

## Travelers on the Holy Way – God prepares the way, not us



- Holy way – new exodus, direct line home, pilgrimage way to Zion
- Unclean – made clean!!
- Fools – morally “directionally challenged”
- Redeemed – theme used mainly in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Isaiah; Lord as Israel’s redeemer, kinship idea, identity
- Safety and security emphasized

Okay. Now I just want to say a few things about this language here. This holy way: again this new Exodus is kind of a direct line home that has a pilgrimage effect to it, like we're walking as pilgrims back to our sacred home in our sacred spot.

*No unclean shall be on it.* It used to be thought that that was kind of a divisive thing. But maybe it's a promise. There will be no unclean on it because God has made everyone clean. Okay, God's creation-transforming power has made everyone clean.

But doesn't mean that there won't be fools, but fools here the word is kind of those who can mean those who are morally directionally challenged, you know. Yeah, they'll be there. Okay, they'll walk through.

And then it's the language of the redeemed. This is language that is often used God is Redeemer in Isaiah, Israel is the redeemed people. It comes from a kinship idea. The Redeemer is the one whose closest to you that, when you have to sell your land or something, takes it on. So it's a kinship identity language. This is who you are to God.

Not just wayward Israelites: you are God's redeemed. And the safety and security, you don't have to worry about enemies. You don't have to worry about wild beasts. You can flourish when you're safe and secure. You can flourish.

*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing and everlasting Joy shall be on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

## Isaiah 35.10

- And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- Ransomed – Exodus, exile
- Joy – gladness, mirth, festivity
- Flee – take flight, disappear



Okay, Ransom language also has hints of Exodus language and Exile. Again, the language of joy here is not only just gladness and mirth but festivity. The picture you have here is a picture of what is call the Simchat Torah, or a public celebration and festival of God giving the Torah to God's chosen

people. You go out into the street with the Torah Scrolls and you sing and dance for the blessings God has given you.

And that's the same kind of joy. It's just not something that you experience in your heart. It's something the entire community experiences and it's so exuberant about you've got to take it out into the streets. Sing and dance and do all that stuff that Lutherans would never do, but some of our other Christian siblings know how to do this. You are home. You are safe. You are where God has intended you to be. All of creation has been transformed. You have been made clean and transformed, and all creation may flourish in God's presence, in God's care, in God's love and mercy, and be what God created them to be.

## Thoughts and reflections

- Transformations of human and nonhuman creation
- Call for the community to participate – they have an identity as the people of God and a mission to support one another and proclaim the Good News. This is really good news.
- Inertia – new story and new song to share and live
- There is a future hope despite our present reality, grounded in God.
- We can move forward into an uncertain future, knowing that God is both already there and also with us on our journey to the future.
- Communal and public joy.
- People, community and creation rejoice and flourish

There's some final thoughts here: recall that this transformation is both of human and non-human creation so that they may flourish. Folks, it isn't just about us, right? And it isn't about us as individuals, but us as community. And the community is called to participate into God's future, to overcome their inertia, to overcome their fearful hearts and anxiety among the community. That at different times people will take on different roles, so that they can have this mission of supporting one another and proclaiming the good news. God is coming. God is here. God is saving us.

And so they have a new story and a new song to sing, and the human song of joy and festivity joins creation song of joyful gladness and celebration and a whole new songscape, soundscape, as humans and creation celebrate the goodness of God.

And it's a call to remind us that we are called to practise an imagination to sit there and say, oh that sounds really, really good. That'll never happen. Yeah, no, no. No, that is not our calling. Our calling is to say that the future is God's future. And we have hope because we know that it is God's future. It's grounded in God and who we know God to be.

And that allows us the imagination to move forward into an uncertain future. It's a lot of anxiety, a lot of anxiety as we do, such that some of us may be pushed into that rather than choose. But the invitation is here. Can we imagine this? This is the promise we've received. That we are called to live lives of joy, in relationship with each other in relationship with God and in relationship with creation.

And the promise of Isaiah 35 is that people and community and creation may rejoice and flourish because of God's life-giving life-transforming power and the desire to bring creation back to as God intended it to be. The prophet faced hard work and we will see that people leave and go back to Jerusalem, but not everyone. There will always be a vibrant community in Babylon as well.

You know, not everyone can claim this and some claim it in Babylon as opposed to Jerusalem. But God is present in both of those communities. And both of those communities find ways of joy and rejoicing and imagination of the future that God can bring.

Well, my time is over. Thank you.