

# From Sighing To Singing

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, church. My name's Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline.! We cram a restless mob inside, and then we endure the harrowing journey across the distant lands to finally arrive at our destination.

Now, I don't know what your family gatherings are like, but perhaps, at their best, they abound with love and with laughter, with delightful food that you eat once a year, and with the cheerful songs of Christmas.

The sorrow and the sighing of a long journey gives way to joy and to singing. Now, if you're inwardly rolling your eyes and going, yeah, right, I wish, you're probably not alone.

But whatever kind of family gathering you have to look forward to on Christmas, let me tell you, the gathering envisioned right here in Isaiah 35 is better by far.

And it's the gathering that you will want to be journeying towards. We're in week three of a four-part Advent series entitled, Advent, The Light Shines in the Darkness.

[ 1 : 34 ] And the title of today's sermon is, From Sighing to Singing. From Sighing to Singing. Now, some may recognize that as the title of our sermon series in Isaiah 40 to 55 last year.

This movement from the sorrows and the sighings of a broken world into the joy and the singing of a world remade is the promise of God all throughout Isaiah to his weak, weary, and wayward people. In this Advent series, we've been diving into select passages in Isaiah, so please open up your Bibles and turn to Isaiah. If you don't have a Bible, there's Bibles on the back table.

Feel free to take one of those and keep it as our gift to you. And before we dive into today's passage, let me set the scene for us. So recall that Isaiah is prophesying around 750 BC.

And Israel, as we've talked about, Israel had reached its height about 200 years earlier under King Solomon, David's son. But then, due to his sin, the kingdom was divided in half, right?

[ 2 : 41 ] You have the northern kingdom of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah, and sort of opposite from the stock market growth that we expect to see, the spiritual and national decline of Israel and Judah just continued on for generation after generation.

So if you flip in your Bibles right now, I want us to kind of flip through Isaiah together. We were in Isaiah chapter 9, 1 through 7. So go there first. For to us, a child is born, is the title in many of your Bibles.

To Judah, in its state of gloom, God promises here to shine a light piercing the darkness. And he would do that through this child, through this son, who would become king and Messiah in the line of David.

Now flip forward a couple pages to Isaiah 11, 1 through 10. That's where we were last week. And here, God turns to the northern kingdom of Israel, and they're in a worse state even than Judah. And God promises to raise up, from what appears to be dead, a messianic king. It's a parallel prophecy to Isaiah 9. And in the fullness of the Spirit, this Messiah king is going to reign in righteousness and in justice.

[ 3 : 51 ] He's going to reverse the curse. He's going to bring about this peaceful state, just like the Garden of Eden. And it will be for the good of Israel and for the nations. Now the next chapter, Isaiah 12, is this beautiful, psalm-like eruption of praise.

But then, Isaiah shifts to a long section of judgment oracles. So again, look in your Bibles. I want you to look into these Bibles today. Flip through this next whole section of chapters.

And I want to just draw your attention to the titles of some of these. So in all of these chapters, we see here two sets of judgment oracles. And they're against all the surrounding nations of Israel, these pagan nations.

And they eventually include Israel and Judah as well. And interspersed in these judgment oracles are glimpses of light. And they give way at the end to three full chapters talking about this beautiful future state of glory.

And then the prophecy shifts back again in chapter 28. And it hones in on Israel and Judah. And God pronounces a series of woes, six different woes.

[ 5 : 00 ] God continues to pronounce judgment over Israel and Judah for their sin, while at the same time revealing this plan for their restoration. These chapters, Isaiah 28 to 35, they underscore God's supremacy over every power as he advances world history towards its appointed end of final judgment and salvation.

Now this final judgment, look at Isaiah 34. This final judgment to include the whole earth is vividly depicted in Isaiah 34. For those who have refused to turn to the Lord, their fertile land will become barren wasteland.

It will be, look at verse 9, soil turned into sulfur. Thorns and thistles, verse 13 and 14. Thorns and thistles and desert animals are going to overtake what used to be these strongholds and these fortresses of the nations.

And God is saying, this is not going to be some temporary condition. This will be their eternity. Such is the hellish scene as chapter 34 concludes.

And then it's followed by these words in Isaiah 35. And before I read them, let me go to the Lord again in prayer. Heavenly Father, this is your word to us. This is your word to us.

[ 6 : 19 ] God, as I use my voice, I ask that you would be the one speaking to our hearts today. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

And so Isaiah says, The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad. The desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

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.

First thing that we see here is the desert transformed. The desert transformed. So in contrast to the fertile land becoming desert in chapter 34, this arid desert now becomes fertile land.

You know, here in New England, spring's arrival is announced by the spontaneous shooting forth of white and purple crocuses. Maybe you have them in your yard. And they come up from what was previously barren grounds.

[ 7 : 23 ] We can sort of envision what's going on here. Now Isaiah is not saying that the land will blossom with crocuses. He's saying the land is going to blossom like the crocus. Right? As the crocus shoots up and then opens to unveil its beauty, so the land is going to experience a transformation into life and abundance, into beauty and glory.

It's a glory, Isaiah says, like Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon. Now Lebanon was renowned for its great cedar forest. We read about them when Solomon constructs the temple.

He uses tons of cedar wood. Carmel refers to the coastal mountain range that is next to the Mediterranean Sea, and that's where Elijah famously defeated the 400 prophets of Baal.

And then Sharon was this plain, a coastal plain of rich pasture and floral abundance. And so Isaiah is saying that this once desolate land is going to be utterly transformed into something as glorious and majestic as Lebanon, as Carmel, and Sharon.

You know, in chapter 34, God's curse upon mankind that we read about in Genesis 3, it seems to become the law, right? Like the eternal law for the wicked.

[ 8 : 39 ] But here in chapter 35, that curse is reversed, right? Again, we see the Garden of Eden is being restored. But notice where the focus is. Because then it says, they shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

First, note the mysterious they. We're not told who they are yet. Now, we can probably guess, but Isaiah chooses not to unveil their identity until later.

But whoever they are, they look around, they observe this divine beauty that's springing forth into wilderness. And they realize that what they're seeing is the glory, not of the land, but of the Lord.

Their minds and their hearts are drawn up to the source. They're drawn up to the glorious and majestic one, the Lord, the King. These two verses, they remind us not only of Genesis 1 through 3, but they also remind us of the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

And we saw last week that this exodus motif is a motif all throughout Isaiah. So pictured here is this second and greater exodus. And as Israel wandered around for 40 years in the wilderness, God

caused water to gush forth from the rock.

[ 9 : 59 ] God nourished Israel with manna and with quail. And he was pointing them to his glory, right? To his glory, not to the food, not to the water. He wanted them to look at him, but they kept missing the glory.

Now here in Isaiah 35, whoever they are, their attention is rightly fixated on God's glory and not lesser glories.

This, of course, is also in contrast to the wicked in chapter 34, who chose those lesser glories and were ultimately given those lesser glories in judgment as their eternal inheritance.

Now I just want to pause and sort of double click on this for a second, because we have here a defining reality of our human existence. We are, as Paul Tripp describes in a devotional I'm going through, we are all glory thieves.

We're glory thieves. There is only one truly glorious being in this universe. The one who declares in Isaiah 42, I am the Lord, that is my name, my glory I give to no other.

[ 11 : 08 ] But you know, we, ever since biting the apple in the garden, we've pursued infinitely lesser glories. Paul would say, worshiping and serving creature rather than the creator.

Seeking after our own glory rather than God's. And the Bible declares that this actually is our greatest problem. It's our own sin nature.

That's our greatest problem in which we're bent in on ourselves. Now, listen to these words from Paul Tripp. He writes, in our marriages, in our parenting, in our work, in our friendships, and in the church, we have made life all about us.

We have tended to reduce the active field of our concern down to the tiny confines of our wants, our needs, our plans, our satisfaction, and our happiness. It's not wrong, he says, to want some control or to want to be right or to like beautiful possessions or to be surrounded by a community of love, but it's wrong and spiritually dangerous for those things to rule your heart.

Perhaps at street level, we're not living for the glory of God at all. Perhaps in ways we're not conscious of, we have shrunk life down to the size of our own glory. Maybe it really is true that somehow, some way, sin makes us all glory thieves.

[ 12 : 31 ] We steal from ourselves what belong to God. We put ourselves in God's place. Perhaps life is one big, unending glory battle. You know, church, what God wants us to see this morning is that true glory, everlasting glory, the glory that we were created to magnify, to make much of, to revel and rejoice in, is found in Him alone.

It's found in Him alone. Now in these two verses, we see a vision of that glory coming down to earth, transforming it from this barren desert into fertile land and then them rightly recognizing it as the glory of God.

And then Isaiah declares, strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, be strong, fear not.

The people strengthened. The people strengthened. Isaiah's audience, remember, is the people of Israel and Judah, a people on the brink of national and spiritual collapse.

And Isaiah has pronounced judgment over them. First, at the coming hand of Assyria, and then to follow Assyria is the greater, mightier hand of Babylon. And it's because, again, it's because of their sin and their rebellion against God.

[ 13 : 51 ] Right here, Isaiah is calling them to turn from their sinful ways and to strengthen themselves not in the might of Egypt, not in the might of Assyria, but in the might of God.

Be strong, fear not. This recalls God's words to Joshua, remember? After Joshua succeeded Moses, the promised land lay before Joshua and Israel.

Forty years earlier, the people had faltered in faith, right? They were fearful of the strong inhabitants. They didn't believe that God would fulfill his promise to give them the land.

And after that forty-year death march in the wilderness, they once again lay on the brink of the promised land. And God says to Joshua, be strong and courageous.

Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1.9 And God promises there to Joshua that he will cause Israel to inherit the land that he swore to their fathers.

[ 14 : 54 ] It's not that those giants were gone. It's not that the people in the land were any less strong. It's that God promised to give them the land and he was with them. And so here in Isaiah 35, the promise of a renewed land is given to the people.

But their hands are weak. Their knees are shaking. Anxiety is filling their hearts. And God says to them, be strong. Fear not. Why ought the people not to fear?

Behold, behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.

That ancient call to be strong and fear not, given once again to Israel, it's based on the faithfulness of God to accomplish his saving purposes for his people.

Notice the twice repeated, will come. Will come. It's an absolute guarantee. That's what God's saying here. Because though the grass withers and the flower fades, the word of our God will stand forever, Isaiah 40 verse 8.

[16:01] And will come, Isaiah says, with vengeance and with recompense. Friends, this is the hope of the godly for the people of God. That he will come and punish his enemies and vanquish all evil and make all things right.

And he will come and save you. Fear not, the angel announced hundreds of years later to those shepherds.

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.

This baby was to be called Jesus because as the angel told Joseph, he will save his people from their sins. wonder of wonders, God has come.

God has come in the person of Jesus to save his people by his sacrifice on the cross in our place. His once for all sacrifice.

[17:02] It has done away finally forever with our sin. It has abolished death, our greatest enemy. That death we saw in 1 Corinthians 15, it's now like a scorpion robbed of its sting.

God in Christ did that for us, the glory thieves, the ones bent on exalting ourselves as kings instead of the king of kings.

This king, friends, church, this king became a suffering servant as we find out later in Isaiah to free us from our slavery to sin, to make us royal sons of God.

If only we would repent of our sin and believe in his name. Now, saints, we know that gospel. We rejoice in that gospel.

And even still, you may be feeling weakness and weariness in the midst of an always busy holiday season. You're battling sickness.

[18:01] Our church is battling sickness. You guys are home battling sickness. You've got presents to still buy. You have an unlikely deadline at work that you need to meet before the holidays.

You're not even looking forward to the holidays, perhaps, because of family conflict. Maybe an uncle who always ridicules you about your faith. Brothers and sisters, these things may be true, but they are not, as we said a few weeks ago, they are not the whole truth and they are certainly not the fundamental truth.

God in Christ has come to save. God in Christ is coming again and he will finally do away with all evil. He will finally right all of the wrongs and he will bring to completion that which he started.

He already won the battle on the cross and he's coming again to claim that victory and church. In the meantime, he's left us with his abiding presence in the person of the Holy Spirit.

And that's true until the end of the age. Knowing all of these things, the author of Hebrews quoting Isaiah 35 verse 3 says, therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.

[19:15] And how do we do that? Hebrews 12 too, by fixing our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. By meditating on all that Christ is and all that Christ has done and all that Christ is doing now and all that Christ is going to do.

By meditating on that and then by encouraging one another, exhorting one another, stirring each other on towards love and good deeds. Church, let us do all these things and we will surely find that as we do, God is granting us peace that drives away the anxiety.

He will grant us confidence that drives out our fears. He will grant us spiritual power despite our weakness. Isaiah comforts and encourages the people of God with the promise of his coming salvation.

salvation. And then he moves to again describe that salvation. He says, then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. The disabled healed. The disabled healed.

[ 20 : 29 ] Before, Isaiah pictured the future healing of the land and now he pictures the future healing of the people that will occur on this future day, this day of salvation.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, the mute will sing for joy. In verses 1 and 2, the land was singing and now it's those who have been supernaturally healed.

You know, in chapter 6, when Isaiah received his call from the Lord into prophetic ministry, God told him that his ministry would make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and blind their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed.

The spiritual blindness and deafness that would characterize Isaiah's generation that would be healed on this future day. And so, the healing depicted here, it is both physical and spiritual. And this is the healing Isaiah is prophesying that would accompany the coming salvation. It's the healing that would accompany this future messianic age. And Isaiah ties this healing of the disabled to the healing of the land.

[ 21 : 47 ] He ties them back together when he says, for waters break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert the burning sand will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water and the haunt of jackals where they lie down the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

The healing of the people goes hand in hand with the healing of the land because the source is the same, right? The source is God. The source is this coming every corner of the earth transforming glory.

And Isaiah, he's once again using language that alludes back to the exodus of Israel from Egypt and also describing a return to that garden state, the curse reversed.

Centuries later, a prophet named John the Baptist comes to Israel calling the people to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John knew that he had been called by God to fulfill the prophecies in Isaiah to prepare the way for the Lord.

Remember how seeing Jesus come towards him, John declared, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Now eventually though, John is put into prison.

[ 23 : 01 ] And John, we imply from the text, begins to doubt whether Jesus really is the promised Messiah. And so he sends servants to ask Jesus, Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?

And here's how Jesus responds. He says, The blind receive their sight and the lame walk. Lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them and blessed is the one who is not offended by me.

Jesus, he points to the prophetic promises contained in Isaiah of this future healing of the blind, deaf, lame, and mute and he points to how these things are taking place in and through him by his power.

His answer to John is basically, Yes, I am the one who is to come. You need not look for another. The messianic age is now here is what Jesus is saying.

In John 7, you know, on the last day of the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem, Jesus stands up and he declares, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

[ 24 : 14 ] Whoever believes in me as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And John adds his commentary, now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believe in him were to receive.

Saints, Jesus has come, his kingdom has been inaugurated, the healing power of the Spirit has been unleashed by his death and resurrection. By faith in Jesus' name, the burning sand becomes a pool.

Right? That happens in the desert of our hearts which the Spirit makes into these pools, these rivers of life. We are the disabled of verses 5 and 6.

The disabled ones that have been healed. You know, as the bride of the song Mary Did You Know proclaims, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again, the lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the Lamb.

That is what has happened to us, saints. That is what has happened to us. We are the blind who now see, we are the deaf who now hear, the lame who now leap, and the mute who now sing for joy.

[ 25 : 27 ] And church, one day, this in-breaking glory, it's going to transform the entire created order. These lowly bodies, they're going to put on immortality, perishable, transformed into imperishable, fit for heaven.

And so Paul's able to write things like this in Romans 8, 18, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the future glory that is to be revealed.

Friends, these sufferings of the present time, whether persecution for our faith, financial hardship, relational conflict, health-related trials, whatever they look like, those sufferings will one day vanish. They will give way to unending glory in the presence of God. And that means that these sufferings that we walk through day in and day out, they will not finally separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Saints, God has already given us glory thieves, his only son, to make us his sons. How much more, now that we are his children, will he finally bring that salvation to completion?

[ 26 : 53 ] Now, the Exodus motif continues as Isaiah declares, and a highway shall be there and it shall be called the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it.

It shall belong to those who walk on the way. Even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. This is the way prepared. The way prepared. Isaiah continues to add color and clarity to this future vision that he has this scene.

He's envisioned the blossoming of the desert into a land of abundance and life. He's envisioned waters breaking forth in the wilderness, the healing of the blind, lame, and mute, and deaf.

And now he describes a road on which the people will traverse across this once barren land. And this highway image, it's another motif that runs through Isaiah's writings.

And here he specifically calls this highway the way of holiness. It's a road on which God's faithful ones will sojourn. Remember, God had formed Israel to be a holy nation.

[ 28 : 06 ] He calls them to be holy as he is holy. But they had failed at that time and again. God had always preserved a faithful remnant, but the nation was, by and large, unholy.

Just like the pagan nations that surrounded her. But on this future day, Isaiah is promising. On this future day, the Lord is promising through Isaiah, only the faithful will travel this road.

And even the simpletons, they're not going to go astray. They will know the way. Having described what's on the highway, he then talks about what's not on the highway.

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. You know, a typical highway leading through Israel would be dangerous.

And Isaiah is saying, this one, it's going to be free of any fierce predators. Right? No one is going to threaten the holy ones on their journey. It's going to be a highway of safety.

[ 29 : 09 ] And did you catch how Isaiah finally revealed the identity of the ones he's been talking about this whole time? They, the only ones who will walk on this highway, are the redeemed, he says.

The redeemed. He calls in the next verse, he calls them the ransomed of the Lord. To be called the redeemed and the ransomed of the Lord, it implies two things.

First, it implies these people either had some great need that they could not meet, or they were in a captivity which they could not break. Right? That's the first thing.

And secondly, the required price has been fully paid. Their need has been satisfied. The captivity has been broken. You know, about 200 years later, God would liberate Israel from captivity in Babylon.

He would make a way through the wilderness for them to return to Jerusalem, but spiritual deliverance would still be desperately needed. And that spiritual deliverance, we know, we know, has come through Jesus Christ another 500 years later.

[ 30 : 19 ] And that, at the high price of his life. And so Peter writes in 1 Peter 1, 18 and 19, you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

Paul writes in Titus 2, 13 and 14 that the grace of God has appeared, has appeared to us, in the appearing of our, he says, great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Yes, a highway has been opened, friends. Not a physical highway to Jerusalem, but a spiritual highway to the new Jerusalem. A spiritual highway to God.

God and the way is Christ himself. He says, I am the way. I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. God in Christ, an extravagant mercy, costly grace. He has taken our sin upon himself. He's given us his righteousness. He's made us holy like himself. And so, having been made holy in Christ, he now calls us to live out that holiness, his holiness, as we journey to our heavenly home.

[ 31 : 53 ] You know, I was, just yesterday, I was on my knees in prayer, enjoying fellowship with the Lord and I had the thought, you know, I'd rather just stay here all day.

And now you're thinking, wow, Mike, you're so spiritual. But no, because what I realized is I simply wanted to escape from all of the responsibilities and the trials of life.

It's a lot easier to stay in my quiet office on my knees before the Lord and distance myself from everything else. But God was speaking to me and saying, no, no, no.

See, what I want for you is not to stay here. I want you to enter into the mess, right? To enter into the relationships that I put before you where you can manifest my holy character.

My love, my mercy, my grace. He wants that on display among his saints for the world to see. And so Jesus says, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[ 32 : 57 ] Saints, as we walk this way of holiness, as we live out our identity in Christ, we're not only glorifying God, we're doing what we've been talking about all year, we're putting him on display, right?

For the world to see, for the lost to see him in us, to realize that Christ is risen and he's powerful and he's active and he's working in the church and that they would also join us on the journey home.

now some here might not need an exhortation to holiness so much as the assurance that is actually in these verses right here.

The highway is a road of safety. The sojourners will arrive at their destination. Saints, the good shepherd protects his sheep.

good shepherd protects his sheep. Jesus said, I give them, speaking of his sheep, I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[ 34 : 10 ] My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. Brothers and sisters, when you doubt, look to Christ your good shepherd.

He has laid down his life for you. He has laid down his life for us to open to us a sure way to God in heaven. Look to Calvary where Jesus gave up all for your salvation.

See there, see at the cross his unyielding love for you. See his unmatched power, his ability to sustain you to the end and know that he who died for you will do just that.

He is going to sustain you to the end because he is faithful. The desert has been transformed. People have been strengthened.

The disabled have been healed. The way has been prepared and finally Isaiah pictures the redeemed rejoicing. The redeemed rejoicing.

[ 35 : 16 ] The tense change here is intentional because now Isaiah envisions something that will never end. 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. notice all the shalls in this one verse.

In fact in the ten verses of this chapter I counted twenty-four times it says shall or will. All of them culminating in these four right here.

The almighty power that God has wielded to transform people and nature and to make a way in the desert where there was no way is for the ultimate purpose of verse ten.

To bring his ransomed children home at last to a renewed Zion where they will sing and rejoice forever in his presence. You see the joy and the gladness that had previously been so elusive becomes a crown upon the heads of the redeemed.

[ 36 : 35 ] the sorrow and the sighing that characterized life in a broken world it flees before the presence of God. It's like cockroaches that scamper when the light is turned on.

We're not welcome here. We're gone. What began as the joyful song of nature in verse one in verse ten it becomes the joyful and unceasing song of the redeemed.

they've safely arrived they've made it to their forever home with God and they sing. As we draw towards a close here I want you to flip in your Bibles to John chapter 16. John chapter 16. Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples right before he's about to go to the cross.

Look at verses 21 and 22. John 16 21 and 22. When a woman is giving birth she has sorrow because her hour has come.

[ 37 : 52 ] Any women relate to that? But when she has delivered the baby she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that a human being has been born into the world so also you have sorrow now but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you.

Jesus is talking about how he's about to die on the cross and the disciples in that moment are going to be filled with sorrow and the world and Satan will rejoice they will actually think that they have won a great victory but then in a display of cosmic power Jesus will rise from the dead and in that day when he sees his disciples again their sorrow will flee and that will be replaced by unending unshakable joy.

You see here Jesus is announcing the in breaking of the new age promised here in Isaiah and in all the prophets right it's through the death and resurrection of Christ picture this in your minds now it's through that that the barren desert is blossoming like the crocus that the blind are receiving their sight that the thirsty ground becomes springs of water and sorrow is being replaced by everlasting joy that joy saints will one day reach its full bloom but it has already blossomed the hearts of the saints because Christ has died for our sins and is risen that's what Jesus is saying so saints right now right here in whatever you're walking through today we have access in Christ to unshakable joy we have access to a soul deep happiness and a delight because of the gospel of Jesus Christ and here again is the already not yet present reality that we live in where we celebrate the advent of Christ at Christmas we celebrate the gospel and all that was done for us back then and we also long for the coming advent of Christ when he finally makes all things new but that means that today we continue to live in a world of sorrow and sighing a world where we're always behind schedule and management or the customer is never pleased a world where family church domestic and international conflict persists where sickness and death looms large where we can't fully escape the indwelling sin in our hearts the anger and the impatience the impurity and the lust the worry and the anxiety the pride and the selfishness a world where rebellion against

Christ and opposition to the gospel remains leading to all kinds of cultural evils and specifically evils against Christians but saints because of the death and resurrection of Christ and all that that has won for us eternally we can be like Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail do you remember Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail in Acts 16 they were doing what in that jail cell they were singing they were praying to God and singing hymns to God even in the midst of their sorrows and their sighings because our joy is rooted in Christ and in his finished work upon the cross and all that that secured we can be singing in the midst of our sorrows victors in this march of strife and this is why Paul could say 2nd

Corinthians 6 8-10 he says we are treated as sorrowful yet always rejoicing sorrowful yet always rejoicing the world saw Paul the Corinthians saw Paul and his afflictions and his humility and all that he endured and they saw man what a sorrowful person Paul saw his afflictions and he rejoiced he rejoiced in his savior he rejoiced in the fellowship with Christ that he experienced in those sufferings and he rejoiced because as he says this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison take heart saints for our mighty and merciful God is transforming he's in the process of transforming it's happening now and will continue forever he's transforming all of our sorrow and sign into joy and singing in a holy remade world you know a highway has been made in the wilderness and the cornfields leading home to Chicago that's where

[ 43 : 04 ] I'm from that's where I'm going for the holidays if you didn't know that and you know a longing to reunite with family an expectation of safety on the road ahead that motivates us to get in the car and cram our little angry mob in the car and actually drive there right and maybe you can do this too I can picture you know those Christmases long long ago as we sing about I can picture those Christmas gatherings of old you know my grandpa sitting on his recliner bopping his grandkids on the head stealing their noses and magically like making them appear again I can hear my dad's contagious laughter in the kitchen as my uncle tells some other ridiculous joke that's way exaggerated me and my two other uncles they're in the living room yelling at the screen because

the bears fumble the ball yet again and meanwhile my grandma she's hustling and bustling around she's making sure that all six of her kids and her six in-laws and her 19 grandkids are all of them having an awesome time and eventually what often happens my mom takes to the piano my grandpa and cousins grab their guitars and then we get to singing the night away you know we're gonna make the journey again this year and it's always good to be with family you know but the thing is some aren't with us anymore and even if they were those gatherings never live up to the romanticized memories of the past that we have do they but saints when Christ returns and he finally gathers all of us and all the saints from all the generations and all the nations into his presence and these perishable bodies put on the imperishable and this holy remade world and the family feast of the ages ensues we will not be disappointed that future gathering is going to eclipse all of the gatherings that we've experienced in this side of heaven we will arrive with singing and everlasting joy will crown our heads and sorrow and sign will flee away and in the meantime church may we be a people that are characterized by that divine joy that divine singing that breaks into the here and now even in the midst of all the things that we face

Christ has died he has risen he is coming again to let us rejoice heavenly father we thank you lord for this beautiful prophecy in isaiah that has already been fulfilled and awaits its final fulfillment and we lord are to be a people of joy a people of joy isaiah says in chapter 12 but you will say in that day give thanks to the lord for though he was angry with me his anger has turned away marvelous grace marvelous mercy has been poured down upon us freeing us from captivity paying the price that we could not pay so that we could be a people of joy and of life united to you eternally!

God God died of died of died of died of died of died of died!  
died