

Jesus' Arrival Brings Joy

1. Joy to the Parched Land

2. Joy to the Fearful Hearts

3. Joy to the Heaven-Bound

Jesus' Arrival

- Seen any commercials on TV lately: someone gone long time suddenly surprises family, shows up back home? Usually this time year, before Christmas. Hallmark; ToysRUs; Folgers. Like this: soldier in army, her bag shoulder, walks up snowy walkway, knocks front door; eating dinner; weren't expecting; rush to door, overjoyed to see. Or college kid pulls up driveway; middle night, blizzard; nervous parents, waiting anxiously front window, see car pull up; relieved she's home safe. Love: dad gone oversees on tour of duty in military; arranges to surprise kids at school; sneaks up, from back room; children turn; see face!; no idea coming home; so much joy! Love those cmls, when loved one arrives home – someone waiting to see for long time – brings joy to everyone; so happy!
- Waiting for Jesus to arrive; what Adv all about. Getting ready for his birth at Christmas (2 wks); also preparing hearts for Jesus to come again Last Day. When comes, Jesus will make so happy! We've waiting so long to see; when finally arrives, we'll filled with joy. Jesus' arrival brings joy. That's picture Isa paints today in OT reading; vision of joy, happiness at coming of Christ – even happier than soldier home on leave, or college kid home for semester break. It's a beautiful, joyful Advent vision Isa shares with us today: coming of our Savior. JABJ!

Joy to the Parched Land

- To parched land. **Vs. 1-2, 6b-7b.** Landscape changing: like dusty desert in Africa suddenly turning into lush oasis with fresh water, tropical gardens. That's picture. Ever been to desert? Ever feel scorching desert wind in face, sun beating down on you? Probably don't have to have travelled to Sahara to know that desert is dry, dangerous, fatiguing place where die without water.
- Here, Jesus' arrival brings so much joy, even parched rejoices. **Vs. 1a.** Saying: when Christ comes, things so much better than are right now, that difference as great as between desert and oasis. That should bring us joy, because sometimes life like desert; fatiguing.
- You fatigued? Stressed? Dec is month of high stress! Sick? Lot of sickness going around. Down, depressed, SAD (seasonal affective disorder – PDW last week – darkness, weather affect mood)? Lonely? Holiday season remind you of loved ones who died around this time? Dealing with some personal issue, tough situation? Life is desert. Even sing: *"I'm but a stranger here...earth is a desert drear"* (CW 417). But, *"Heaven is my home."* And JABJ because we know Savior born for us at Christmas will come back, bring us to home in heaven: greater than any tropical oasis. **Vs. 6b-7b.** If feeling fatigued from living desert drear, this is vision from Isa you need: joy to parched land, people.

Joy to the Fearful Hearts

- JABJ also to fearful hearts. **Vs. 3-4.** "Feeble hands; shaky knees; fearful hearts" – description people no hope, afraid of God, only see God as angry Judge. Guilty over sins; afraid of what happens after they die. Know anyone like that, afraid to die? People who don't believe Jesus as Savior; who don't understand pure Gospel of forgiveness through Jesus – afraid to die. Don't have hope heaven. Funeral director: huge difference between Christian funeral and non. And even as Christians, we still sin, feel guilt, understand wrath of God. So know what it's like to have fearful heart before holy God.
- Isa's joyful message today: **vs. 3-4.** Talks "vengeance, divine retribution." Yes, God angry. But because Jesus, not at you; for you. Angry at Satan for ruining creation, enslaving his people in sin, taking them to hell. Christ hates that; so much that left home in heaven to wage war against Satan. Even though looked like bloody mess on cross when gave life, through that death at Calvary and resurrection from dead on Easter, Jesus unleashed vengeance, divine retribution on Satan, on your behalf. Yes, Jesus angry, not at you, for you, angry enough to die for you to save you. That's the

Christ born at Christmas: vengeful, Satan-hating, sinner-loving Savior. Won't see that on Christmas card; what you'll find when look in manger, gracious Savior who brings joy to fearful heart.

- And also have joy knowing, **vs. 5-6a**. Jesus heals. Think of all times in Jesus' ministry healed. Still heals. If you're sick, suffering, need of surgery, or terminally ill – Jesus heals. Made bodies; knows how to fix bodies. And (on mind lately), Jesus either makes better, or perfect. Important to remember; sometimes Jesus lets sicknesses persist, doesn't take away. But in heav'n, in res, bodies made perfect, forever free from sicknesses, pain. So if fearful heart, sin/sickness, take heart; JABJ to fearful hearts.

Joy to the Heaven-Bound

- Joy to heaven-bound. Sometimes when driving expressway, talk travelling N/W-bound. I think as Christians should talk travelling heaven-bound. How Isaiah talks. **Vs. 8a**. God's expressway. Last Sunday, PDW preached Isa 40, which says, **“Prepare in the desert a highway for our God,”** – God would travel highway, cut through desert, right into Babylon, rescue people. Here, Isa 35, it's God's people travel highway. **Vs. 8b-9**. Highway for God's people, you/me, heaven-bound.
- Heaven-bound right now; Jesus walks with us. One most comforting aspects of Gospel: Jesus always with us. Ps 23: **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”** Jesus with us on journey through this life. Never forget that, no matter what going through right now. Jesus is with you. Some take comfort in Footprints in the Sand poem, ends: *“During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”* Jesus with us. Others take comfort in beautiful hymn from hymnal: *“I walk with Jesus all the way; his guidance never fails me. He takes my every fear away when Satan's power assails me, and, by his footsteps led, my path I safely tread”* (CW 431). Jesus with us; heaven-bound.
- Someday make it to destination. **Vs. 10bc**. JABJ because when Jesus returns, we going to heaven. Like on long road trip, finally get out car, stretch – think how glad, finally there. When Jesus returns, we'll finally make it to heaven, where **vs. 10c**. Isa shows us what heaven like, and joy we'll have.

Brings Joy

- More joyful than in commercials, when soldier surprises family, college kid comes home. Maybe some you have military kids, college students coming home for Christmas in next few days; or maybe have family visiting. There's joy in their arrival. JABJ too: to parched land, fearful hearts, heaven-bound – to us, as we prepare souls for Christ's first coming Christmas, second coming on Last Day. May Christ and this Advent Gospel in Isa fill you with joy.

Isaiah 35:1-10

¹ The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, ² it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

³ Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; ⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” ⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

⁸ And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. ⁹ No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, ¹⁰ and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.