

Sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent, Year A
16.xii.2007, 10:00, Holy Eucharist – ELW 5
Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10; Romans James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11
Saint James Evangelical Lutheran Church / Brogue, Pennsylvania

Jesu Juva!

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

[8] A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

[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 joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

--Isaiah 35:8-10

On this, the Third Sunday of Advent and our third and final Sunday on the spiritual Mount Zion with the Prophet Isaiah, we receive some important reassurance. Like the

Jews captive in Babylon, we, who have made so many wrong turns in life unless I am mistaken, may worry about losing our way to God and to the peace the LORD gives. Like those contemplating the long journey home to Judah and Jerusalem, long before the Romans had hunted to extinction the many wild animals of prey in that region, we may fear dangers along the way or even our ability to abide in the peace of God's spiritual mountain in our hearts. Like those who had the courage to set out on that perilous journey, we may ask ourselves, 'Is heaven worth the effort of practicing the mercy and compassion of God?' The Prophet reassures us: When we have come home to God in our hearts by enshrining God in righteous action, the sweetness of that homecoming will be inexpressible!

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travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

One argument against undertaking any long journeys, especially in our day, is the problem of traffic. That is not a problem when headed in the direction *God* wants us to go, because most of the traffic of humanity, the ‘unclean,’ are usually headed in the other direction, or in no direction in particular. Perhaps that is the reason for our current obsession with those ORVs, ‘off-road vehicles,’ very few of which actually go off the road. Still, we would like to be able to drive off aimlessly, not having even to follow the road ahead of us. We do this in our moral choices, choosing this or that that simply occurs to us, letting impulse rather than goodness and kindness be our guide. So, why not drive off the road and out into the wilderness of our impulse, never mind what the LORD intends for our

lives. Or, if we do stick to the road, and become lost, how difficult it is for some—and I doubt that it is only men!—to stop and ask for directions, thus admitting that we do not know where we are to people who most probably do?

The Prophet assures us that, if we consecrate ourselves to following the path on which God has set us, and if we pray that the LORD will bring us to our destination, then we will find our way home to God, however indirectly. Even those who get lost no matter how many maps they consult, no matter how many locals try to give them directions, even these will be led to their place on the Holy Mountain of God and will wander off and get lost no more.

[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.

Many Christians, after belonging to and leaving a congregation torn by inner strife and constant turmoil, make themselves a promise. That promise runs something like this: ‘We are just going to worship here, be friendly, shake hands, maybe come to social events and *maybe* help with service projects, but we are *NOT* going to join any committee or organization of our new congregation. Why are we not going to do this?—because we don’t *NOT* want to know about the inner strife and turmoil, if any, in this congregation, because we are afraid nay, *terrified* of the ravening wolves of religious dominators and trouble-makers and gossips.

These varmints either do not exist on God’s Holy Mountain, or, like last Sunday’s vision from Isaiah of the lion and the lamb and the little child, they have learned kindness and manners. There actually is a place in the

heart of Christ's Church where no one needs to fear the next crisis or blow-up, and that place can be *here*. It can be. God grant that it *will* be. ✠ Amen.

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from ours sins by His blood and has made of us a Kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and for ever. ✠ Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!