Isaiah 66:10 10Rejoice with Jerusalem and celebrate with her, all you who love her. Share her joy with her, all you who have been mourning over her

 I have to tell you this is a rather difficult text to wrap your head around, but once you do you will realize that it is a text filled with comfort, hope and the total wonder of God. I pray that I can do justice to the words that are found here.

 To simply begin, let me remind you of the ministry of Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet of God who served from around 740-681 B.C. Contemporaries who served God’s people around the same time, are Micah and Hosea with Jonah and Amos not far out of the picture. As a prophet, Isaiah served the southern kingdom of Judah with its capital Jerusalem. Perhaps the most important thing to know about his time is the godlessness of the people who were served. By and large, the Jewish nation had abandoned the true God, were ignorant of the true nature of God’s Word and worship and had fallen into the trap of work-righteousness as the means of salvation. Isaiah was sent to deal with all of this.

 Because of that, much of Isaiah is a preaching of the Law of God. Isaiah is busy pointing out the sins of the people and calling for heartfelt repentance. Again remember that Isaiah ministered to the Kingdom of Judah. Things in the northern Kingdom of Israel were even worse. For that matter, it is during Isaiah lifetime and ministry that northern Israel is conquered and carried away by the Assyrian armies never to be heard of again. 10 tribes of the Jewish people who simply disappear into the world as a part of God’s judgment against them. Only because of God’s intervention does southern Judah survive!

 Yet not all of Isaiah’s words are Law and condemnation. It is Isaiah who gives us so many wonderful and uplifting messages of Gospel promise. It is Isaiah who tells so clearly, emphasizes that salvation, deliverance from sin, death and hell would be through the Holy One of God, namely the Messiah, the Christ that God would send. It is Isaiah who tells us of the virgin birth in Bethlehem, of the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace who will rule on David’s throne for the sake of souls. It is Isaiah who speaks of the ministry of the Messiah in Galilee and Judah with a myriad of signs, miracles and wonders of God. Yes, Isaiah who speaks of Christ’s suffering and death, his burial and his resurrection from the dead. It is Isaiah that gives us wonderful words such as **“We thought it was because of God that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, but it was because of our rebellion that he was pierced. He was crushed for the guilt our sins deserved. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”**

There is no doubt then that Isaiah was indeed a preacher of the Gospel, a prophet who extended to God’s people the wonder, hope and comfort of God’s eternal salvation. It is just such a section of God’s Word that we have before us. It pictures the hope and beauty of God’s Holy Christian Church. It pictures the rejoicing and joy that will be ours, all because God will grant His grace and blessings upon us. Our theme for today will be: **REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM!**

 Now the first thing I need to tell you, important to understanding this section, is that in the previous chapters and verses we have the setting for what our verses tell us. In Chapter 65 for instance, we hear of the Lord’s new creation, a picture and promise of our eternal life and salvation from and of God. From there we enter into Chapter 66 where the first nine verses give us the setting for our verses. In those first nine verses we are told of Mother Zion and what will be when Mother Zion comes about. Listen to just a few of the things so important to our text.

 Verse 7 says, **“Before she suffers labor pains, she gives birth. Before birth pain comes upon her, she delivers a male child.”** Here is the promise of the birth of the Savior. The Savior will come from God’s people, the Old Testament Church. Here the Church is depicted as a mother giving birth, but giving birth without pain and suffering. In other words, the Savior has come, the male child who will deliver the world from sin, death and hell. That is the beginning of our hope and confidence, this birth of Jesus. All of this happens because God will bring it about!

 Then there is the end of verse 8 which states: **“But as soon as Zion experiences labor pains, she gives birth to her children.”** Notice how we have gone from one child born to now many children born. It is a prophetic way of speaking of the impact of the one child. Because of the one child there would be many children. Here is the Lord telling us how we will be born again and adopted as His children. Here is God showing us the Holy Christian Church, the communion of Saints, that church that arose from the Old Testament Church because of the fulfillment of God’s promises in Jesus. Jesus would grant us forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus will make us heirs of heaven and inheritors of God’s wonders and marvels.

 The Apostle Paul helps us grasp this wonder in Galatians. In Chapter 4 he says, **“In fact, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus…And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants and heirs according to the promise.”** Later on God says this to us through Paul, **“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons.”** What is even most remarkable are the words at the end of Galatians 4 that tell us: **“For this reason…we are…of the free woman.”** If you look that section up you will find that Isaiah is quoted and the woman who does not have birth pains is the free woman! There is no doubt that all of this before us is the promise that comes to us through the Savior born of a woman. And now let’s look at what that promise reveals.

 Our text started: **“Rejoice with Jerusalem and celebrate with her, all you who love her. Share her joy with her, all you who have been mourning over her.”** God wants us to know that a time is coming when we can and will rejoice, that we will be able to celebrate what comes from “mother” Jerusalem. It will be a change from the old apostate church of the Old Testament to a new Church, a church filled with believers.

 Now before we hit the next verse, I want you to grasp that this verse clearly speak of the importance of the Church to all of us. Note that our words speak of those who **“love her.”** The Church is where God’s Word is found. The Church and her prophets have been the instrument by which God has revealed himself, extended his promises, fulfilled His promises and continues to nurture and sustain us in the wonderful promises of faith. Those who had been mourning over the Church, because she had forgotten the wonders and truths of God, can now rejoice with the Church because God has revived her, God has brought forth the Savior and with that Savior many other children.

 Our next words are uplifting and wonderful. Most consider these words to be about the visible Christian Church as it is found in this world. I find that understanding to shallow. I believe these words are about the invisible Church, the Holy Christian Church, all those everywhere who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior from sin. While we can make application of these words to our present day churches, the greatest application is to grasp that the next words depict and picture for us, in a very unique way, the eternal Kingdom of God, namely, the Triumphant Christian Church and the eternal happiness we will all have in heaven.

 Listen up. **“Share her joy with her…so that you may nurse and be satisfied from her comforting breast, so that you may suck and find delight from her milk-filled breasts.”** Pretty interesting words. God uses the beautiful and wonderful picture of a nursing mother to bring us the comfort of eternal heaven. I will tell you I take great comfort in these words. Any mother who has nursed will tell you about the bond, the contentment, happiness and love that happens in the beauty of nursing. It is not something nasty, it is something beautiful. God uses this picture to help us understand the love, comfort, closeness and happiness of heaven!

 Our text then goes on. **“Yes, this is what the Lord says. I am ready to extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream. You will be nursed. You will be carried on her side, and you will be bounced on her knees.”** Again, God is giving us a unique and totally awesome picture of his heavenly kingdom. It is a place of peace. Do note that this peace is equated to a flowing river. Think of some of the great rivers of our land and how they just continue to flow and produce their blessings. In this section, that river, every drop of water in that river is equated with the multitude of blessings, the goodness and wonder of God! Then let me just remind you that in Revelation, when we are given a picture of heaven, we find the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God. Another way of simply telling us about the total, perfect, peaceful, without sin marvel that heaven is! And please note I didn’t even speak about **“carried on her side”** or **“bounced on her knees”** thing. If you don’t get the lesson on love, comfort, happiness, contentment and the awe of those words, then I feel bad for you! The picture of the joyful mother totally involved in her child is used to depict God’s eternal comfort and joy of heaven.

 There is more. **“Just like a man whom his mother comforts, in the same way I myself will comfort you, and you will be comforted concerning Jerusalem. Then you will see, and your heart will be glad. Like grass you will receive new strength, right down to your bones.”** I can tell you of the special bond that most mothers and children share. It is that bond that God desires with you. God has given us His church, a place where we are nurtured with the Word, fed the wonder of the gospel and given the complete hope of eternal life. The church is like your mother watching over you, taking care of you, nurturing you and seeing to it that you have all you need to be a strong and sure child, in this case, a child of God!

 Now let me highlight the words: **Then you will see, and your heart will be glad. Like grass you will receive new strength, right down to your bones.”** These words are a reference to the wonder of God’s salvation. As you think of these words think of Jesus. Think of what Jesus has done for you and me. How he came to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins and how through his resurrection from the dead he has declared the complete victory that he has won on our behalf. I can’t think about this wonder of Jesus and not be filled with awe. It is Jesus and his redemption that fills my heart with joy. It is the gospel proclamation of forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus that serves as my strength, hope and wonder…yes, right down to my bones! I thank God daily for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that gift that allows me to see and fathom this simple and yet profoundly moving truth of Jesus. The promises found here, are mine, they are yours, because of Jesus. Because Jesus is our Savior. Because Jesus, that male child born, was born to bring us the adoption and inheritance of heaven. I would tell you that these words are the true heart of this prophecy. They are pointing to the Savior who brings all of this to reality.

 There you have it. A joyous and awe filled prophecy of Isaiah. It is about what God will do and does in Jesus. It is also about what God gives in His Church. Look at these words and contemplate their joy. Look at these words and then ask yourself if you want what they show? Then recognize that being in church, hearing God’s wonder, being fed the wonder of God’s love in Jesus is the application of these words today. Church is our spiritual mother. Church is a place of hope, comfort, nourishment and joy. Church is what God has given us in order to bond with us and that we receive the strength we so desperately need to get by in this sinful world. It is in church that those last words do come true. **Then you will see, and your heart will be glad. Like grass you will receive new strength, right down to your bones.”**

May the joy of these words fill you. May the wonder of Jesus thrill you. Amen.