

“Rejoicing on The Journey”
By Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday September 08, 2024

Readings:

Isaiah 35:1-10

Mark and I just had 2 weeks of holidays and we enjoyed travelling to Nova Scotia, and for part of the trip we road our bikes on a trail that led from Halifax to Lunenburg.

Most of the trail was excellent, but along the way we encountered a bridge closure, construction, and rough trails.

There are any number of headaches for travelers of every kind.

Has anyone ever gotten lost?

We have construction, road closures, lane reductions all the time it seems.

But listen to the picture Isaiah paints – a highway in the desert, a straight, flat road, where all travelers are safe.

The picture is of this open wide path, free of traffic jams, where all can safely, smoothly, travel all the way.

Who is on this road?

“They will come from east and west and from north and south and sit at table in the kingdom of God.”

God's people are on the road, the redeemed of the Lord.

They are coming from all directions and going to Jerusalem.

They are God's scattered people coming from all the corners of the earth, all taking this open, freeway to worship God.

Where are they going to ?

They are going home.

The name of home is Jerusalem, but in every real sense, the journey is a journey home.

God is gathering his people, making a way for them and for their return.

They will come to Zion, the city of God, with singing;

and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

It is a celebration journey, a journey home, done in praise and singing.

One of Isaiah's images is this vast paved way, with all God's people from everywhere, turning their feet towards home; towards God.

And along this freeway home, the whole land and landscape was being transformed.

The desert breaks forth with streams of living water.

A desert wasteland is not a patch of ground I would particularly like to travel.

Yet God is in the place.

The dry and barren land gives birth.

Substantial resurrection fills the earth.

The desert shall rejoice and blossom.

Like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

Streams break forth in the desert.

It is more than just the land that is healed and given new life.

The deaf shall hear,

the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless shall sing for joy.

The blind shall see and the weak shall be strengthened.

All who travel this holy Way will see the splendor of our God.

The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground bubbling springs.

We pray: God may Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth.

We live each day preparing the way for our Lord, bringing all things to readiness; our hearts, our lives, our homes, our church, our community, our world.

We are to bring justice to all our relationships, and do the work of peacemaking in our lives and in the world.

We are to be a healing force of reconciliation lifting up the oppressed, and setting the captives free.

We are people of the Way; the Way of holiness that Isaiah described, the way of Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Our feet are to be on this road Way.

Today Isaiah invites us to look around us as we journey, to see this Way for what it is becoming and what it will be.

We are invited to see those dry and weary places suddenly break forth with blossoms of new life.

Jesus himself claimed to be the spring of living water welling up to eternal life.

Our lives are to overflow with that life-giving water so we might bless other thirsty souls.

Practically and literally we are to bring clean water, safe drinking water, water for crops to places of drought, and places of need.

We are to see and proclaim that the deaf rejoice, the lame leap like the deer, the weak knees are strengthened, the blind can see, and all rejoice in the salvation of our God.

We proclaim that Jesus brought this healing life when he walked this earth and we, his followers, continue his work of healing and restoration.

We support hospitals and medical programs- here and around the world, continuing the work of our Lord.

We do not walk this Way alone.

There are many travelers on this broad thoroughfare.

We care for all those who journey with us, encouraging and strengthening each other.

We give a hand and reach out to those who are trying to find the Way.

Together we continue doing the work Jesus did, as we gladly make the journey together towards home.

Jesus the Son is the Way.

Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, God in flesh- models and lives the Way of holiness as the way of servanthood.

If you are feeling overwhelmed this morning, if you are already feeling busy and pressed and wondering how you are going to manage everything, you might consider learning Jesus' way. We are beginning the course Practicing the Way, and we are learning more intentionally together to walk in step with Jesus, which is not frantic and hurried, and overloaded and overwhelming. You might consider joining us as we learn together to Practice the way of Jesus.

There is one more surprise on this Way.

This highway is not just for us to journey towards God,

but God journeys towards us.

“God is coming.” is the cry of the prophets.

“God comes to us.” is the message of faith,
and God continues to move towards us.

The desert shall bloom and pools will well up in the parched land.

“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come.
He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and
ears of the deaf unstopped;
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;
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.

Today we come to our Lord’s table, another sign of
God’s refreshing love for us on this journey,
another sign that God comes towards us in Jesus,
and provides for us all along the way.
We are strengthened together, as we journey
towards home.

Prayer:

Forever Fresh and Refreshing Source, Living Water, Bright Garment of Dew, descend now and always in one endless, life-bestowing flow. Bring to us those waters that forever quench our thirst. Bring those waters, we pray, to the deserts of our hearts, that from their parched soil, life may spring anew. And more than this, enable that life-giving flow to pour from ourselves to enliven all around us. Send us from here rejoicing on this Holy Way. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.