DAY 24

ISAIAH 9:6–7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Fifteen years ago, inspired by an Advent Conspiracy video, the congregation I was serving in embarked on a clean water project for a small community in Ecuador. When I went to Ecuador for the ribbon cutting and blessing of the project, some of the people took me over to a neighboring community that was built on a garbage field. It is as heartbreaking as you can imagine. One of the many things that goes along with a lack of clean water is a myriad of skin diseases, which were visible on the bodies of the people. After seeing more need, the hope was that our church could do something to help.

While we were there, some people in the community took me to their church—a spot of pounded ground with four poles holding up a corrugated metal roof and twisted-wire cross. They told me other pastors and priests rarely visited them here, so they asked if I would celebrate communion, the Eucharist, with

them, saying to me, "Please. Jesus is all we have." They were right. Jesus is all we have.

The words of the prophet in Isaiah today are often interpreted as a promise, but in their original setting they must have been words of hope. There would be a day when God will send a ruler, just and faithful, restoring joy and justice and reestablishing the nation as it was under David. Isaiah's vision was not spiritual but tangible and physical in a broken world.

When the early Christians thought about the work of Jesus, His healing and feeding, driving out demons, and eating with all sorts of excluded people, they believed they saw a fulfillment of the prophet's vision. God's renewal of Israel was, has always been, a renewal of this world. They also knew that Jesus was the embodiment of this hope of the restoration of God's world. And they knew that Jesus called and empowered them, the disciples, to embody this hope, in His name, in this world.

Jesus is all they had, all we have, and it is enough. At times it seems we struggle to believe that God truly wants the transformation of the world. We look at the world and it's hard to believe it could ever change. But the words and hope of Isaiah still ring true for us today. Jesus is enough for that change. Jesus is all we have. Jesus is all we are given. And it is enough. Enough to change our lives. Enough for God to change the world. That's the story of Christmas, of the Incarnation, isn't it? Jesus is all we are given.

REFLECT

Which name and character trait of Jesus are you clinging to from the promises of Isaiah? Why?

PRAY

Jesus, on this Christmas Eve, I remember the gift of your Incarnation. Be present in me so that I can make you present in the world through my life. Empower me with your Holy Spirit and help me to trust that the promises and hope found in Isaiah are still true for our world today. You are enough, Jesus. Amen.