

# Streams in the Desert Isaiah 35:1–10

Grace UMC Iuka

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## 1. The Setting: A People in Their Own Wilderness

Isaiah spoke to people who were tired and afraid. Judah lived under the shadow of a powerful empire, unsure what tomorrow would bring. Their faith felt worn thin, and their land felt threatened. Into that fear, God offered a picture full of color and life: deserts blooming, weak knees strengthened, broken bodies healed, and God's people walking home on a safe road.

Isaiah 35 reminds us that God does not wait for perfect conditions to move. He brings joy into barren places. He restores what feels empty. He shows up with hope when we feel worn out.

Advent picks up this same promise. It isn't wishful thinking—it's trusting that God is already working in ways we may not see yet.

## 2. Joy in the Desert (vv. 1–2)

Isaiah describes deserts bursting with blossoms. It's surprising, almost impossible, and that's the point. God brings life where no one expects it.

### Key idea:

God doesn't avoid barren places—He transforms them.

Isaiah uses places known for beauty—Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon—to show that God restores the driest places with the richest splendor. Even creation sings when God steps in.

### For us today:

Where you feel dried out—spiritually, emotionally, or physically—God is able to bring new life. Joy may start small, like a single flower in the sand, but it will grow.

## 3. Strength for the Weary (vv. 3–4)

Isaiah turns from creation to the people. He tells them to strengthen weak hands and steady shaky knees. Those aren't the words you say to folks who feel strong and confident—they're words for people hanging on by a thread.

And then Isaiah gives the heart of the promise:

**“Your God will come.”**

Not “might.” Not “maybe.” Will.

God comes to save, to restore, to lift His people. Advent joy grows from this truth: God keeps showing up.

## 4. Healing and Restoration (vv. 5–6)

Isaiah describes blind eyes opening, deaf ears hearing, and people who couldn't walk suddenly leaping like deer. These aren't small changes. These are complete renewals.

Centuries later, Jesus points to this very passage when John the Baptist's disciples ask if He is truly the Messiah. Jesus essentially says, “Look around—Isaiah's promise is happening right now.”

### Key idea:

Where human ability stops, God's healing and restoring grace begins.

The same God still works in the broken, hurting corners of our lives.

## 5. Water in the Wilderness (vv. 6–7)

Isaiah describes streams in the desert and pools of water where there used to be cracking sand. Places that were once home to jackals become places of growth.

Water is a sign of God's presence—life, renewal, and the Spirit's work. In Scripture, when God brings water, He is bringing hope.

**For our faith:**

The Spirit makes things grow even when we feel stuck. No part of your life is too dry for God to bring new life.

## **6. The Highway of Holiness (vv. 8–10)**

God prepares a road—a safe, protected path—for His people. No danger threatens them. No predator lurks nearby. Only the redeemed walk this way, and God leads them forward step by step.

Isaiah ends with a promise that sits like a crown on the whole chapter:

**Joy will overtake them.**

Not temporary joy. Not fragile joy. Everlasting joy.

Sorrow and sighing will flee because God Himself guides His people home.

## **7. Advent Joy Today**

Isaiah 35 tells us that God is restoring everything—from the cracked soil of creation to the cracked places inside us.

Advent joy isn't about pretending life is easy.

It isn't about ignoring the desert.

It isn't about forcing a smile.

Advent joy is knowing:

- God meets us in hard places.
- God brings life where we least expect it.
- God strengthens us when we feel weak.
- God is already at work making all things new.

When the days are short and the nights feel long, we remember that Jesus came into a world that felt like a wilderness and filled it with hope. And He is coming again to finish what He began.

## **8. Key Takeaways**

- God brings joy to barren places.
- Weakness is not failure—God meets us there.
- Jesus fulfills Isaiah's promise of healing and restoration.
- The "Way of Holiness" is a path God prepares, not a path we earn.
- Sorrow doesn't get the last word—joy does.

## **Closing Thought**

Where is your desert right now? Isaiah wants you to know that those places are not forgotten. They are the very places where God loves to plant joy.

God is coming.

God is restoring.

God is making all things new.

And even the wilderness sings when He shows up.