

**JOURNEY OF LOVE DEVOTIONALS
WEEK #3 – JOURNEY OF JOY**

December 6th – Monday

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of joy...Help me bloom.

Opening Prayer:

Glorious God, I enter your presence with joy today as we begin another week together on the journey of love. The world may be hectic and difficult to navigate this week as we get into the heart of the holiday season, but I will turn to you and walk with you in joy into the Kingdom of God you have shown me. Help me to blossom with joy from this special time we have together. In your precious name, I pray. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-4

Key Verses: Isaiah 4:1-2: (1) “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, (2) it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God” (NIV).

Nature is often one of the great reflectors of God's splendor and majesty and, especially, beauty. The scope and intricacies of the creation are beyond our imagining. The more we learn about it, the more we can but wonder how any God can do so much. It is no wonder that humankind has created so many ideas of multiple gods to cover its vastness. It is also amazing to me that when we see the enormous variety God has placed within this planet and the glories of such variety, that we want to pigeon-hole humanity into a sameness, making everyone like us or rejecting them as “wrong.” But I digress. We must take up our treatment of others in another portion of our walk. Today, we are looking at the lessons we can learn in praise and rejoicing from the creation around us.

For those of you who are new to me, I am a great fan of science fiction and fantasy books and stories. There is a series of fantasy books by Melanie Rawn about dragons and people with unusual abilities. Nothing really all that unusual about that in the world of fantasy. But she has created an interesting world with her books and compelling characters that make me eager to read more. The principle land of the heros of these books is a desert, harsh and inhospitable as are most deserts and dry with very little, if any vegetation. When I read our scripture passage today I think about an incident in one of the books in which one of the principle characters has been living in a different part of their world for some time and is returning home because his mother is ill. He brings some friends and colleagues with him on the journey. As he reaches a place on the road where the land will be spread out in a splendid vista he is brought up short in awe and wonder. What he expects is the dry, land, full of colorful sands and little else. What he sees is a land covered in blossoms as far as the eye can see. The land had received a springtime runoff of water from distant mountains such as had not

happened in a hundred years or more and the desert was in full bloom. This is the picture painted in our scripture passage. It is like the desert is bursting forth in praise to the living God. The surfeit of water which causes the desert to bloom in riotous profusion is the same as when we receive the living water of Christ. Just as the desert blooms from the water it receives, so we, too, shall blossom when receiving that living water only God can give. Joy is evident in these blossoms. And it can happen in the harshest of environments when the right conditions are present. We can blossom in a riot of joyous profusion when we receive Christ's Spirit and walk in his way. We will not only "*see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God,*" but we will be strengthened and encouraged in the midst of any hardship, any anxiety, any difficulty we may face. This hectic season can sap us of our energy and cause us to feel as dry as the desert. But, Christ's living water can cause us to bloom in the midst of that desert so that we, too, may rejoice at any time. Unlike the desert, we don't have to wait a hundred years to receive this living water. We can draw from Christ's presence at any time and bloom anywhere. We carry the Christ Child within us. Let us bloom in profusion and rejoice in the blooming!

Additional Scripture: John 4:10-14

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. What does the image of a desert in full bloom bring to my mind?
2. How can I bloom in the midst of my hectic holiday schedule?
3. How can I show my joy in the Christ Child in my everyday life?

Suggestions for action:

1. Word for your tree: **BLOOM**
2. Find a picture of a desert in full bloom. Place it where you can see it this week.
3. Picture your favorite flower. Imagine yourself as that flower, vibrant and in full bloom. Now live today as if you were that flower, praising God for the precious gift.

Closing Prayer:

God of Splendor and Lord of creation, I pray for the capacity to blossom fully in your presence and to shine forth to others of your power and majesty. I rejoice that you are still with me and that you have given me living water that I might have the ability to bloom where you have placed me in honor of you. May this day be filled with opportunities to bloom forth in profusion and may it bring you joy and praise and the glory you so richly deserve. In the name of the Christ Child, who came to bring us living water, I pray. Amen.