

**Something Different**  
Just What We Needed  
Isaiah 35:1-10  
December 11, 2016

Today, we are starting a new series entitled, "Just What We Needed." You know, as I reflect upon Christmas past to today, I remember certain years and what I found under the Christmas tree.

**COMMENT**

Certainly, getting what you want is a wonderful thing, but getting what you really need is something else altogether.

So, during the remainder of Advent, we are going to look at what God did that first Christmas. That He gave us "Just What We Needed."

Today, that which He gave us was "Something Different." I invite you to turn in your bulletin to page 5. We've given you a place to take notes.

Something different. To get something different this Christmas would be nice. I'm not talking about a singing bass for your wall or an all-expense paid trip to the South Pole.

I'm talking about waking up Christmas morning and finding a different world... one without all the animosity or vitriol, one that is full of abundance and not scarcity, one that is dominated by love for neighbor and God instead of love for pleasure and self, one where the country is unified, where Democrats no longer cry and Republicans no longer gloat, one where the color of one's skin or gender or religion or social economic status no longer matter.

Too nebulous for you? What if I bring it home? Think about the worst aspect of your life right now: job, relationship(s), health, etc. What emotion would you use to describe it? Write that down in your bulletin.

Now wouldn't it be nice to receive something different for Christmas this year?

That's exactly what God promised in Scripture.

I invite you to hear these words from the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 35:

**READ ISAIAH 35**

What does God say will be different with the coming of Christmas? He says in verse 1 that the wilderness and the desert will be turned into blossom and life, that it will be a glad place.

Now, I don't need to tell you that the desert is not a glad place. It's dry and parched. In places it's just moving sand; in other places, it's hot sheets of stone; in still other places, the pebbles are the size of golf balls, black as the night, and always shiny and hot and hard.

It does not rejoice. It drains the energy from you. It never quite has life – what life there is hides away, survives on little and blooms very seldom.

But write this down:

**In God, the desert will be glad!**

The wilderness will rejoice! It will burst into bloom and shout for joy! It's a metamorphosis! And it's coming, says the prophet... so strengthen your hands, steady your knees, be strong, and do not be afraid.

This Christmas, God is coming to save you! Isaiah says deserts are blooming, invalid people are being restored. Verse 5-6:

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.*<sup>1</sup>

Deserts are blooming, invalid people are being restored.

Have you thought about that... invalid people are often treated as in-valid people. People without worth, or value.

But with the coming of Christmas, **the nothings of creation have become something.**

They will see, they will hear, they will leap, they will speak when Christmas comes.

We see this in Acts 3:

*One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.*<sup>2</sup>

Later in Peter's first letter, he says this:

*But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you – from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.*<sup>3</sup>

Once you were not a people – you were in-valid, but now you are a chosen people, a people belonging to God.

God has transformed His creation. He has taken a people made in His image, who through sin had made themselves in-valid, and He has, in His Son, born of a virgin, dead on a Cross, risen into glory, given us back the value we first had in Him. Once you had not received mercy, now you have received mercy.

Christmas is the season of Emmanuel. This is my third point:

With Christmas, **God is with us**, and there can never, ever, be a better cause for celebration.

Isaiah prophesized:

*"All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')."*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 35:5-6 (NRSV)

<sup>2</sup> Acts 3:1-8 (NRSV)

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 2:9-10 (MSG)

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

When John the Baptizer was becoming uncertain of his own future, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask the question, “Are you the One, or should we wait for another?”

Christ’s answer was simple – He quoted from today’s Isaiah 35 passage – “Tell him what you see, the eyes of the blind are opened, the ears of the deaf are unstopped, the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shouts for joy.”

In more words than were necessary He was saying, “I am the One!”

Observe the fulfillment of prophecy! Look at broken, in-valid people being restored! Water is gushing forth in the wilderness. Streams in the desert. The burning sand has become a delightful pool. The land which at first sucked in the moisture is now a bubbling spring.

And this is my final point:

**It’s turnaround time.** It’s Christmas!

Isaiah says,

*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.*<sup>5</sup>

Before us is the Highway of Holiness. It’s for those whom Christ came to redeem. He has paid the ransom. He has set us free. We will never be able to outrun the gladness and joy which is the blessing from the One who says, “I am the One!” Sorrow and sighing, on the other hand will flee away.

This celebration today says, “I believe this!” You are here because this promise is for you. This is the celebration of the greatest event which has ever, ever taken place.

The Almighty entered into His creation to take sadness and sighing away from us and to overwhelm us with His gladness and joy.

Listen to the voices of those who discovered this in the beginning, when Christ was born among us:

From Mary, the virgin mother. God chose to enter the world through her womb:

*“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.”*<sup>6</sup>

From Zechariah, the father of John:

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.*<sup>7</sup>

From the angels on the night of the first Christmas:

*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!*<sup>8</sup>

From Simeon, the old priest in the Temple:

*for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*<sup>9</sup>

And you, how will you add your voice to the great chorus of praise? How will your journey be on this great Highway of Holiness? How will you savor the great love which God has for you? Rejoice in Him, celebrate the new dawn.

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<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 35:10 (NRSV)

<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:46-48 (NRSV)

<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:68 (NRSV)

<sup>8</sup> Luke 2:14 (NRSV)

<sup>9</sup> Luke 2:30-32 (NRSV)

Because Christ has come, everything is different now! God is with us!!!