



# Advent #3

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## Joy Renews the Weary

w/c 14 December 2025

*"Joy and laughter are the gifts of living in the presence of God and trusting that tomorrow is not worth worrying about." (Henri Nouwen)*

Water is clearly a major theme for both Isaiah and John. The former dwelling both on its lack as well as its abundance. Water often seems to represent the Spirit, flowing to us and through us.

### **Read Isaiah 55 and John 4:1-14**

Isaiah 55 has been described as a sales pitch wrapped in poetry. It makes clear the ability of God's word to complete his intentions. We are invited to both anticipate and trust his provision. Those promises though are both 'now' and equally – at the same time – 'not yet': a key aspect of our Advent thinking. How does this paradox affect our approach to our day to day lives?

These passages are both concerned with offers of water to the thirsty. We live in a temperate, oceanic climate. It is not easy then to imagine the importance of water for the lives of desert dwellers. Here Isaiah writes of God calling for the thirsty to come to the water. This is a reversal of earlier verses that described Judah as a garden without water (Isaiah 1:30) and the Lord as withholding water from Jerusalem (Isaiah 3:1). Why do you think there has been this apparent turnaround? Where else in the Bible do we read of God's gift of water to his people?

God's provision is both free and freely available. The living water does not just quench our thirst today. From John's gospel, we learn that we need never thirst again. How do you think this idea of never thirsting fits in with our ongoing spiritual journey?

Come, Isaiah reminds us, and enjoy this gift. The hunger of our souls is fed in God, nowhere else. We should not look elsewhere. What God offers us is completely free. We can then answer a question from one of last month's studies: Yes, there is such a thing as a free lunch, and it comes from God. It may be useful to remember that, in the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the *"Chief end (or primary purpose) of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever."* How do we enjoy God?

Elsewhere in John (7:38), we read that such water is not just ours to receive. We must also pass it on. How will our lives look if 'streams of living water' do truly 'flow from within them'?

Isaiah speaks words of hope, likely to an exiled people returning to Jerusalem. There are several references in the New Testament to our being, if not returned exiles, then migrants arriving in a new country and becoming its citizens. See for example Colossians 1:13. Our task though is to be representatives of that new country within our old one (See 2 Corinthians 5:20). As the old saying goes, we need to be in the world yet not of it. How do we achieve this without alienating or embarrassing non-Christian friends and neighbours, or even our fellow believers.

*"Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfilment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart."*

(Martin Luther King, Jr)