

**December 3, 2016**

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### **Scripture**

Isaiah 4:2-6

<sup>2</sup>On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. <sup>3</sup>Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, <sup>4</sup>once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed over all the glory there will be a canopy. <sup>6</sup>It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

### **Devotional**

Embedded within this passage we find cause for both hope and for fear. Isaiah speaks of burning and cleansing, but also of refuge and shelter. So often, we have difficulty embracing both of these aspects of our faith. We tend to focus either on God as judge or God as protector, yet here Isaiah unites both actions. It is only by “washing” Zion that God can make it safe.

As we celebrate Advent, the coming of Christ can be equally complex. Christ makes intense demands of his followers, yet also gives his life for them. He is both infant and lord, both God and human.

In the coming weeks, let us pay attention to the ways we portray the birth of Jesus and try to hold on to the complexity of a God who both cleanses and protects.

### **Prayer**

Lord, we thank you for the wonder of this season. We thank you that you are our refuge and strength, and we ask you to help us follow you even when it is difficult. Amen.