

May the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable to you oh God, my strength and my joy... Amen.

This is the last Sunday I will preach on our advent text from Isaiah, as next Sunday, we have a special venue planned... The Children's Christmas Program, and I must say that I am most excited for what the kids and the Sunday School Teachers have prepared for all of you...

I am also most excited that this was the Isaiah text chosen for today, as it is such a beautiful and flourishing text...

A text that can blossom in your imagination.

A text, like the last two weeks, that paints a picture...

And this week the picture is a spectacular sight...

Today we are invited into a barren and extremely dry desert...

A desert that is in need of life-giving rain...A slow and soaking rain, one that will bring about nourishment in the land.

So that life can blossom in barren spaces, and do so abundantly...

And when I think of life

blossoming abundantly, I think of super blooms...

Super blooms are a spectacular and extremely rare, floral phenomenon.

They are only possible when a desert receives long and soaking winter rains.

As these rains are needed for seeds to germinate... Seeds that in some cases have been lying dormant in the desert floor for decades...

And, after these rare winter rains arrive, a once barren landscape blossoms with an overabundance of flowers all at once.

So many flowers in fact, that the colors of these blooms can be seen from outer space...

Which makes Isaiah's vision even more spectacular, as Isaiah's vision is even greater than a super bloom.

The waters in Isaiah bring about more than flowers... They bloom joy and gladness causing all of creation to rejoice in song...

The waters cool burning sands, producing pools teeming with life...
Allowing the thirsty ground to produce springs of water...

And alongside all of this beauty a highway will appear, and it will be called the Holy Way...

Not a highway of course, like we think of today...

Isaiah's highway is a path that allows those on it, time to drink in all the beauty, not needing to worry about their safety or protection.

Allowing all who travel on it to be filled with joy and gladness, and to burst into song.

Because how could one not be filled with joy and gladness when they travel along such a magnificent path... A path that has beauty around every corner, where life flourishes in every crevice...

And yet, here we are... in the month of December... it's cold outside, most trees are barren, and most water is frozen or is starting to freeze...

But regardless of the view outside, most people continue on, on their own path... rushing along, the highway to Christmas...

Which is why these words of Isaiah are so powerful this time of year... As Isaiah reminds us that a highway does not necessarily need to be fast...

Because Isaiah's highway is the Holy Way.

A place to slow down and appreciate all of the beauty around you, allowing God's creation to fill you with joy...

Because there is always abundant beauty blossoming around you, even here in the cold month of December... Just look at the beauty that is here, in this sanctuary...

From the beautiful Christmas decorations, to all of you beautiful people...

So, instead of rushing towards Christmas and all the things you need to do...

What if we took advice from Isaiah... What could happen if you took time to notice the path around you? Allowing yourself to experience all the things that are blooming in your midst.

Because, as you all know, it is so easy to get wrapped into the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season...

Especially if you are someone who feels the need to do all of the things, and to go through all of the motions.

But the trouble that can happen when you do this, is that, you can forget to experience life... and you actually end up ignoring the emotions you are going through.

And I get it, so many of you are busy... And this is a busy time of year...

But if that is all you ever tell yourself, then you will miss out on what God is blooming in your midst...

After all, so much of life comes down to our experiences and our relationships. Relationships of course with others, with yourself and with God...

Which is why it is so important to really take time and to live into advent.

Embracing the mindset of advent to re-train your body, mind, and spirit to wait, and to wait with purpose...

And this Sunday, waiting with purpose, means, watching and absorbing all that is around you, to try and not rush to the end...

Because the good news of advent, is already being lived out among us every day... Because to most of society, it is the season of Christmas, which means that Christ is both here, and the birth of Christ is coming, no matter what...

And since this is true, then, there is nothing to rush to, only experiences to be had along the way to Christmas Day, and beyond...

Afterall if you don't carve out this time, nobody is going to do it for you.

And this time is so important, as it allows God to nurture what needs nurturing in you.

For God has planted every seed that you will ever need inside of you...

All you need to do, is allow yourself to experience the life-giving rain of God, and soak it all in.

Because this is a slow soaking rain, a rain that does not rush to the end.

The kind of rain that produces not only abundant blooms, but also, pools teeming with life and joy...

This is the rain brought from the Holy Spirit to revive God's purpose in you, so that you can share that with the world...

Because that is how true joy is spread.

Joy that God brings forth from inside of you...

Joy that all creation sings along God's Holy Way...

Afterall our third advent candle today burns for joy....

Because Advent leads to the greatest joy of all...The birth of Christ.

So, you are welcome to embrace the joy of Christmas now... And to share that joy with the world, the kind of joy birthed in Isaiah... And the kind of joy that both heaven and nature sing... Amen