

Read: Isaiah 35:1-10

Surprise! Things Don't Always Happen That Way . . . Do They?

Isaiah 35:5-8

The eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged. The crippled will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy. Waters will flow in the wilderness, and streams in the wasteland. The burning sand will become a pool, and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water. . . . A highway will be there, a road that will be called the holy way. The impure will not walk there. It will be reserved for those who walk in that holy way . . . and the redeemed will walk there.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Surprising. Unexpected. Impossible.

That is what makes a story, a movie, or a TV show interesting. The reader is surprised when Charlotte spins a web, and Wilbur lives out his days on Zuckerman's farm. The movie plays out with the unexpected servant girl becoming a royal bride, or the impossible problem is miraculously solved. When something is surprising, unexpected, or impossible—it catches our eyes, our interest, our hearts.

In our reading from Isaiah chapter 35, God talks about some things that are surprising, unexpected, even impossible: *The blind can see? The deaf are able to hear again? Those who can't walk—now can run, and jump, and play soccer? Someone who cannot talk . . . sings praises to God?*

That sounds impossible. That's just not going to happen!

But that is exactly what God promises in our reading today. And God is completely certain that he will do the impossible, the unexpected, and the surprising. He says that he'll turn the desert sand into a place where people swim, and—most importantly of all—he'll build a highway in that wasteland. Wow, talk about surprising! God will build a highway . . . so that you, his baptized and beloved child, will have a clear path through life to eternity.

God didn't use a spider's web or a movie's princess. God sent his promised Messiah, exactly as he promised: "The eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged. The crippled will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy. Waters will flow in the wilderness, and streams in the wasteland. The burning sand will become a pool, and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water. . . . A highway will be there, a road that will be called the holy way. The impure will not walk there. It will be reserved for those who walk in that holy way . . . and the redeemed will walk there."

That is God's surprising, impossible, unexpected promise: His Messiah has come to save you, and this Messiah has come to change your life today—and your eternity tomorrow. God did the impossible by sending his Son, and God did the impossible by giving you faith in Holy Baptism. God did the impossible by placing you on the way to heaven, and God will continue to do the impossible by keeping you on that path.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What is something impossible that God talked about in today's reading?
- Name something that seems impossible at the moment for you, and let's pray about it.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What is the most impossible or surprising thing God ever did?
- From your own memory, name one or two "impossible" things Jesus did. What do we call these "impossible" deeds?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Identify something impossible that God accomplished in your own life. *(For a hint, consider Luther's explanation to the Third Article: "I believe that I cannot, by my own thinking or choosing, believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel . . .")*
- This reading finishes with God's promised forgiveness through the Messiah. Why do you think God spent so much time describing the impossible things that the Messiah would accomplish, before finally describing the forgiveness that Messiah would win?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you promised to come in vengeance and to do the surprising, unexpected, and impossible. You raised yourself from the dead and baptized me into your household of faith. Keep me on your highway of grace. Amen.