Good Morning!

“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. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.” Isaiah 35:1-2

Today I am looking at Isaiah 35. It is often quoted in the New Testament. In the first 39 chapters, Isaiah is known to be full of condemnation for Israel and all the nations around her. It is just one warning after another, which, by the way, Israel and the nations justly deserved. But 35 jumps out at us as a relief from that with its promise of a future restoration for God’s people.

Isaiah is speaking God’s promises here – so they are sure. That land shall flourish is the promise in verses 1 & 2. Lebanon, Mount Carmel and Sharon received much more rain than the rest of Israel. The lush greenery of that area will be in the desert areas of the land; meaning the land will produce like never before. In fact, the theme of something happening like it had never done before is throughout the promises of this chapter. This is exactly why this chapter has been a favorite of Hymn writers, poets and the rest of us since it was written.

The Lord is talking to a weary and discouraged people. In the next two verses He will address the exhausted and those grown feeble from anxiety. He will tell those overcome with fear to take courage because your God is coming. He will judge the oppressor fairly and He will save you. The weary will gain new strength because of God’s promises.

“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.  
For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.” Isaiah 35:5-6

The chapter continues in this vein and concludes with:

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; *and* everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Lettie Cowman was a missionary to Japan along with her husband Charles. She was forced to return to the States because of Charles’ failing health. While she nursed him until he died, she wrote the daily devotional “Streams in the Desert,” the title taken from verse 6. If you do not understand that this chapter is between God’s wrath against the nations (chp. 34) and the King of Assyria’s dreadful invasion of Judah (chp. 36) then you will miss Lettie’s reason for the title. Her devotional was written as a personal expression of her anxiety and pain – and God’s faithfulness to her even in that pain. Many people found help from someone writing from the same level of pain as they were feeling.

Isaiah’s passage was a comfort to the people of Judah. It was a comfort to those living in Jesus time under the heavy boot of Rome. It is a comfort to everyone who suffers - because it doesn’t remain in lament. It sees the reality of God’s sovereignty, His love, and His care for us and finds rest in His future restoration of His people. You can understand the promises of God flowing as streams of refreshing water in the desert of your life. It is God’s pleasure to do something that has never happened before.

The answer is: the recompense of the Lord will come – but He will save you! (v. 4)

In Jesus Christ, the God who keeps us until the day…

Pastor EA