

On The Highway of Holiness and Happiness

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Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 35:8-10

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Isaiah 35, we're going to read the entire chapter.

1 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; 2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. 3 Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert. 7 The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8 A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It 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, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Let's pray together.

Thank you, Lord. In your perfect timing, you have ordained this passage for us this morning and, Lord, we know you desire to glorify your name and we know you desire to minister to our souls. If possible, Lord, this morning you bring salvation to some and to minister to those who know you. So, Lord God, we ask for your ministry among us today, O God, and we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would fill us with ears to hear, you would fill our brother and elder, Scott, Lord, with your Spirit to proclaim your word faithfully as he does each week and, Lord, possibly even to lead and guide him as he speaks, Lord, in the

way that you would move in his heart and soul to minister to our souls. As we come before you, Lord, in dependence upon you, thank you for your word and may you speak to us, Lord.

It's such a delight, again, to be in Isaiah 35 and we've already covered verses 1 through 7 last week and we saw how God takes the ruins of your life which was the habitation of jackals and arrow snakes, how he takes a life and he pours out the Holy Spirit and so many marvelous things happen. I repeated them for you in the outline just so you can see the flow. We're only going to deal with three verses today, verses 8 through 10, but in the first seven verses we saw how the power of God through the Holy Spirit comes and he transforms your life. He makes the people who strengthen one another and they talk to each other and what do they say? They say to the broken hearted, "Don't be afraid." And you have a new community of people who are talking to each other. They are blessing one another to relieve them of their fears and then you have the power of God at work in their life: the lame walk; the blind see; the deaf hear. It's wonderful. This is just an outgrowth of the power of the Holy Spirit. Then in verses 6 and 7, the streams flow in the desert. That beautiful picture of water in a dry and thirsty land. This is the power of the Holy Spirit to take a person who is in ruins and who is surrounded by snakes and jackals and then to surround him with rivers of living water.

Now we go into this next section here. There is a highway of holiness and a happy arrival is provided there and so when we read this in verse 8 that, "A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness," we learn that the Christian life is a road and this is why John the Baptist was preparing the way of the Lord. There is a way of the Lord. There is a road and this is why the Lord Jesus Christ himself said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." Christianity is about a way, a highway. It's a highway of holiness and he is the way.

Here in this passage, you have this mingling of thoughts from God to help you understand what his kingdom is like and here he teaches us about the everlasting joy that is on this highway of holiness and I think what we should all recognize today, and I pray we can see it here in this passage, if you don't love holiness, you can never have happiness because the two are so mingled together here in this passage. And the Christian life is a pathway of holiness. That's why Jeremiah said, "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls." That's what God has for his people, but in Jeremiah 6:16 we find that the response of the people was, "We will not walk on it." How tragic it is to despise holiness because when you despise holiness, you've lost happiness and it's such a tragic thing that happens. This is why David in Psalm 1 said, "Happy is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful," because there is a way, there is a path. There is a path of happiness and holiness and there is the other path as well. That's why David in Psalm 16:11, he said, "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

That's the path of the Lord because the Christian life is likened to a way of walking and Psalm 77:19, we read, "Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, And Your footsteps were not known." In Psalm 119:105, we read those famous words, "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path." You might just think about the path that you're on now. Everybody is walking down a pathway. You're either walking down the broad road that leads to destruction or you're walking down the narrow road, the path to life, the highway of holiness. And how do you know if you're on that pathway? This passage really does give the answer to that question.

Solomon counsels his son, he says, "My son, do not walk in the way with them." He's talking about those who are on the broad road. "Keep your foot from their path." On the other hand, he speaks of a different path to his son, Solomon does. In Proverbs 4:18, he says, "But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." Then he also says to his son to ponder very carefully the path of the harlot. He says there is a path of the harlot and he says, "Lest you ponder her path, her ways are unstable, you do not know them." Later on in Proverbs 5 and 6 and 7, we learn something about the path of the harlot: the dead are there. You get to the end of that path and you are with the dead.

So there are so many encouragements and warnings about the pathway that God has. Tragically in Proverbs 7:8, we read that there was the young man who took the path to her house and yet David also speaks of the other path where he says, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

So God has set before us here this morning a pathway and I want us to just consider the everlasting joy that's on the highway of holiness. I don't know what your view of holiness is but here in this passage is a complete recalibration of your understanding of holiness. Some people think that if they get holiness, they miss something good, but the Bible has a completely different picture. If you get holiness, you get happiness and everything that implies and so I pray for a holy church. I pray that our church is a holy church. I pray that God would give me a greater hunger for holiness, to hate sin in my life, to turn away from it because it deprives me of all of the happiness that God has intended.

Do you see the kindness of God? How he desires to lay on the brow of his children happiness while they walk on the way? You know, they may walk in a difficult way, but in the way of the greatest difficulties, the greatest disappointments, in that way is happiness regardless of the troubles and the reversals that take place. God in his highway of happiness has a way of supernaturally through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bless his people with happiness while they are on the way. Are you happy on the way? Well, if you're not happy on the way, then today would be a good day to pinpoint the source of the problem, holiness, because happiness and holiness are connected.

Now, let's go into the text. Verse 8, it is both a highway and a road. In verse 8, there is some very interesting language that we really uncovered on Tuesday morning when we were discussing this together. It says that, "A highway shall be there, and a road." Do you see those two different words? A highway and a road and Isaiah uses two completely

different words here. He uses one word for "highway" and another word for "road" and he's making a contrast in these two different kinds of roads. The word for "highway" has to do with the physical highway itself. It means "to cast up." You know, when you build a highway, you're wise to build it up above the grade so it doesn't flood. You build it up above so it drains off and there is a way that it can not be broken up by various forces. So he's speaking here of a physical road and it's an elevated road.

So the first word has to do with the physical reality of this highway and as we'll learn later, it's a sure highway and it is going to its direction. Whoever gets on that highway is going to get to the end, that's the idea here. But the other word, "road," is a word that implies the journey on the road. While you do have the physical road that God has provided for his people, there is also the journey of the road as well and the word that Isaiah uses has to do with treading down with your feet and the movement, the direction, the trajectory. It implies the experiences that you have on the road so you have the road, but then you have the things that happen to you on the road and he's speaking very distinctively about your movement down the road and the way you make your way. It matters how you make your way down that road so the experiences that you have on the road, the people you meet, the situations you encounter, the feelings you have, the things you do, that's what this word "road" implies.

Perhaps one of the most brilliant, beautiful descriptions of this is found in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where he tells the story of Christian who is on the road. You know, there is a young man in this church by the name of Christian and I love his name because it reminds me of this almost whenever I see him. But Christian is this father, he's a husband and he is stricken to his heart for his sins and he has this spiritual crisis and he is told by a messenger that he is in the City of Destruction and that he has got to depart the City of Destruction and make his way to the Celestial City, to make his way toward heaven. So Christian leaves the City of Destruction and he begins to make his way to the Celestial City and this is the Highway of Holiness and on the highway he meets so many people. He meets Evangelist, the messenger who carries the Gospel. He meets Obstinate, Christian's neighbor in the City of Destruction who refuses to go. He meets Pliable, a neighbor of Christian's who accompanies him for a little while but he's pliable enough and after things get hard, when they fall into the Slough of Despond, Pliable gets discouraged and he makes his way back home and then the whole townspeople mock him for leaving and then coming back. He meets Worldly Wiseman, a reasonable, practical man, you know, who is astute and genteel and he has advice. He also meets Help, a fellow pilgrim who helps pull him out of the Slough of Despond. He meets the Formalist, the Traveler whom Christian meets along the way where he has another companion in Hypocrisy and the Formalist tries to get around another way.

So he meets all these different kinds of people on the road and he meets Discretion and Piety and these wonderful young ladies, Piety and Prudence and Charity. He meets the Interpreter. He also meets Apollyon, the fierce monster, the dragon who threatens Christian and fights with him and Christian defeats him. He meets the Shining Ones and the Faithful. He also meets Talkative, this one who is talking all the time and doesn't have much deeds. He meets Hopeful and the giant, Despair. He meets all these people and he

meets one near the end of his journey, he meets Goodwill. He meets Goodwill at the end of the journey after all the temptations have gone by and now he's at the gate and Goodwill is a very serious and grave man and he is answering the knocks of those who are burdened by their sins and he goes over the gate and over the gate is written, "Knock and it shall be opened to you." So he knocks and so here is this burdened sinner, Christian, standing at the gate of Mount Zion. He has come from the City of Destruction and Goodwill says to him that he is willing with all his heart to let him in and so he lets him in.

So this word that Isaiah uses for "road" has to do with the journey. You meet so many people on the journey and the question is: when you meet those on the journey, is it holiness that describes everything you do in the journey? Then it's a highway of holiness, verse 8 and here again in verse 8, we see how tied together holiness and happiness is and how if you don't love holiness you cannot have happiness. "And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness." Again, he uses this word that we've spoken about a number of times in Isaiah for holy, kadosh. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." It's that same word that he uses and holiness has its foundation in God for God is holy. It has its source in Jesus Christ who is holy. It has its ground in the Spirit who is the Holy Spirit. So holiness begins with God because God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit are holy.

Here we find in this whole subject of holiness that holiness really is the pathway of hope for the Christian. Not only is holiness the only happiness, holiness is the only hope for the Christian and here he gives the idea that it's possible for a Christian to be made holy and so he's encouraging us here as to the possibilities of the Christian life of holiness and he introduces that idea here. You know, the Lord Jesus Christ came so that we might have life in his name and that life results from the holiness that he provides for his people and we receive life in his name because grace and truth are in him and grace upon grace are found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here in this whole matter of holiness, we just find this pathway to hope for the Christian.

A Christian needs to understand something very clearly and I pray that if you forget everything that I say today, that you'll at least remember Hebrews 12:14 because there is something that a Christian must understand and that is that if you are not holy, you cannot see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." He's saying that holiness is something that you pursue. Now, we'll get to that later because there are different kinds of holiness and I'd like to make distinctions about the various kinds of holiness, but one thing we should recognize is that holiness should be pursued and when you're pursuing holiness, you're always pursuing happiness. Always.

When we talk about holiness, we have to recognize that holiness is really the entire purpose of our salvation. Everything that God is doing in your life is for holiness. The entire objective of salvation is to undo the works of the devil in your life. It is true, your life was in ruins. The snakes were there. The jackals were there. It was overgrown. It was overcome and everything that God is doing in your life has to do with holiness and

therefore it has to do with happiness because the Lord is destroying the works of the devil in us. He's remaking us. He's renewing our minds. Our minds were so twisted. We thought so wrongly about everything and he poured out his Spirit upon us and he began the work of cleansing, progressive sanctification.

You know, 1 John speaks of this, that the purpose of the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. You can read that in 1 John 3:8. There is this very powerful and clear statement. He says this, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Everything regarding your salvation is for the destruction of the works of the devil; to make you holy. Holiness is the ground of all of salvation and when you hear that word "holy," make sure you're thinking rightly about it and I think Isaiah in chapter 35 gives us such a beautiful picture of it to help us think rightly about holiness. Nobody ever lost a single twinge of happiness in their holiness and yet today most people think that if you are holy, you'll lose your happy and it's not true. It's the lie of the devil, to think that if you don't turn away from sin you'll be happier. That's not true. But the purpose of the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, so what we find here is that the entire purpose of our salvation is for holiness. That God day after day, month after month, year after year, would be cleansing us by the washing of the water of his word.

Now, what is holiness? I'm going to give you four things to give you a range of what holiness is. First of all, in terms of God, it is absolute sinlessness and purity.

Secondly, it is separateness, uniqueness and different-ness if that is even a word. But to be holy is to be separate and different. People don't want to be different anymore. They want to fit in, but God wants to make you different. He makes you holy, that you stand out. You will be weird if you are holy. You will be happy but you will be weird because you will be unique. This is why Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people." This has to do with separateness.

Third, conformity to the life and the heart of God from a sincere heart. That is the third aspect of holiness when it comes to human beings.

Fourthly, it's conformity to God's laws. In Psalm 119, we learn that God's laws are what creates the happiness of the heart, therefore, they do create the holiness of the heart.

J. C. Ryle in his book called "Holiness" gave us many things to consider about holiness. I'll just give you a few things taken from his section on defining holiness. "Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture." Secondly, "A holy man will endeavour to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment." Number 3, "A holy man will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ." Number 4, "A holy man will follow after meekness, long-suffering, gentleness, patience, kind tempers, government of his tongue." Number 5, "A holy man will follow after temperance and self-denial. He will labour to mortify the desires of his body - to crucify his flesh with his affections and lusts - to curb his passions-to restrain

his carnal inclinations, lest at any time they break loose." Number 6, "A holy man will follow after love and brotherly kindness." Number 7, "A holy man will follow after a spirit of mercy and benevolence towards others." Number 8, "A holy man will follow after purity of heart." Ninth, "A holy man will follow after the fear of God." Tenth, "A holy man will follow after humility." Eleventh, "A holy man will follow after faithfulness in all the duties and relations." And, "A holy man," finally, "will follow after spiritual mindedness."

This is the pathway of holiness and for Isaiah, holiness is happiness and you cannot have happiness without holiness. There are three phases of holiness that we see in the Bible. First of all, there is the act of being made holy, being justified by God. God is so kind to repentant sinners that he makes them holy. He justifies them. He doesn't just forgive them, he doesn't just pardon them and save them from the resulting penalty; he doesn't just do that, he justifies you and makes you holy as if you never did the sin and the Bible says that he forgets it, something we have such a hard time doing.

But there is being made holy. This is what the Apostle Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 6:9 where he said, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not enter the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." Then he says, "And such were some of you." They turned away from those things. We have all of those in our church today. All of those are in our church but verse 9 says what happened to them, they began to hate their sin and they turned from it and he says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." This is the substitutionary atonement of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sinners and in that sense, you are made holy.

Then there is being made holy. There is the act of declared holy and then there is the being made holy. This is the sanctification, the progressive work of the Spirit of God in a person's life as the living waters flow and the light shines and the bread is eaten and nourishment and health returns to that body and those ruins are restored. This is being made holy. In 1 Peter 4 he speaks of it, he says, that you should "no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you." He's talking about the person who got off that train; got off that highway to hell; got off that broad road and they got on the highway to heaven, the highway of holiness. They put those things aside and it was marked by their repentance of sin. Their minds changed and the blind saw and the deaf heard.

This whole matter of progressive sanctification can be hard, can't it, because God identifies your sins along the way. When the revival of God takes place in your heart, it's both sweet but it's also terrifying, isn't it, because he puts his finger in the wound. Your wound. Your sins. He puts his finger on your sins and he shows them to you and he

shows you more and more of them the older you get, I can bear witness to that. I think I'm the oldest guy in this church except for one man and I know that that is true. Leonard Ravenhill, I heard him say that the most chaotic thing, the most destructive thing, the most terrifying thing is revival because people's sins are exposed by the Holy Spirit but it's also at the same time, it's the most life giving; it's the most comforting; it's the most happyfying thing that can ever happen to you at the same time. What we avoid is the way of happiness. We avoid admitting our sins. We don't want to say what they are, but what are we afraid of? Are we afraid of happiness? Are we afraid of the cleansing? Are we afraid of the rivers of the water of life that wash and cleanse and sanctify all these things?

Then thirdly, the third stage of holiness is made completely holy in heaven where you are glorified and perfected in holiness. Romans 8:30 speaks of it like this, "Whomever He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Then he says if we say these things, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

So there are these three phases of holiness. One is being declared holy by the righteous sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Secondly, there is the being made holy of progressive sanctification, that's the Christian life. Then finally, your final glorification where everything is made new. All your tears are wiped away. You have a new body and you're glorified for all of eternity. And when he put that gladness on your head in the very first time when you repented, you will now have in heaven everlasting joy upon your head. He has put the crown on your head today. It's there and it will never be taken away.

Now, let's talk about who's on the highway. Not the unclean, first of all. Not the unclean. "The unclean shall not pass over it." The unclean shall not pass over it. Those traveling on the highway have been washed. They have been purified, but they are also a people who are turning away from their sins. They hate sin. I heard Ian Paisley say, "Sin and the Savior never walk hand in hand. You never see them embracing on the way to heaven." Sin and the Savior don't walk hand in hand. Don't think for one moment that your sins don't matter. They matter. God has made a way for sinners by justifying and holifying them but that doesn't mean that they live a life of sin.

Ephesians 4:17-25 speaks of this where he says, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk," and he talks about their darkened minds and what they do in lewdness and uncleanness and greediness and he says, "No, no, don't walk in the ways of the Gentiles. If you have stolen, don't steal any longer. If you have lied to one another, don't lie. And if you're angry with your brother, relieve your anger. Turn in repentance." He says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification." So he's talking about all these things. He says in verse 31, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." One of the chief marks of those who are on the highway of holiness is that they love people and they don't have malice and they have mercy and they don't try to hold everybody accountable for every single different thought that they have compared to them. They have the love of

Jesus Christ but they have also turned away from all these things. They have turned away from sin. Holiness is happiness but happiness is also holiness in turning away from sin. Consider the everlasting joy that's on this highway and consider that if you don't love holiness you cannot have happiness and you cannot have this highway.

Then, the unclean are not there, "But it shall be for others." So he says, "Well, there are some that are not there, those who have not turned from their sins. They are not on that highway." If you don't hate your sin, you should question whether you're on that road. But there are others there and I think the others are spoken of in verse 10: the redeemed and the ransomed, the washed, the sanctified and the justified. What is different with the others? Well, they are not like the others. They have a distinguishing mark and you will know them by their fruits and their fruit is always determined by what they eat and drink and what they breathe. That's the difference between the unclean and the others. It's not a matter of whether they do something, it's what they do. I think we should recognize that the others drink and eat and breathe different things and you drink your way into sanctification by drinking holy things of living water and it only gives you a thirst for more. You breathe your way to sanctification by breathing the air of the Holy Spirit, the pure air, which is the breath of God giving you a desire for more. You eat your way to sanctification by eating the bread of life. "For man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," because sanctification is accomplished through holy desires that lead you to eat and drink and breathe what is good and then all of the eating and drinking and breathing, it just produces more and more. The affections grow as a result of what you eat and drink and breathe. It matters what you eat and drink and breathe while you're on the highway, while you're on the trajectory. You can eat and drink and breathe anything you want on this highway. God has given you freedom. He has said that if you eat and drink and breathe in a certain way your life will be wood, hay and stubble. Do you want your life to be wood, hay and stubble? But the others aren't like that. This is why they are progressively holy and they are progressively happy. Consider if you don't love holiness you can never have happiness.

Then in verse 8 we also see that there are fools there. Fools not straying. Isn't that strange? Fools that don't stray? I thought fools were astray. So he uses this strange language here, "Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray." So it immediately seems strange that they are fools on the road and it makes no sense. The word for "fool" in Isaiah 35 is the same word that Solomon uses for "fool" in the book of Proverbs and it always speaks of people who are going astray. They are morally perverse. They are ignorant and they do things that are not profitable. "The fool says in his heart there is no God." The fool just keeps on talking. He opens his mouth and he shows how much a fool he is in Proverbs 17. The fool in Proverbs 20:3, he quarrels at the drop of a hat. So the fool is all over the book of Proverbs. This very exact same word is all over the book of Proverbs.

Whenever you encounter a word like this in the Bible, you need to understand at least two things: first, it's a holy word, that is a word that is given by God, the word matters and the definitions matter; and secondly, that the context determines the meaning. What's

the context of the use of this word "fool"? What kind of fool is he? So we have to examine the context carefully here. This is a certain kind of fool. Now, he's a fool that doesn't go astray but that still sounds strange to our ears, doesn't it? But in the Bible there is word of a fool that does not go astray and he's mentioned in both the Old and New Testament. In Hosea 9:7, the prophet is called a fool because of the moral corruption of the people. The prophet is a fool. The spiritual man is thought of as insane and why? Because the iniquities of the people are so great, the prophet seems like he's crazy. So there is a kind of fool that is a godly fool.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul speaks of people who build on a foundation on Christ and those who build on wood and hay and stubble. He says this, "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness'; and again, 'The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.'" What he's saying is that if you're building with wood, hay and stubble, you're thought as wise and the godly man is called foolish because he doesn't build with wood, hay and stubble. In 2 Corinthians 11, we find the same idea. Verse 23, "Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often." What he's saying is, "I'm thought of as a fool because I'm always getting beat up for my faith." Read that maybe this afternoon in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 and you'll see why people thought Paul was a fool: it was because he was willing to be despised and hated and that made him a fool. So there is a godly kind of a fool and I think that's the kind of fool that we're dealing with here because he is a follower of the way. He is going in a right way. That's the kind of fool that he is.

So who is on that road? People who are thought of as fools by the world but they are not really fools and then no lions or ravenous beasts. Verse 9, "No lion shall be there, Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there." So no lions. Again, we have to understand what these lions are all about. Lions in the Bible, they are strong, they are valiant, they are fierce, they roar, they are after prey, they are seeking those whom they may devour, they are brutal. Lions are brutal in the Bible and there are many places that we can go to to see how lions are spoken of, but also Peter says that there is a lion. He says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." And one of the interpretations of this is that God protects his people. He protects his people from the lions on the road and, really, the way that the commentators and I read, anyway, really interpret it this way: Matthew Henry thinks that the lion refers to Satan; John Gill believes that the lions refer to wicked people. I think that's the closest. There is a way that God does protect his people while they're on the road. He does save them. He doesn't protect them from the trouble, he protects them in the trouble.

Desert roads are dangerous and these ravenous beasts are there on the road and I think one could consider that he is speaking about that, but I'm not confident that's what he's talking about. He's talking about different kinds of people on that road and I think what he's saying is that the brutal, the lions, the vicious, the unloving, will not be on that road because they contradict everything in the law of God. Every law of God is a law of love,

that's what the Bible says, and the ravenous wolves, I would rather be inclined to think that they are people who do not know the Lord. They're part of the people who are on the road in some sense but they have no love in their hearts and they as a result are proving themselves as to not being really on the road. The Bible says, "If anyone says he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar." I think that's the lion on that road. John in 1 John 4:8, he says, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." In the same way, Moses spoke of it in Leviticus 19. He said, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." Paul says to the Romans in Romans 13:10, he says, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Again we find that other principle: if you hate the law, you have to hate love because love fulfills the law. Every single law of God, every single command of God, is summarized up in one word: love. Romans 13:10 proves that. In Acts 20, we learn that the wolves will come out from among you. Acts 20, Paul says, "From among you wolves will arise." If you are a ravenous beast, if you're an unloving person in the meetings of the church, recognize you're not on the highway. If you're taking advantage of others, you only care about yourself, you seem to be on the road but you don't love your neighbor as yourself. I think somebody in Bible study said, "If you're strutting down the road for your own gain, you're on a different road."

Then the redeemed are there. Verse 9, the redeemed are there, "the redeemed shall walk there." There are two words here that we're going to examine: the redeemed is the first one. He uses the word that's used of the kinsman redeemer. The kinsman redeemer was one who would rescue his kinsfolk from destruction, where there would be redemption from a near relative and this the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is our elder brother. We are co-heirs with Christ. Christ is the head of the family and he is our kinsman redeemer. He is our relative who saw us. We fell into hard times and we became like a desert with snakes and jackals all around us and he redeemed us. In the Old Testament law, if a family fell into hard times and he had to sell his property, the kinsman redeemer would buy the property and hold it for him. A relative would come in, a kinsman redeemer would come in and buy his property which is a picture of heaven, and hold it for him until he got back on his feet again. In Leviticus 25 if an Israelite sold himself into servitude to pay his debts, the kinsman redeemer was supposed to rescue him and buy him back and fulfill all his obligations, pay all of his debts. That's what the kinsman redeemer does. This is this idea that we find in redemption. The redeemed are on the highway. Notice who has a kinsman redeemer: those who have a relative that bought them off the slave market; those that had a kinsman redeemer that bought their property so they wouldn't lose it, so that their inheritance would be preserved in heaven. In the midst of their hard time where everything was going the wrong way because, you know, a lot of things can happen to you when you're on that highway.

Then you see the certainty of their return. Verse 10, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return." Now a different word. Redeemed earlier, now ransomed. This has to do with the transfer of ownership through the payment of a price. It was a commercial transaction in terms of the use of this word. In Exodus and Leviticus, there is language of the redemption of a slave girl for the purpose of marriage. It's used to speak of

redemption. A debt is paid for sin and the result is this marvelous ransom. You know, he gave his life as a ransom for many. You can see so clearly in this passage how if you don't love holiness you can never have happiness. You'll never have your property, your inheritance preserved. You'll never have your sins dealt with. You'll never have love in this world. You'll never really know it.

And then you see the joy in their return. "And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." We get more detail here. Isaiah just keeps giving us more and more detail about this highway and it's a highway full of singing. It's coming to Zion. Zion is another word for heaven. It's another word for singing and happiness. That's what happens in Zion. In a few weeks our family is going to go down to see Jeff Pollard and I love the name of his church, Mount Zion. We're going to drive down there and be singing with happiness just thinking of the word that's there in the name of his church.

Their burden of sin has been relieved and they are set free. Now, this is repeated almost verbatim in Psalm 51:11. You can read that later. But we are now here at the climax of the story that began in chapter 28. In chapter 28, Isaiah is delivering the woes to Israel. He delivers five to Israel and one to Edom. This is the climax of it and he's been contrasting the woes that fall upon the heads of those who don't repent and trust in Jesus Christ and he talks about the happiness that's laid upon the head of those who do trust Jesus Christ. This is the climax of this whole section. When we come next week or in the next section in chapter 36, we begin an historical disclosure of how all this worked, but this is now at the end of this great section that began in chapter 28.

It ends with everlasting joy. Everlasting joy on your head while you're walking down the highway of holiness. Isaiah loves to use this word "everlasting." In chapter 9, verse 6, he talks about the everlasting Father. In chapter 26, verse 4, he talks about God as everlasting strength. This word is all over the Bible. Moses talked about the everlasting hills and the everlasting covenant and the everlasting ordinance and the priesthood and the possession. Daniel said that God's kingdom was an everlasting dominion. There are the everlasting arms. The everlasting doors. The everlasting kindness. The everlasting name, light, power, king, kingdom, love, dominion. "Everlasting" in front of all those words. Now we have everlasting joy on your head. Has God given us enough language to understand what his intentions are for us? It's so wonderful. It's amazing.

Here we find that there are two things that are dealt with: suffering and sighing. Let's ponder those for just a moment. Suffering and sighing. Suffering has to do with troubles, real troubles that happen in your life and the anguish and the internal disturbance that happens in your life and here God through Isaiah is saying that Jesus Christ has come to deal with your suffering. What a blessing that is. Then sighing. This word is really used like a public declaration. It's the way you talk about your sufferings. You are sighing. It's what you say. It's when your friend says, "Hey, how are you doing?" and you are either going to say one of two things, you're going to say, "Super fantastic!" or you're going to say, "I'm at the bottom of the ocean." That's the kind of thing he's talking about there when you say, "I'm at the bottom of the ocean."

It says here that these things will flee away. Do you see the words there? "Flee away." They will flee away in the face of holiness. This word that Isaiah used pictures something is just departing quickly like in a panic from danger; a quick flight. He's saying that these things will go away.

Here in this beautiful chapter, you see this picture of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the living waters that are there. The things that happen in your life. The things you start saying to your brothers. The way that you start ministering to people and the people around you, they're walking and leaping and they're praising God. They're actually changing because they've been genuinely redeemed. They have turned away from their sin and they can look back on their theft and their homosexuality and their immorality and they look back on that and they are so thankful for this highway of holiness where God is chasing away their fears; where God is putting them in a community where people help one another to chase away their fears by the word of God. Consider the everlasting joy that there is in the highway of holiness and then if you don't love holiness, you can never have happiness.

I want to close by reading a passage of Scripture in Romans 5. I'd like you to turn there. This will be the very last thing that we'll say. This is the departure point from this great and wonderful chapter. Romans 5. It explains everything about this highway. Everything. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

We should be the happiest people in the world because that highway of holiness, because of God's kind identification of our sins progressively throughout our lives. We should never be afraid of it. The highway of holiness, the highway of happiness forever.

Let's pray.

O Lord, we thank you for these wonderful words you have laid upon our ears, these words from your prophet Isaiah who has helped us to understand the way the world works and how it doesn't work and the ground of happiness that is in your kingdom for

*the kingdom of heaven is in righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. O Lord,
rain your kingdom down upon this church. Amen.*