is truly going somewhere. The destination is a purity and a magnificence of life that pleases God. **Is it any wonder that those who travel it “come to Zion with singing” and that “sorrow and**

sighing shall flee away?” Such a road is beyond our usual thinking. It is one that can be found only as we commit ourselves to the King.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

God is good even when things seem bad, focus upon him and find something to sing about!

YOU:

How will you look for joy when life gets hard? When your independence starts to slip away? When your dreams never come true? When you lose someone you love? Even then, there is something to sing about.

CLOSE:

In the desert times in life, the rain will come. You, even your life, will begin to blossom abundantly. The beautiful music of life will again come to your ears and through your life into the lives of others in the midst of a desert time. You will walk a road that might be freed of dangerous critter, but who cares! It might be so strait that even I couldn't get lost on it! It will be a road that lead to God, to holy living in the grace of God. It will be a road of life that makes God smile and it will make us enter the city of Hopewell, right on past erring letter “H” singing and sorrow and sighing will flee away. And that’s something to sing about!

It is also something to pray and praise God about! Let's pray together
now...