

12/12/2010

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Stir up our hearts, O Lord, **to prepare the way for your only**

Son. By His coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 35:1-10

(The prophet Isaiah describes the joy of the Messianic age.)

1 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. **7** The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. **8** And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. **9** No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. **But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.**

THE EPISTLE LESSON James 5:7-11

(God calls for patience and perseverance as we await Jesus' coming.)

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. **8** You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. **9** Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! **10** Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. **11** As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 11:2-15

(Jesus tells His disciples about John and his ministry.)

2 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples **3** to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" **4** Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: **5** The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are

raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 6 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 11 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

15 He who has ears, let him hear.

Hello. It's me again, Isaiah the prophet. I have returned to share with you how my book pointed to the coming of the Savior, and how my book gives blessing and direction for your life.

I walking around your town yesterday. I experienced Colony Christmas. It's quite a celebration. There was the sale of gifts, display of fireworks, there were concerts and food. Along with the concerts, music was playing everywhere. The music of Christmas was my favorite. The songs were beautiful peaceful tunes that bring the message of Jesus' birth and God's kingdom. I bet you like the Christmas music too. But, does the rush of activities and the stress of commitments drown out the joy and words and the melodies of the music you love?

Christmas as a holiday is supposed to be a time of joy. But the stress of Christmas celebration can get in the way of the reason for the day, can it not?

Now consider this. Christmas is about the undeserved love of God shown to the whole world with the gift of the birth of God's Son himself. In a world of pain God's love promises joy. His forgiveness provides peace. His salvation in the gift of His son promises hope. His mercy should lead to acts of love. But do the troubles of life rob you of the joy and peace and hope?

Did you see what my book said? **1 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. 9 . . . But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.**

Do you know how I could promise everlasting joy and gladness to the people of my time? It wasn't because life would be good. In Chapter 34 I had told the people. **2 The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter.** The people of Israel were facing judgment for their sin. All people of the world face death for their sin. But, to such a world God was sending, He has sent Messiah. And to a world that lives in the trouble and pain of it's sin, God takes away that sin. To a world that faces the judgment of death, God offers life. As Israel faced the coming judgment, the love of God in the Messiah is greater. They could have joy and peace and healing even in life's pain because Messiah was coming.

The message of Messiah is not just joy for the Jews, because the Savior is for all people. Do you want peace and joy in your life. Do you want peace and joy this Christmas. Look past or through the sales, and the stress, the troubles, and receive the Messiah. When it is the Messiah who is your celebration what I said of the Jews will be true for you. **everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.**

