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Psalm 24:1-10, Isaiah 13:1-13, John 3:22-30, Hebrews 12:18-29

Today's passage from Isaiah isn't one that we'd expect to read during advent. We like the suffering servant, or the way of the Lord being made straight, better. The day of the Lord coming to make the land desolate seems too ominous, and even contradictory to the stand message of this season. But as Hebrews reminds us, God is so holy that his presence is cause for fear and trembling; even Moses approached him with awe.

Yet Hebrews also tells us that "you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God." How is it that a mere mortal who must be stoned for even setting foot on God's mountain can come into the assembly of God himself? John the Baptist knew the answer. John says of Jesus, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). Jesus himself came from heaven so that we would no longer need to be separated from God. When we were unable to approach the Lord, he approached us instead.

John's statement didn't apply only to himself. Jesus must become greater, and we all must become less. Trying to make ourselves greater is the basis of all the sin that separates us from God. As Jesus becomes greater in our lives, we begin to grow into the life that God wants us to have, and which will continue in God's presence in the world to come.

This is what was really unexpected about Jesus' message. It was believed that a hero was coming to overthrow the Roman government and vindicate Israel as a state. What God provided instead was a man who could live in our hearts and teach us how to become less, in order that we could become closer to God than we could think possible. How often do we reflect on this? It's more popular to take the message of Christmas as a story about a God who loves us and came to live among us, redeem us from our sins, and then go back to heaven, leaving us once again to our own devices. But that's not what the Bible offers us. Instead, we are told of a God who, because he became human, re-established contact with us so that we could become like him. But for that to happen, we

must come to God on our knees and become less, so that, through Jesus, we can become what God means us to be.

#### Prayer

Dear Lord, we come to you on our knees, thanking you for coming to us when we were unworthy to approach you. We ask that you help us to lay aside our egos and learn to love you with our whole hearts, so that we may give them more fully to you. Amen.