



HERE WITH US...TO BRING US JOY!

ADVENT THREE

Day 1—A Light Shining until the Day Dawns

Consider that many prophecies have layers of fulfillment; a prophecy might be fulfilled, in measure, in the generation or era in which the prophet lived and wrote. Greater fulfillment might be evident in Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, and yet there might be still more. Read Isaiah 61:1-11. What hope is there for the Jews exiled in Babylon? How does Jesus apply part of this Isaiah passage to himself (Luke 4:16-21)? What is yet to come? Let 2 Corinthians 4:6, 16-18 form your prayer.

Day 2—Nouns and Verbs; Verbs and Nouns

Do you remember times when, during grammar lessons, you had to pay attention to nouns and verbs? Read Isaiah 60:1-11, paying close attention to the nouns and verbs; consider underlining, with double lines, all verbs that describe God's actions and, with a different stroke, each noun identifying those whom God blesses. What do the verbs teach us about God's heart and character? Did you discover promises that comfort you and give you new hope for your present and for your future? Pray you will really want to share this hope with others. Now do it!

Day 3—Oaks of Righteousness...for God's Glory

The Lord doesn't just improve us; the Lord makes us new; read John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17, 21; Hebrews 10:14; and 1 John 3:2-3. Notice what God's people are called in Isaiah 61:3b; and what are these "oaks of righteousness" to display? So, it's the Lord who makes us new, and we are to reflect all glory back to the Lord. Thank God for his faithfulness; pray you will display his glory.

Day 4—"Today this Scripture Is Fulfilled"

The sovereign, almighty God of all creation is the Lord who hears the cries of his people's hearts and cares for them intimately and personally. Read Isaiah 61:1-11; Luke 4:16-21; John 1:14; and Hebrews 1:3a. In what ways did Jesus fulfill the Isaiah passage during his earthly ministry, both physically and spiritually? Consider that Jesus might see as accomplished (because it is so certain) that which we view as incomplete. Read the rest of the story in Revelation 21:1-7. Worship Jesus who said, "It is finished" (John 19:30: Greek: tetelestai: completed, perfected).

Day 5—A Closer Look

The Isaiah 61 passage, part of which Jesus quotes in the Nazareth synagogue, is so rich with promises. Read the text again and notice the words of comfort and hope; carefully consider the nouns. Who are the poor (61:1)? Might they be those experiencing physical poverty and the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3)? Consider that captives and prisoners might be those in physical

exile or bondage and those who are spiritually blind and enslaved by sin (John 12:44-46; Romans 3:23; 6:22-23). Pray Ephesians 1:18.

Day 6—God Is at Work in Ways We Cannot Always See

The Babylonian exile was a dark time, but God promised new hope and everlasting joy (Isaiah 61). When Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, the church was under heavy persecution, yet Paul told the people to “rejoice always” (5:16). How is joy possible? The generation that returned from captivity in Babylon did not see fulfillment of all the promises; Paul and countless others died as martyrs of the faith. Is our hope and joy in circumstances or in God’s faithfulness? Read Isaiah 26:3-4; John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:4-7; and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. Pray.

Day 7—Rejoice!

We sing “Joy to the World” but are we experiencing the joy that Scripture promises is our heritage as God’s people? Are we covered with the “oil of joy” and “garments of praise” (Isaiah 61:3)? Is the Lord’s love for us our dearest treasure (Psalm 63:3; Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 3:8)? Read Isaiah 61:10 aloud several times. Now worship our Lord and Savior and be a light for him in our dark world.