

Advent Reflection
December 16, 2020
JOY
Isaiah 35:5-10 NRSV

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;
The burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water;
The haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
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.
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.
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.

Reflection by April C.

I have done some hiking and backpacking. On a long walk, there is nothing more welcome and refreshing than the waters breaking forth from the wilderness – a stream, a mountain lake, a waterfall, a cool spring.

I have learned that gladness and joy do not just show up on my doorstep like something ordered from Amazon. Joy, inherently, is something **shared** with others. Gladness, too. Joy and gladness are what I experience when I **give** kindness to or with others. These things are not just for me. They are not owned. They always flow, like the waters in the wilderness.

Everyone has spent some time in some wilderness or another. Everyone is on a long walk (whether our eyes see that or not). Be a person who is a welcome stop by a refreshing stream. Give encouragement, hope, strength, simple kindness, or just a quiet place to rest. In whatever small way, be their pool in a parched place. Then your eyes will be opened to see more gladness, your ears unstopped to hear more joy, and your heart loosed to leap and grow. Practice giving these things away, and joy will find you – gladly giving more.