

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **A Time of Joy: Immanuel, God with Us**

December 11th, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:46-55**

1. **The Significance of Immanuel, God with Us**

o **Promised Deliverance**

Throughout the history of Israel, we see a recurring theme of the Lord delivering the people of God from oppression from their enemies. Sometimes the suffering was self-inflicted because the people sinned against God and brought judgement on themselves. Sometimes, the judgement involved the people being conquered by their enemies and going into exile. When they were sent into exile in foreign lands, the redemption of the Lord meant their coming back to the land of Israel.

Isaiah 35 describes what happens when the Lord shows up to deliver. In this case, the deliverance involved the people returning to their land from exile.

**1The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;**

like the crocus [rose] 2 it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing...

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

**5Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;**

**6then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.**

**For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and stream in the desert**

Isaiah 35 NRSV

All this would happen because the Lord showed up to bless Israel and was with them.

Israel understood this, and Mary understood this when the angel appeared to her and explained that she was going to give birth to the Messiah. Thus, Mary's words echo Isaiah 35.

Recall: Israel at the time Jesus was born was under the oppressive rule of the Roman empire.

49 the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Luke 1:49-53 NRSV

- **The Power of Immanuel, God with Us**

The presence of the Lord causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the mute to speak. Even the wilderness and desert shall blossom. Isaiah described what God did then, but Isaiah 35 is also a prophesy of what the Messiah, the Anointed One would do in our lives.

Jesus, the Christ (Anointed One, Messiah) described his purpose in the words of Isaiah 61 thus:

**"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**

Luke 4:18-19 NRSV

In fact, this is the most important message that the early Church preached and emphasized - that Jesus is the Anointed One whose presence in our lives brings about our deliverance from present difficulties and gives us life eternal:

36You know the message he [God] sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced:

38God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem.”

Acts 10:36-39 NRSV

2. An Example: Joseph

- Joseph was at one time a slave, and later a prisoner but that did not hold him down. As a slave, he was a “successful man.” As a prisoner, he was still successful. How could that be?
 - “The Lord was with Joseph”
 - It was due to “the blessing of the Lord” - v5

2The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. **3His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands.**

5 ... the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; **the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.**

21But **the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer**

23The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, **because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.**

Genesis 39 NRSV

What difficulties are you going through in your life today?

Do you believe and hold on the promise of "God with us"?

Do you live your life in the confidence that the God who is with us will deliver and sustain you?

3. **Our Response: A Time of Joy**

○ **Be Strong, Fear Not!**

With the promise of Immanuel, Isaiah shows us how we are to respond:

3Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
4Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."
Isaiah 35:3-4 NRSV

○ **Be Joyful!**

Again, Isaiah shows us what to do.

"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."
Isaiah 35:10 NRSV

Let us rejoice and magnify the Lord with Mary:

**"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.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name."
Luke 1:46-49 NRSV**