

Be Born In Us Today
A Series of Special Services for Advent

Be Born In Us Today Bringing Guidance

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.
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.
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.

Isaiah 35:8-10

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all." Do you know who said that? It was Helen Keller. And who is she? Well, Keller was born in 1880 and if you know anything about her life, you know that it was full of setbacks and hardships. At 19 months old, she contracted Scarlet Fever and that illness left her blind and deaf. Without being able to see or hear the normal challenges of life would be almost impossible, wouldn't you agree?

But with the attitude that life is a daring adventure, she refused to quit. She refused to let any limitation hold her back. She was accepted into Radcliffe College at the age of 16 and she graduated cum laude. Her speaking skills and gentle spirit won her the admiration of audiences around the globe.

That's right; her speaking! Though she was deaf, blind, and couldn't speak, that didn't stop her from learning to communicate, even to speak. And speak she did! She excelled at public

speaking, even became an international celebrity for her intellect and wit. Helen Keller made the most out of life and accomplished more than most people who see with 20/20 vision and can hear every word you say!

She wrote bestsellers, she advocated for the blind, and the deaf. She also wrote about and talked about faith.

Helen Keller lived according to her words: "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all!"

That's the spirit of Isaiah's words in our Bible text today.

Isaiah says, ***"Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness. It shall belong to those who walk on the way.*** Isaiah 35:4,8

I want to get on that road, that highway, don't you? I want to always know what life is like when God comes with forgiveness of the past, the free gift of heaven for the future, and a way forward that makes each day an adventure of following the One Who loves us with an everlasting love!

One of the greatest problems among us believers today is that Christians have lost their sense of adventure. Christians have settled for a boring life when they are supposed to be living the adventure of faith in Jesus, the adventure of a life filled with His love in a loveless world. This "Highway, this way of His holiness," is a way that guides our steps in this world. And this highway, this way of holiness raises our sights from the temporary things of this life, up to the eternal things of life with Him forever!

For Christians around the world, this is the season of Advent. It's not the "holiday, shopping, party-scene season," you know, the season that everyone regrets every year. No, this is the season of Advent, a time to re-ignite the adventure of faith in God. This is a time that we remember when God sent His Son to be born into this world so that our adventure might not merely last this lifetime, but an eternity.

Just think about that word, Advent, you can already see and hear its connection to Ad...ven....ture.

Isaiah, the author of our reading for today, was pretty bold about inviting people to put their trust in God and get in on this adventure with Him. He said, "**Rejoice. Behold your God.**" This adventure is coming! So, "Behold! Pay attention! Your God is coming."

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

Isaiah 35:1-2,10

Isaiah chapter 35 is filled with joy. A gushing joy. So much joy that you can't even express it. Joy bubbling over. Incredible indescribable joy. Unbelievable joy. In fact, Isaiah couldn't contain himself when writing our text for today. He was so full of joy that he kept saying it over and over and over again. Rejoice. Sing for joy!

You might think that Isaiah was writing about all of this when things were going well, when there was an obvious time for joy. But that wasn't the case in his life. At the time of this writing there was no reason for joy at all. Isaiah's hometown of Jerusalem was not doing well. The once full city was empty of people. It was a shell of its former self. And the situation was getting worse. There was no military to even defend her.

And the powerful Assyrians, they were taking over the whole world at the time. They were an unstoppable force. They had just destroyed the nearby sister kingdom of Samaria to the north and word had it that they were marching on Jerusalem. Isaiah's King, King Hezekiah of Judah, looked for some help. He knew that there

was no way Jerusalem could defend herself against this army. Destruction was certain. The Assyrians were known for their cruelty. There would be no mercy. So Hezekiah looked to another mighty power for help, the Kingdom of Egypt.

But Isaiah, the prophet of God, told Hezekiah don't align yourself with Egypt. Isaiah told Hezekiah to trust in the Lord, not in Egypt's army. Isaiah told King Hezekiah that Egypt couldn't help. Instead, the King should trust in God and rejoice in the adventure. He should *overflow* with joy

Why would Isaiah say that? Why would he say rejoice? There is only one reason: behold your God will come to save you. And when God is in action for you, let the adventure begin! When God is acting on our behalf, bring on the challenges, bring on the struggles, and let the joys be multiplied! That's Isaiah's word for God's people then, and that's God's Word for us today!

The promised adventure of joy is simple. God is coming. In fact,

“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.’” Luke 2:10-11

God has come. God acts. We can entrust our lives to Him. And when we look back on this Word, we can even be more joyful. Why? Because God the Father not only acted to save Israel long ago, He acted to save us by sending His Son Jesus into the world to rescue us from sin, from death, and from the power of Satan himself.

The adventure of life really begins when you realize there is someone in your life who can overcome what is against you; who can provide a way through where you see only obstacles. When someone trustworthy enters your life, life is not a foolish risk, it is a daring adventure with One Who can guide your way through.

That's what happened to Helen Keller. She was faced with overwhelming odds, she had enormous challenges, but then Anne Sullivan entered her life. Partially blind herself and a former ward of the state, Anne was well aware of the kind of life that awaited Helen, were she to be put in an institution. But Anne was also aware of the miracles that were possible.

With this in mind, she arrived at the Keller home, and the instruction began. She had been through all the struggles. She had experienced all the frustrations and now she would persistently love and teach Keller until she "saw things, maybe not with her eyes, but with her heart and soul." Life changed for Keller when Sullivan entered her life.

When someone is there who loves you, who has experienced all your struggles and pains and now guides you through it all, it would be wise to trust them and follow them.

Isaiah is pointing you to someone even greater than Anne Sullivan was for Helen Keller. Isaiah says: "**Rejoice. Behold your God.**" Behold your God, the One Who has saved you, the One Who *will* save you and me, the One Who provides a way of life where there is only sin, and death, and destruction.

God loves you more than anyone else. God knows your struggles because He entered this world in Jesus and walked through an ordinary life of hard work, temptations, sickness and death all around. God is an excellent guide! God guided the nation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt to freedom. God guided His people from the captivity of the Babylonians and brought them back to the land He had promised them, a place of security and identity. But ultimately, God acted and rescued all people from the guilt of their sin, from the devil's right to lock you up in hell for all eternity, from despair and futility in your life now. He came and acted through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ our Savior. The Bible is certain. The adventure is sure. God is coming, put your faith in Him. Behold your God, He comes to save.

That's Isaiah's message to King Hezekiah. Into their situation of fears and terrors of Assyria coming on them. Into their situation of the vulnerability and insecurity of their home, the city of Jerusalem. Into their lives Isaiah proclaimed ultimate joy and hope in the God Who will act for them in the end. Even though all looked lost at that time; even though their nation deserved God's wrath and anger, Isaiah told King Hezekiah and all of Jerusalem to rejoice. Behold your God. That's it, and that's what you ultimately need. Behold your God. He will ultimately come to save as only He can save!

***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

And that's the message for you today too. Your life is like a desert. A desert place is lifeless, dry, no water. Your life has been dry – your soul has been thirsty for the refreshing waters of hope, of love, of purpose, of security. Your life is like a wilderness. In a wilderness, wild animals can attack suddenly. You've experienced sudden vicious attacks – you lost your job and you didn't see it coming. You lost your health and didn't see it coming. You lost spouse or a close friend to death and you didn't see it coming. You've been attacked by vicious words, by attacked by drugs, attacked by debt, attacked by your own vices.

When Jesus arrived that first Christmas, the Bible said that God had made a way through the desert. Jesus built an obstacle-free way between you and God above. He has shown you that path so that you can see that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's promises to save you and all people.

“[Jesus] answered them, ‘Go and tell ... what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.”

Luke 7:22

Jesus even quotes Isaiah when talking about His own work on earth. Jesus said, ***"because of Me, the blind are receiving their sight. The deaf are able to hear. And the lame are leaping."*** Translation: rejoice! Behold your God. He has come to save you and me!

That's the message for today. Rejoice. Behold your God, and let the adventure in Him, with Him, begin. ***"Rejoice. Behold your God."***

That's why we rejoice so much every year when Christmas rolls around.

Now is not the time to seek other sources of strength and confidence. They won't last. They won't cut it. So listen to Isaiah's warning. Don't put your trust for life and eternity in anything but the God Who loves you, Who saves you, Who guides you by His Word in this life and forever. Behold your God, the One Who comes to save.

Know for certain that God not only came then to save Hezekiah, He came that first Christmas in the flesh for all people, you included. He came to pave the highway of righteousness so that you can live with God now and forever. He came to take your place, to live your life perfectly before God the Father. Every year believers look at Jesus, the baby in the manger, and we say, "Rejoice. Behold your God."

What's also amazing is that Jesus Christ, is not only God come to earth in a baby boy, but He also came to become a man who died in your place in order to rescue all who are held in the jail of sin.

***And the ransomed of the LORD (YOU) shall return
and come to Zion (HEAVEN) with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their (YOUR) heads;
they (YOU) shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.***

Isaiah 35:10

Using Isaiah's language; Jesus died to pave the highway of righteousness in the desert. Jesus walked the way of a real human life to lead the way, to pave the way of righteousness. Jesus died to bring the desert to bloom, to give new life to you. At Christmas as a baby in the manger, on Good Friday as the suffering man on the cross -- Behold your God; the One Who came to save you as only He can.

And even more; Jesus is alive even now. Jesus rose from the dead. And because He rose, you too will walk the holy highway. Because He rose, there is now a road that leads to God's holy city. Now, Jesus IS WITH YOU, and once day your body will be raised from death, put together in a new miraculous, perfect way, and body and soul you will be with God forever in heaven. This, too, is a free gift of grace from the God who loves you so. Just believe. Trust Him. Follow Him. It's an adventure. And, rejoice, behold your God, the One Who came to save you as only He can.

That's the Advent invitation to adventure. Let your God guide you through this life. Let your adventure in Him begin and never ever end. That's my prayer for you today. In His Name. Amen!