



Awaiting His Return  
Isaiah 65:17–25

Waiting can be one of the most exciting and simultaneously difficult times in our lives. Consider pregnancy. The longer you wait with child the more difficult it gets, not to mention the pain of labor and delivery. It's difficult to wait for the child you've wanted to hold for so long too. But it's exciting as well. With every day that passes you know you're closer to holding your brand new child. This kind of waiting characterized the people of Israel. They awaited a savior, experiencing both the difficulty and joy of waiting. When Jesus was born everything changed. Now, today, we await as well. We wait through the pain of suffering and evil, but we wait with confident joy, knowing Jesus will return.

The future, complete joy that we will have when Christ returns should compel us to live with joy in the present.

- As you reflect on the message, what stood out to you? What is something you are still thinking about?
- What is something from the message that challenged you? How are you wrestling with that challenge?
- What question(s) do you have from the message?
- What is at least one practical takeaway from the message?

Isaiah 35:1–10

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

**2** it shall blossom abundantly  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

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

**3** Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

**4** Say to those who have an anxious heart,  
“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God  
will come with vengeance,  
with the recompense of God.  
He will come and save you.”

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

**6** 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;

**7** the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

**8** 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.[a]

**9** 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.

**10** 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.

- As we continue in the season of Advent, how has the Lord been near to you, and/or what has he been teaching you about himself?
- Reflect back to Isaiah 65:17–25 last week. How does Isaiah 35:1–10 compare to Isaiah 65?
- Why is it important that not only creation is renewed but humanity is renewed as well?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–28. Why does Paul say the resurrection is essential to the renewal of creation?
- Isaiah 35:4 say, “Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold your God will come with vengeance with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.’” As we approach Christmas, what are you anxious and/or fearful about?
- How should the first coming of Jesus give you courage and strength to face your anxieties and fears? How should the return of Jesus give you courage and strength to face your anxieties and fears?
- What can we do during Advent to increase our faith and trust in the Lord?
- Turn to Revelation 21:3–4. Why is the presence of God *the* necessary ingredient in a renewed earth with resurrection people?
- Read Isaiah 35:10. As we anticipate Jesus’ return, how can we best practice the celebration and praise that awaits us in the new heaven and new earth? How might Christmas help us with this?
- As you close, pray this prayer we prayed together on Sunday.

Father, we thank you that you have already sent your son Jesus to us for the first time, to usher in your Kingdom and bring us salvation.

As we now await the second coming of Jesus, help us take heart in what is to come and share that joy with the world around us. May the future resurrection of your people and creation compel us to live in faith and confidence now.

This Advent season, teach us to reflect on the Christmas story and anticipate your return and the resurrection.

We pray with the saints everywhere: “Come, Lord Jesus.”

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen