

## Joy – Peter and Ellen Stapleton

The Advent candles of Hope and Peace have been lit. Today we light the Advent candle of Joy.

(Peter lights the candle)

Ellen: Our scripture is Isaiah 35 1-10

### Joy of the Redeemed

35 The desert and the parched land will be glad;

the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.

Like the crocus,<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the feeble hands,

steady the knees that give way;

<sup>4</sup> say to those with fearful hearts,

“Be strong, do not fear;

your God will come,

he will come with vengeance;

with divine retribution

he will come to save you.”

<sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened

and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

<sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer,

and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness

and streams in the desert.

<sup>7</sup> The burning sand will become a pool,

the thirsty ground bubbling springs.

In the haunts where jackals once lay,  
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

<sup>8</sup> And a highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness;  
it will be for those who walk on that Way.

The unclean will not journey on it;  
wicked fools will not go about on it.

<sup>9</sup> No lion will be there,  
nor any ravenous beast;  
they will not be found there.

But only the redeemed will walk there,  
<sup>10</sup> and those the LORD has rescued will return.

They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Ellen continues: Now Peter and I are going to offer you an advent poem of joy from our family to yours.

Peter: Joy is going to a wedding next week to see your son marry someone perfect for him.

Ellen: Joy becomes traditions set by family and friends; Thanksgiving at Holston camp; a wonderful place where children can run free, where the outside world is set aside, where we can see people we haven't seen for years, and where we remember those who have passed on, like my father who connects us still.

Peter: Joy is playing with your grandchildren and realizing I never tire of it. You cannot plan such joyful moments.

Ellen: Joy is floating down the Dechuts River -- with its glorious scenery-- and my boys and two grandsons all to myself.

Peter: Joy was meeting Ellen for the first time and the discovery that I wanted to be married to her more than go back to Australia.

Ellen: Joy is represented by our two mothers. Their independence, their strength and their devotion to family.

Peter: Joy is where we live ---a paradise where you can look at Grandfather mountain every single day

Ellen: Joy is the birth of a grandchild; just when you think the world is going completely mad, and life is a mess, God is resoundly says to you, "There's hope!"

Peter: Joy is acceptance. Ellen and I can begin to understand God's joy when we see our grandchildren because God sees what is best in us. He unconditionally accepts us. And when we look on the face of a grandchild, he reminds us that we should be joyous and that it is a good time to be alive.

Ellen: Pray with me.

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for sending us the greatest of Joy; your son, Jesus Christ. Remind us that every day we should sing "Joy to the World" for the birth of a baby in Bethlehem taught us how to see what's right in with our families, our dwelling place and our world. And when we don't feel your joy in our hearts, remind us with the face of a child. Amen.