
“The Word Who Brings Light and Life”

ISAIAH 55 10-12

DECEMBER 24, 2025

PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

At A Glance

On Christmas Eve, we celebrate a God whose Word never returns empty. Drawing from Isaiah and John, this sermon traces how God’s Word comes like gentle rain—bringing life where there was death, light where there was darkness. What was once cursed ground marked by thorns is transformed into fruitful soil, all because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is the quiet, powerful story of Christmas: light has entered the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

When He Speaks, Things Happen

On Christmas Eve, we remember that God does not speak empty words. When He speaks, things happen. Life comes where there was death. Light appears where there was only darkness.

Tonight, we will hear from Isaiah about a Word that comes down like rain—quietly, gently, yet powerfully—and from John about that same Word who became flesh. This is the story of how God entered our darkness, not to shout from a distance, but to dwell among us.

Isaiah 55:10-12

Verse 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater...”

Isaiah pictures a gently falling **rain and snow** that nourishes; not a torrential downpour that washes away. This is life-giving precipitation that falls on the earth gently. **Bring forth** and **sprout** are words of life.

It nourishes the ground and produces life out of what was once dead. These are words of abundance and beauty. But more than beauty, the rain brings **seed** and **bread** – provision and sustenance. Essential to sustaining life.

It Shall Not Return Empty

In the same way, God says in **verse 11, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**

Just as rain brings life from death, God’s word likewise brings life from death. His **word**, like the rain, is powerful – it produces. It is effectual – it achieves its purposes. It is successful with what it was intended.

Verses 12-13 For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their

hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

In an agricultural world, nothing is more stubborn and frustrating than **thorns** and **briers**. In Texas they have Mesquite trees that destroy pastures. They're thorny and do nothing but harm livestock, puncture tires, and rob the ground of nutrients. They're nuisances and they are hard to eradicate.

Cypress trees, on the other hand, are strong, tall, and useful. They can be harvested and used for building strong structures. Thus, when God says **instead of a thorn shall come up the cypress**, He is promising a future in which the ground that used to frustrate will be useful and productive.

The **brier**, a harsh bush, also thorny, will be replaced by the **myrtle**. Unlike the brier, it is an evergreen shrub, fragrant, and beautiful to look at. The myrtle is used elsewhere in scripture to symbolize God's mercy on the other side of judgment. (cf. Zechariah **1:8–11**, Nehemiah **8:15**) It grows where peace has replaced wrath.

Reverse the Curse

Consider this message – from thorns to cypress, from briers to myrtles. Thorny ground is language of the curse. As a result of Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, God curses Adam's work with thorns and thistles. (cf. Genesis 3:18)

But not forever! God promises through Isaiah a time in which the people will no longer contend with thorns and briers, but cypress and myrtle. This isn't an agricultural prophecy. At least not principally. No, this is a promise to reverse the curse.

How will this be accomplished? God's word will reverse the curse and the whole creation will rejoice, even the **mountains and hills and trees**. The curse will be lifted and mankind will be at peace with His Creator all because the word of God **goes out and it shall not return...empty**.

The Word Became Flesh

Please turn now to **John 1**. Let's read **verses 1-5** and **11-14**.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Like the rain and snow falls softly upon the earth, the Word entered the world gently and softly in the form of a baby born in the little town of Bethlehem and laid in a manger.

And the **Word** did not return void. No, the Word did not simply command revival, He created it. He stepped into the soil of our broken world, putting on flesh and becoming the curse for us.

The thorns that have plagued mankind...would pierce their Creator's own brow.

The curse placed upon Adam's back...would one day rip into Christ's.

The barren ground of your heart that used to produce only thorns is now nurturing myrtle.

There's a reason mesquite trees are so hard to destroy. You can cut them down, but they sprout back. You can burn them, but they return. You can spray them, but their roots often survive. Why? Because they run deep; going down fifty feet into the ground. Unless you kill the root, you will not kill the mesquite.

Like these taproots, the curse runs deep in our hearts. More than mere outward behavior modification, our hearts, dead in sin, need to be completely changed. The only means of such deep-rooted transformation is that God's word penetrates our hearts and shines light into the darkness, bringing life out of death.

New Creation

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It is the life-transforming Word of God. Where the Word takes root, **new creation begins**.

What Isaiah promised, and what John proclaimed, is this: the Word did not remain distant. He came near. The light entered the darkness—not with noise or force, but with light and life. And where the light is, the darkness cannot win.

Tonight, as we mark the culmination of this advent season—**Light in the Darkness**—we do something simple but symbolic. We extinguish every other light, to remember the world as it was: waiting and longing in darkness, unable to save itself.

And then we lift our eyes to the one light that does not go out—the Word made flesh, the Light of the world.