

Advent Devotional December 19, 2024

Weekly theme: Joy

Scripture

Isaiah 11:10-16

10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

11 On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

12 He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

13 The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, the hostility of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not be hostile towards Ephraim.

14 But they shall swoop down on the backs of the Philistines in the west, together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put forth their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them.

15 And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind; and will split it into seven channels, and make a way to cross on foot;

16 so there shall be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that is left of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

Devotion

The Rev. Bill LaVelle '89

Some things might seem impossible. Some traumas are just too hard to even think about the possibility of reconciliation. Family members die broken, unwilling to even express sympathy to one another. Such has been my family, from generation to generation.

When I graduated from seminary, my father told me he was ashamed of me. My niece just died from a final stroke at the age of 56, after living as a ward of the County Home for years. Her life, and her brother's life, were filled to the brim with tragedy. There wasn't even an obituary in the newspaper. It's as if her life didn't matter. But she mattered to her brother. And to me. And to the woman who raised her after my sister left. And best of all, Tracy mattered to God.

“On that Day,” . . . it will be glorious! “On that Day, the Lord will extend his hand . . . to recover the remnant that is left of his people . . . He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts” . . . On that Day, Tracy will be there! And all will be glorious Joy!

I hold this promise of Joy On that Day deep, deep in my heart as tears for her most painful sojourn still bring me grief. But in the midst of my grief, there is also trust in my heart that Tracy will be among that throng of outcasts, all those nobodies, who are near and dear to the heart of the Lord. I trust that “On that Day,” Tracy and I will walk together on that “. . . highway for the remnant that is left of His people.”

Prayer

O most gracious God, protector of the helpless, defender of the outcast, hope of the poor: bring love and hope and the promise of eternal Joy to all who are so badly broken. We place our trust in you, Lord, for only you can make it come to pass. We do truly believe that “On that Day,” the Holy Spirit will suddenly sweep into our world and make all things new. “On that Day,” there will be true, lasting Joy! Amen.