

Isaiah proclaims that God will transform the very wilderness.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH [43:16-21]

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

*The Word of the Lord.*

PSALM 126 (*8 AM said in unison, 10 AM sung*)

- <sup>1</sup> When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, \*  
then were we like those who dream.
- <sup>2</sup> Then was our mouth filled with laughter, \*  
and our tongue with shouts of joy.
- <sup>3</sup> Then they said among the nations, \*  
"The LORD has done great things for them."
- <sup>4</sup> The LORD has done great things for us, \*  
and we are glad indeed.
- <sup>5</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD, \*  
like the watercourses of the Negev.
- <sup>6</sup> Those who sowed with tears \*  
will reap with songs of joy.
- <sup>7</sup> Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, \*  
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

Paul declares that the greatest riches of this world are so much rubbish compared to life in Christ.

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS [3:4b-14]

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

*The Word of the Lord.*