

# THE WEARY WORLD Rejoices

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 35 | December 13, 2020

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## I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our Advent series exploring Isaiah's prophecies of the coming Messiah. In this Sunday's text, God's people remain in exile, but look forward to returning to their homeland.

## II. Connecting with One Another

What is the furthest away you have travelled? What did it feel like to return home?

## III. Study the Text

- a. Students of Isaiah have noted the prophet's use of contrast, his intentional setting of one condition or situation against another. This occurs various places throughout the book, including between chapters 34 and 35. While **Isaiah 34** details the desolation of the nations, chapter **35** describes the future glory of Zion.

Each chapter alludes to the desert. What do you think of when you think of the desert? What does it signify to you? What words would you use to describe it?

What events in the Scriptures take place in the desert?

- b. **Read Isaiah 35.1-2.**

Which verb tense is used in these first two verses (past, present, or future)?

Why is that important to notice?

- c. Isaiah writes these words while God's people are in exile – and a large desert lay between them and their homeland. Think back to the words you would use to describe the desert, then look again at these first two verses.

How do you think Isaiah's initial audience heard these two verses? Why?

In what ways are you in a "desert" season of life? What, if anything, gives you hope to "return home"?

- d. **Read Isaiah 35.3-4.**

The verb tenses remain the same in verse 4, but are preceded by three specific commands. What are they?

Who in your life has strengthened your hands, steadied your knees, and spoken words of hope to you? How did that affect you?



Who are you being called to strengthen, steady, and speak to?

- e. Why does the prophet instruct the people to strengthen, steady, and speak?

What are they preparing for?

- f. Recall that God's people were in captivity in Babylon. Why is the word "vengeance" necessary? How would Isaiah's audience have heard that word?

On what would you like God to take vengeance now? If you're tempted to name a person (who is made in God's image!), try digging a little deeper into *why* they come to mind.

- g. **Read Isaiah 35.5-7.**

How does verse 4 relate to verse 5? In other words, what must happen for the good news of verse 5 to occur?

Do you think verses 5-6 are meant literally? Or figuratively?

- h. **Read Matthew 11.1-6.**

Why do you think Jesus answers the way he does?

How do you think John the Baptist understood Jesus' answer?

- i. Returning to **Isaiah 35**, what do you *now* think? Are verses 5-6 literal or figurative?

- j. **Read Isaiah 35.8-10.**

Building a road in the desert was neither financially savvy, nor feasible, in ancient times. But what is this road *for*? Where would it take God's people?

- k. Why do you think Isaiah calls this highway "the Way of Holiness"?

Why can't the "unclean" or "wicked fools" walk upon this road?

- l. What does it mean to walk the way of holiness in following after Jesus?

Where do you sometimes slip off the way of holiness? How is God calling you to return to the road?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Thank God for those who have strengthened, steadied, and spoken into your life.

- b. Ask the Holy Spirit to equip you, empower you, and reveal those in your life for whom you could strengthen, steady, and speak to during this difficult season.

- c. Pray for wisdom to walk "the way of holiness."

#### V. Digging Deeper

- a. Return to **Matthew 11**, looking again at verses **1-6**, then continuing through **15**.

What other allusions to Isaiah 35 do you see? Why might people have thought John the Baptist was "another Isaiah"?

