

Expecting Joy

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Isaiah 35:1–5; Isaiah 35:7–10; Matthew 11

Expecting Joy

Third week of Advent

Change is happening

John the Baptist was a prophet but he was the last of the old covenant prophets

[Matthew 11:2–11](#) (NASB95)

2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples

3 and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”

4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see:

5 *the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

6 “And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

Jesus’ Tribute to John

7 As these men were going *away*, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 “But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings’ palaces!

9 “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

10 “This is the one about whom it is written,

‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You,

Who will prepare Your way before You.’

11“Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

So familiar with the bible and Jesus that we miss how radical he was

So radical they needed someone to get people ready for him.

The connection between counter cultural formation and Mission.

John the Baptist biography

In the wilderness then soon after the baptism of Jesus he was arrested by Herod.

So we tend to read the Scriptures through the lens of what we believe instead of what it says.

This sets us up for two traps of the devil.

Trap #1 Being offend by what Jesus is not doing.

Being offend by what Jesus is not doing.

John in prison and ask why?

Sickness, poverty, offense, struggle.

People who don't know God ask, "If God is love, why?"

I don't know.

But I know He is good.

This is the wilderness. This is the place of testing and trial and determining who God really is in your life.

Will you hold on to Jesus when the whole world falls down around you?

You may feel stretched and pulled but God is for you. He is Good.

This wilderness is leading to great fruitfulness.

But the bible does not say john was bitter about being in jail.

[Matthew 11:2-11](#) (NASB95)

2Now when John, while imprisoned, **heard of the works of Christ**, he sent *word* by his disciples

3and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

Niv 2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah

Revised version When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing

Trap #2;

Being offended by what Jesus is doing.

Because we think he should be doing something else.

[Matthew 11:4-6](#)

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

5 *the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

6 "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

He is testing your heart to see which kingdom rules it. The kingdom of love and forgiveness, or the kingdom of bitterness, offense, judgment.

Jesus was ministering to the people on the margins of society.

Countercultural formation – the hurting matter to God

Mission – Spending his few precious years reaching those who could do nothing for him.

[Matthew 11](#)

7 As these men were going *away*, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

8 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' palaces!"

Don't waste your wilderness.

9 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

10 "This is the one about whom it is written,

'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You,

Who will prepare Your way before You.'

11 "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

God took you through the wilderness to see a kingdom that looks nothing like this world. In light of eternity don't focus your life on things that won't make it to the afterlife.

Our jobs are holy to God. Our tithe is the offering of our life. Its holy.

But our heart has to be quick to forgive, quick to give up idols.

When we get saved the whole paradigm of our life changes. But over time, if we don't undergo counter cultural spiritual formation it goes right back.

That's what happened to Israel and why they needed John the Baptist.

They needed to be reminded of the words of Isaiah.

[Isaiah 35:1-2](#) (NASB95)

Zion's Happy Future

1 The wilderness and the desert will be glad,
And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom;
Like the crocus
2 It will blossom profusely
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the glory of the Lord,
The majesty of our God.

If you stay faithful to God in the wilderness, he will redeem the years with joy.

He will take it, turn it to joy and empower you for the mission God has on your life.

[Isaiah 35:3–5](#) (NASB95)

3Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.

4Say to those with anxious heart,

“Take courage, fear not.

Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance;

The recompense of God will come,

But He will save you.”

5Then the eyes of the blind will be opened

And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

As we tell people about Jesus, we open eyes and unstop ears. They can hear and see the goodness of God.

What is the effect?

[Isaiah 35:7–10](#) (NASB95)

7The scorched land will become a pool

And the thirsty ground springs of water;

In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,

Grass *becomes* reeds and rushes.

8A highway will be there, a roadway,

And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.

The unclean will not travel on it,

But it *will* be for him who walks *that* way,

And fools will not wander *on it*.

9No lion will be there,

Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;

These will not be found there.

But the redeemed will walk *there*,

10And the ransomed of the Lord will return

And come with joyful shouting to Zion,

With everlasting joy upon their heads.

They will find gladness and joy,

And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

When the Gospel gets in people God starts to supernaturally turn your failures to your greatest strength

We create wells of joy for God as we share the kingdom.

We are making room in our lives for the coming of Jesus. He is removing things and calling us to something more beautiful.