



THE CLOTHING OF THE

# KING

*Advent Devotional*



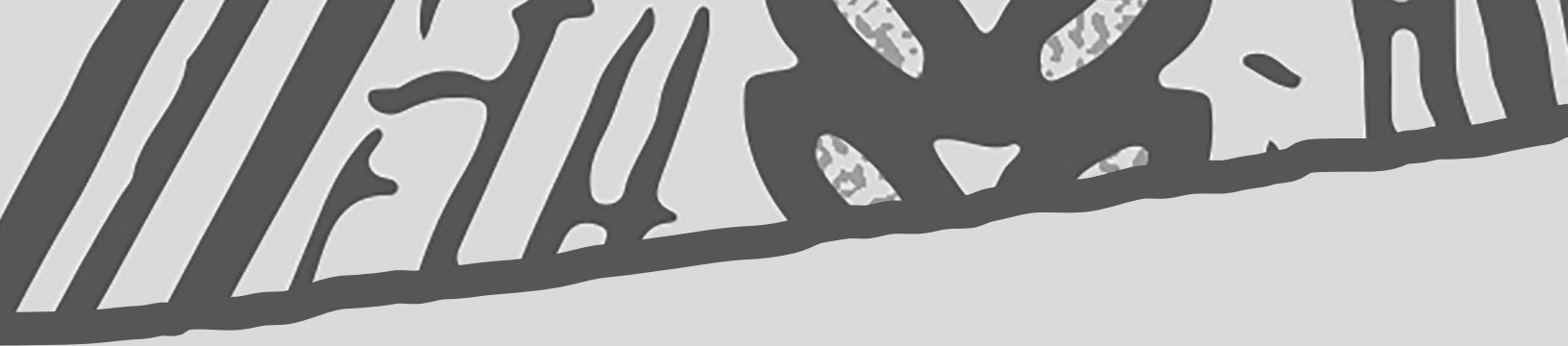
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**KING**



1517 Advent Devotional

*Written and edited by 1517*





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THE CLOTHING OF THE  
**KING**



# COVERING UP

## SCRIPTURE:

GENESIS 3:21

**And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.**

---

There are two ways to celebrate the Advent season. There is the traditional church practice of viewing this as a time for fasting and repentance. And repentance is nothing but having our sins exposed and confessing them to God, so that we might hear and believe, “Christ has died for you. Your sin is covered!”

The other way to celebrate Advent is what we’ll call the secular route. This way consists of shopping, parties, and decorating our homes.

One of the practices that comes with the secular Advent is the buying and “hiding” of gifts. We hide, or clothe, our gifts in wrapping paper, you might say, so that no one will know what is on the inside until the appropriate time. The gifts are wrapped in order to remain hidden. For the determined child, that wrapping paper is a joke. They’ll go to great lengths to find out what is on the inside that we do not want them to see.

Adam and Eve tried to hide behind a wrapping of fig leaves. But what they hid was no Christmas gift, but their own sin and shame. They had

## COVERING UP CONTINUED...

selfishly and destructively rebelled against God. They realized their sin was as exposed as their bodies, so they sought to cover themselves by wrapping up in fig leaves.

But, for the determined God, these leaves were a joke. He found his children and he pronounced

—  
YOU CANNOT  
HIDE YOUR SINS  
FROM GOD. BUT IT  
IS ADVENT, SO  
WHY TRY?  
—

the law's judgment upon them. And yet he did not leave them for dead. He loved them too much. He decided to cover their sin with something far greater than leaves: a sacrifice. To be sure, the sacrifice of an animal at the time. But that only foreshadowed the greater sacrifice of his own Son, Eve's offspring, the second Adam. His death would cover their sin. And, not only theirs, but yours as well. You cannot hide your sins from God. But it is Advent, so why try? Repent and hear the good news, "Christ has died for you! Your sin is covered!"

## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, repent us this Advent so that we may be made free from our fig leaves of shame and sin, forgiven anew, and clothed in your lovingkindness.*

# STEALING THE BLESSING

## SCRIPTURE:

GENESIS 27:15

**Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.**

---

When Isaac was coming to the end of his life and his eyesight had gone, he decided it was time to bless his eldest son, Esau. But as Esau went hunting in order to prepare his father's favorite meal, his mother and younger brother had different plans.

It's easy to read the story of Jacob and Esau and see Jacob as the good guy and Esau as the bad guy, but this is not the case. Jacob colludes with his mother to steal a blessing from his father that belongs to Esau. The plan includes a meal for his father prepared by his mother and dressing in his older brother's clothes. The real scandal of the story is that God allows this deception to work. Jacob boldly walks into the tent dressed in his brother's clothes and steals a blessing from his father.

As unfair as this story is, it pales in comparison to the story it foreshadows: the story of every Christian. The truth is, you and I do the same thing with God. We come before him as sinners who deserve nothing but judgment, but because we are dressed in the righteousness of our older brother, Jesus, we receive grace and blessing.



## STEALING THE BLESSING *CONTINUED...*

God is not fooled. He not only allows this to happen but orchestrated it from the foundation of the world. God has colluded with himself to declare sinners like us holy and blessed for the sake of Jesus. The gospel is the good and scandalous news that all the undeserving younger siblings get what only the older brother deserves. It may sound strange, but that is how the gospel works.

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WE COME BEFORE HIM AS SINNERS WHO DESERVE NOTHING  
BUT JUDGMENT, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE DRESSED IN THE  
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR OLDER BROTHER, JESUS, WE  
RECEIVE GRACE AND BLESSING.

---

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your plan of salvation which clothes us in the righteousness of our older brother and grants us the blessings you pour out on us for his sake.*

# BORROWING FROM GOD'S CLOSET

## SCRIPTURE:

GENESIS 28:1-5

**Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen.**

---

When the high priests prepared for temple duty, they did not slip on their nicest suit, grab a matching tie, and clock in at the altar. They wore what God told them to wear, head to toe. The “toe” part was a cinch. Since the priests, like Moses, stood on holy ground, they served shoeless. But their hats, undergarments, overgarments, breastpiece, and so forth—the whole ensemble—was a uniform decreed by the Lord. Why?

The priestly attire had highly symbolic value. For instance, both on their chest and atop their shoulders were precious stones, engraved with the

## BORROWING FROM GOD'S CLOSET *CONTINUED...*

names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Wherever the high priest went, all Israel went with him. He bore them in his own body, in the bejeweled clothes he wore.

What's more, the material from which his vestments were made was the same material used to craft the tabernacle and its veil. The priests borrowed from God's closet. What "clothed" the dwelling place of the Lord also clothed his priests. Aaron and all other high priests were attired as walking, talking tabernacles.

—  
AARON AND ALL  
OTHER HIGH  
PRIESTS WERE  
ATTIRED  
AS WALKING,  
TALKING  
TABERNACLES.  
—

These human high priests, by dressing in a divine fashion, bearing Israel atop their shoulders and over their hearts, were a prefiguration of the Messiah himself. But Jesus does not just "wear" our humanity but fully partakes of our flesh and blood, while still remaining divine. He bears the names of all humanity. Wherever Christ went, all of us go with him—through his life, to death, to burial, to resurrection, to ascension.

## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, remind us that just as you clothed Aaron and the high priests in your glory and beauty, you clothe us in the glory and beauty of Christ our righteousness.*

# DRESSING DOWN

## SCRIPTURE:

LEVITICUS 16:4,  
23-24

**He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on...Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the Holy Place and shall leave them there. And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people.**

---

In the military, different uniforms are worn for different functions. The clothes communicate whether the soldier is doing physical training, going through a daily routine, dining formally, and so forth. Uniforms inform. On the Day of Atonement, the two “uniforms” worn by the high priest had their own iconic message.

When the high priest appeared before God in the Holy of Holies, he did not wear his elaborate vestments but “dressed down,” wearing humble, linen garments. This was fitting, since he was the representative of sinners in need of the cleansing from atonement. But once the atonement rite was done, he bathed and donned royal vestments, for he then functioned

## DRESSING DOWN CONTINUED...

as the representative of the King of kings before this people. One man, two uniforms, twin messages.

When the Son of the Father was born as a man for us, he “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). We might say he took on the “humble, linen garments” of our humanity,

for he came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). In him, the Father saw us. But at the same time, as the Godman, he remained “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb. 1:3). In him, we see the Father.

—  
GOD SEES ALL  
OF US IN CHRIST,  
JUST AS WE SEE  
ALL OF GOD  
IN HIM.  
—

On Good Friday, the ultimate Day of Atonement, God sees all of us in Christ, just as we see all of God in him. He is the Servant and King, the sacrifice for sin and Son of the Father, who goes all the way to the cross and empty tomb to robe us in his righteousness.

## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, we give thanks for Christ’s atoning work on our behalf, that we may appear before you not in our sinful flesh but in your radiant glory.*

# WEARING SPIRIT CLOTHING

## SCRIPTURE:

JUDGES 6:33-34

**Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.**

---

Gideon wasn't exactly the steel-spined pillar of courage. When the Lord told him to demolish the idolatrous altar of his father, he was "afraid of his family and the men of the town," so he did it under cover of night (Judg. 6:27). Later, he was "afraid to go down" alone to spy out the enemy camp, so he took his servant along (7:10). And not once but twice, he begged God for a "fleece sign" to make sure he was really supposed to take on the Midianites (6:36-40).

In other words, Gideon was a mere mortal. He was cut from the same cloth as we are, a victim of doubt and trepidation, with a phobia of failure. So, the Lord of mercy gave this man what he needed: "the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon" (6:34). Over Gideon's naked vulnerability, our Father laid the Spirit, so that in this man, being weak in himself, the Lord might display his almighty power to save. And save he did, using Gideon and a paltry force of three hundred men to defeat hordes of the enemy.

## WEARING SPIRIT CLOTHING CONTINUED...

Gideon was one of many rescuers in the book of Judges. Their office of divine deliverance foreshadowed that of Jesus, upon whom the Spirit rested, through whom the Father “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, on whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13). This same Spirit clothes, inhabits, and guides us as the children of our heavenly Father, constantly bringing us to Jesus and Jesus to us.

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OVER GIDEON’S NAKED VULNERABILITY, OUR FATHER LAID THE SPIRIT, SO THAT IN THIS MAN, BEING WEAK IN HIMSELF, THE LORD MIGHT DISPLAY HIS ALMIGHTY POWER TO SAVE.

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### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit by which we find peace and comfort through your guidance and your protection.*



# A WELL-TAILORED SUIT

## SCRIPTURE:

1 SAM. 17:38-39

**Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them.**

---

A good tailor is an under-appreciated sculptor, mathematician and master craftsman all at once. His or her hands measure and mark, sew and shear, and turn lifeless textiles into stunning statements. If clothes make the man, then an exquisite suit can vault the wearer to great success. At least, this was Saul's idea when David appeals to him to confront the Philistine, Goliath.

Saul, a tested warrior, does what comes naturally. Saul's intentions were good, but the suit did not fit. So, David left it behind, opting instead for his own staff, a sling, and five smooth stones. David's suit was unconventional, but it was exactly what God had in mind. David, clothed with confidence, strode in front of the giant, slung a stone that sunk into his forehead, and won the battle. God prefers to use the unexpected and the underwhelming rather than the power of a well-tailored suit.

David's story is the same as the story of the incarnation. While sin, the giant of our world, rages, howls, beckons, and cajoles us to battle, God sends a helpless infant, seemingly ill-equipped for battle. But this child,

## A WELL-TAILORED SUIT CONTINUED...

wrapped in a suit of swaddling clothes, has everything needed to slay the serpent of sin. Following the will of the master craftsman, his hands would be marked with nails and his lifeless body would hang on a cross to transform the world. His stunning resurrection made a statement for eternity that the battle belongs to the Lord, and because of this, your sin is forgiven, and you are clothed with the righteous robes of the King.

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GOD PREFERS TO USE THE UNEXPECTED AND THE  
UNDERWHELMING RATHER THAN THE POWER OF  
A WELL-TAILORED SUIT.

---

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for clothing us in weakness that we may  
rely wholly on the power, strength, and might of Christ's cross.*

# THE PUBLIC POWER OF GRIEF

## SCRIPTURE:

ESTHER 4:1

**When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry.**

---

Bible readers and church-goers are familiar with the outward symbolism of sackcloth and ashes. But it can sometimes evade our attention that tearing clothes and sitting in ashes is a *public* event, not a private one. So why do ancient Jews do this?

When we grieve, there is a sense that no one else can really know how we feel. Others may know what it is like to mourn, or feel guilty, but they never know *my* guilt as I know it, or *my* grief as I experience it. That often means that mourning and guilt are accompanied by the added burden of alienation or loneliness. Tearing clothes and wearing ashes makes this interior loneliness an outward invitation. In mourning for the impending doom of his people, Mordecai creates a space where solidarity and community can flourish and words are replaced by groans and tears.

His sackcloth and ashes do something else as well. In the shared grief of public mourning the injustice of the King's decree is put on trial. Those who are powerless may not be able to outstrength magisterial might, but they can nevertheless stand up to it and call it out for what it is. Shared

## THE PUBLIC POWER OF GRIEF CONTINUED...

grief shows that grief is not just a passive state but also an active subversion to the more obvious cause of the pain.

Mordecai as a pious Jew knows that who he worships is greater than any king he serves. So, he refuses to lose hope. Mordecai's hope lies in the God he knows from the Jewish Scriptures. But as Christians we know so much more. We know that our God has taken on flesh and died for us. We know we are heirs to his promises. And we know that he, fully aware of grief and pain, still told us not to worry and that we are never alone. With hope like that, we have something even greater to anticipate that overshadows the hard things, which will pass away.

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SHARED GRIEF SHOWS THAT GRIEF IS NOT JUST A  
PASSIVE STATE BUT ALSO AN ACTIVE SUBVERSION TO THE  
MORE OBVIOUS CAUSE OF THE PAIN.

---

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, you know our pain and our grief even when we feel alienated by the sufferings of this world. Give us mouths to mourn and to hope, as we continue to live in the tension of the now and not yet.*

# NOTHING AND YET EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED

## SCRIPTURE:

ESTHER 5:1-2

**On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters. And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.**

---

After days of beauty treatments and dressed in innate fabrics gathered and sewn to the latest fashions, Queen Esther looked as though she belonged in the royal court. She did not look like one of her fellow exiled people. She had been stripped of her old clothing. Her flesh had been exfoliated, moisturized, and painted. She was lovely and her appearance won favor with the king.

Although she appeared as a queen, her genetic makeup remained the same. She was still Esther, adopted daughter of Mordecai, daughter of the tribe of Benjamin.

After our baptism, we do not look much different. Perhaps our hair is awry and our clothes cling to us or, if we are infants, our faces turn red

NOTHING AND YET EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED CONTINUED...

as we scream in defiance and fear. But otherwise, we remain the same. Nothing has changed yet everything has changed. We are still sons and daughters of our earthly fathers, yet also sons and daughters of God.

“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).

—  
WE ARE STILL  
SONS AND  
DAUGHTERS  
OF OUR EARTHLY  
FATHERS, YET  
ALSO SONS AND  
DAUGHTERS  
OF GOD.  
—

In baptism, everything has changed because we have put on Christ.

Esther in her royal garb was unsure if she would perish when she approached the throne. We, however, approach the throne with confidence. Not because of our genes, our earthly fathers, beauty treatments, fancy clothes, or put-together lives. We approach with confidence because we are clothed in Christ.

## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for adopting me as your child in the waters of baptism. Keep me ever mindful of your love for me as we await the coming of Jesus.*

# CLOTHED IN SHAME

## SCRIPTURE:

PSALM 35:26

**Let them be put to shame and disappointed altogether who rejoice at my calamity! Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves against me!**

---

Is David asking God to punish his enemies with all the typical cultural trappings – ostracization, shunning and embarrassment – of our modern age in Psalm 35? Let them be “clothed with shame and dishonor” reads like a modern cancel culture insult, and yet it’s not the only time this type of language is used in the Old Testament. In Psalm 109, David makes a similar request: “May my accusers be clothed with dishonor; may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a cloak!” The prophet Micah likewise reflects, “Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, “Where is the Lord your God?”” (Mic. 7:10). The Old Testament mentions being clothed with shame, disgrace, etc. at least 10 times.

And yet it would seem that almost every other entry in this Advent devotional reflects on the idea that our God promises coverings and clothing of righteousness and honor, *not* shame. What is going on here? God’s beloved are not in danger of receiving the opposite of the wardrobe worn by King Jesus. But apart from our King, this is the outfit we already wear. Yes, it’s David who first spoke these words, but it’s to Christ we attribute them. And as Christ’s words, we must interpret “enemy” as all of us who justly deserve shame and dishonor for magnifying ourselves against him.



## CLOTHED IN SHAME CONTINUED...

Those in opposition to the Savior by definition dress differently - the only option available to them is the garb of shame-stained rags.

But you, dear Christian, are no longer among the shamed. For while we were all still enemies to God, the King of Kings died for us. This is at once both a shaming fact and one filled with absolute freedom. While we deserve all the shame and disgrace of God's enemies, solely by his gracious love, our Heavenly Father has brought you close and clothed you in the majesty of his son (Rom. 5:10).

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GOD'S BELOVED ARE NOT IN DANGER OF RECEIVING THE  
OPPOSITE OF THE WARDROBE WORN BY KING JESUS. BUT APART  
FROM OUR KING, THIS IS THE OUTFIT WE ALREADY WEAR.

---

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, we praise you that even though we were enemies clothed  
by the disgrace of our shame, you have chosen to give us a new wardrobe  
of salvation and righteousness.*

# SMELLING TO SEE

## SCRIPTURE:

PSALM 45:10-14

**Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him. The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people. All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her.**

---

We tend to forget that in the past the world was a much smellier place than today. While perfumes certainly existed, only the rich could afford them, and people did not wear deodorant. Most people often worked outside, in the heat, and depending on where they lived, rarely bathed.

In Psalm 45 we meet two characters, a King and his Princess. The King is obviously the Messiah Jesus, because verse 7 reads, “Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you.” But strangely, we are told what the Messiah wears and how he *smells*. “Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia” (45:8). You can smell the King before you can see him. His smell is pleasant, pleasing—his approach is like the familiar scent of home, your loved one’s hair, or freshly baked bread.

## SMELLING TO SEE CONTINUED...

The princess character is also described not by her personality but by what she wears: robes “interwoven with gold” and “many-colored.” These images delight ancient imaginations and build anticipation for what God is doing and about to do for Israel.

The characteristic of messianism is waiting—anticipation. Just like Israel waited longingly for the Messiah to come, we wait for him to come again. But anticipation is not static, it’s dynamic. We all know the closer we get to the thing anticipated, the greater the intensity.

The Psalmist gives us images of robes and scents to stir our imagination and pull us closer to the reality that we are Christ’s and Christ is ours. He is dressed for the wedding of his Church, and he will come at the right time to get her and bring her to where he is.

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JUST LIKE ISRAEL WAITED LONGINGLY FOR THE MESSIAH  
TO COME, WE WAIT FOR HIM TO COME AGAIN. BUT  
ANTICIPATION IS NOT STATIC, IT’S DYNAMIC.

---

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, ready us for the coming of Jesus and yet gives us  
patience as we wait, knowing that your love, salvation, and  
timing are all perfect.*

# GOD DRESSED AS A PRIEST

## SCRIPTURE:

ISAIAH 6:1-7

**In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:**

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

**And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”**

---

Isaiah was undone. When God showed himself to Isaiah in the temple, the prophet was exposed to be a sinner: God’s glory exposed the worst in him. He was no mere sinner, but a prophet with unclean lips who lived among

## GOD DRESSED AS A PRIEST CONTINUED...

people with unclean lips. What had sullied his lips? The words that came from his mouth. Isaiah had not kept God's name holy. Nor had his people. And now, he stood before the Judge on his throne in terrifying glory. This was no place for a sinner to stand. This was a place for a sinner to die.

—  
WHILE GOD  
COULD HAVE  
SHOWN THE  
FULL TERROR  
OF HIS GLORY,  
HE INSTEAD  
CHOSE TO  
DRESS HIMSELF  
IN A ROBE,  
AND PROBABLY  
THE ROBE OF  
A PRIEST AT  
THAT.  
—

But, then, as Isaiah stared at the glory of this God, in the midst of a holy and terrifying company of singing angels, in the temple filled with God's presence, he saw something else: a clothed God. Clothed? While God could have shown the full terror of his glory, he instead chose to dress himself in a robe, and probably the robe of a priest at that. The God of all glory and power and honor chose to humble himself to the coverings of a priest.

A priest has the job of offering up sacrifices for sinners, praying on their behalf, and delivering the good news of forgiveness. And Isaiah's robed God takes it a step further. He takes a fiery coal from the altar and attaches a promise, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for!"

Isaiah's God is our same God: one who comes dressed as a priest to sacrifice and forgive. What's next? A sacrificed Lamb on a throne? How wonderful, indeed.

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for clothing yourself in the lowly robes of a priest, and for dressing yourself in the incarnation of the son, that we might be forgiven and saved.*

# THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

## SCRIPTURE:

ISAIAH 22:17,  
20-22

**Behold, the Lord will hurl you away violently, O you strong man...In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David.**

---

In Isaiah's day, there was an uppity official in the king's service whom God decided to teach the painful lesson of humility. He would remove him from his office and, like a ball, toss him into the distance (Isa. 22:15-18). His replacement? A man named Eliakim. Of him, the Lord said, "I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (vv. 21-22).

Eliakim would wear the uniform of regal service, complete with robe, sash, and (perhaps) some sort of key-shaped insignia called "the key of the

## THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID CONTINUED...

house of David.” In other words, he allowed or disallowed access to the palace of the king. To get to the ruler, you went through Eliakim.

In Revelation, when Jesus speaks to the church in Philadelphia, he says that he “has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens” (3:7). He is the new and greater Eliakim, the “mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5), who provides us with access to the Father. Jesus stands at the door and beckons, “Come unto me, come unto my Father, and receive from us life and forgiveness. We will deck you in robes of salvation.”

—  
TO GET TO THE RULER, YOU WENT THROUGH ELIAKIM.  
—

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your son Jesus who is our mediator,  
our access, and our key to your lovingkindness.*



# AWAKE, AWAKE, AND PUT ON STRENGTH

## SCRIPTURE:

**Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?**

**Isaiah 51:9**

**Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean.**

**Isaiah 52:1**

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Chapter 51 of Isaiah begins with a command: “Listen!” Through this command God seeks to rouse his people. But people don’t always want to be roused. Oftentimes, we are too tired, too worn-out, or too busy to have interest in doing another thing. We might get stressed even thinking about having to make another commitment.

But God will not ask what he himself is unwilling to do. So, he rouses the people, but only after rousing himself first. In 51:9 we hear, “Awake, Awake, put on strength O arm of the Lord.” It may be cumbersome in

## THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID CONTINUED...

English, but this call is actually addressed to God. God rouses himself. He has awakened and put on the clothing of strength. He will lead a procession of his people to Zion.

—  
YES, YOU MAY  
BE SUFFERING,  
DISTRACTED,  
TIRED OR WORN  
OUT. BUT GOD  
IS FIGHTING  
FOR YOU.  
—

Though they don't know it, the people also must be roused. Suffering, hardship, the distractions of daily living, and the hyper-focus on the troubles of today have made them sleepy and despondent about what God is doing. Into their malaise, God calls them to rise up. Into their malaise God calls them to rise up. In 52:1: "Awake, Awake, put on your strength O Zion; put on your beautiful garments." The beautiful garments they are to wear are not for fighting, God will do that—they are parade clothes, garments of celebration. But like any soldier, doctor, actor, or pilot—anyone who knows the strength that comes in wearing a uniform, the beautiful garments are representative of God's provision. To wear *these* garments means you are called to follow the parade to Zion!

So, yes, you may be suffering, distracted, tired or worn out. But God is fighting for you. He who rouses you has roused himself. And somewhere, in the heavenly wardrobes of the Kingdom, there awaits drawers full of beautiful garments, fitted and prepared just for you. When the time comes and all the seals, bowls, and trumpets have been broken, libated, and blasted, the King will return and you and I will be clothed in splendor. And the parade to Zion will begin.

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, awaken us to your work as you fight for us. Thank you for clothing us in the splendor of your victory.*

# FORM OR FUNCTION

## SCRIPTURE:

ISAIAH 61:10

**I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

---

Have you ever stopped to think about the point of clothes? Why do we wear them? Why do some of us gravitate toward wardrobes of bright colors, while others of us tend to wear neutrals, and still others would be happiest to remain in pajamas all day? Why do sports teams wear certain socks and shorts, and what does it mean that specific professions - both religious and civil - require specific types of dress?

Some of these questions are answered by aesthetics while others find their answer in our actions or behaviors. The form of our clothes often signifies something about our preferences, our status, or our lifestyle, while the function of our clothes signifies something about what we do. Either way, clothes reveal – sometimes more than we realize – who we are.

This simple (and perhaps obvious) fact should enrich and enhance our understanding of Isaiah's description of the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. For the Christian, such descriptions are commonplace, but don't let the repetition fade into an unmentionable cliché.

## FORM OR FUNCTION CONTINUED...

—  
CLOTHES REVEAL  
— SOMETIMES  
MORE THAN  
WE REALIZE —  
WHO WE ARE  
—

Such garments and robes are like any other. If you are a form person, picture them as far greater than your most expensive coat or dress. If you are more of a function person, consider them as giving you not just super-powers but equipping you to fulfill the status of president or king. And most importantly, in Christ, hear and trust that these adorn you here and now. They aren't just hanging in your closet waiting for a special day; our Creator has tailored them perfectly to fit you. You never have to wash or repair them, and by them, all identify you as Christ's bride, God's priest, with access to all that he has.

## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, remind us that by clothing us in salvation and righteousness, you give us a new and permanent identity. You fulfill all our longings for form and function by dressing us in the glory of your Son.*

# THE FIRST DRESSED AS LAST

## SCRIPTURE:

MARK 15:17

**They dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and set it on his head.**

---

The color purple symbolizes royalty, and of course, royalty is exactly who Jesus is. But Jesus' enemies twisted this truth in their own attempts to subvert and conquer. Their mockery ended not only with Jesus' exaltation, but the completion of God's redemptive plan in his spilled crimson blood for the sins of the whole world. The soldiers placed threads of purple on Jesus' back in an effort to mock him. But while they worked to ridicule, he worked to redeem.

Jesus is not surprised by the mockery and shame he experiences. This is part of what he came to accomplish. The true King of creation is persecuted and killed at the hands of his creation. Here we see the first become last so the last can become first. Jesus endures what he does for those doing it to him. For those who ignored and killed the prophets before him. And for you and me.

A beaten and bloody man dressed in the mockery of a purple robe wearing a crown of thrones is not the God we naturally desire. This is God clothed in weakness and shame. But this is the only God strong enough to save. This is the only God who can truly forgive his enemies and set a world of

## THE FIRST DRESSED AS LAST CONTINUED...

sinner free. This is the God who defeats death by dying and rising again. If we do not have this weak God in blood-stained purple cloth, we do not have a God strong enough to save.

The good news is we do have him. And the even better news is he has us. Jesus has become last so that he can be the first fruit of resurrection. Promising that he will raise us as well. Everything he has done; he has done for us. This is our God, friend, brother, and king.

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IF WE DO NOT HAVE THIS WEAK GOD IN  
BLOOD-STAINED PURPLE CLOTH, WE DO NOT HAVE A  
GOD STRONG ENOUGH TO SAVE.

---

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to become weak so that I might be saved. Help me to live in the power of his resurrection and the promise of mine.*

# THE POWER OF A CLOAK

## SCRIPTURE:

MARK 5:27-28

**She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.”**

---

It’s easy to forget the healing of the bleeding woman wasn’t *the* story Mark was trying to tell. This woman, who had bled uncontrollably for 12 years, was a footnote to the story of Jesus’ raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead.

Jesus’ main focus wasn’t healing this woman. Instead, he was fighting his way through a crowd; a crowd so large that it pressed around him (Mark 5:24). Most of us can relate to the feeling of getting caught up in the unpredictability of a large crowd: it’s hot, it’s loud, and it can – at times – be terrifying. Needless to say, Jesus had other things to worry about.

And yet, the woman knew that if she could just touch Jesus’ dusty robe (most likely well-worn and in need of a wash from his many travels), if her fingers could merely graze the fibers that enveloped him, she would be healed. Because the woman believed that Jesus alone could be the source of her healing. Jesus’ clothes didn’t heal because they were special nor intricate. On their surface, they didn’t indicate his kingly and priestly



## THE POWER OF A CLOAK CONTINUED...

—  
HIS POWER  
AND HIS  
PROXIMITY ARE  
INEXTRICABLY  
LINKED.  
—

identity. Yet there was undoubtedly power in his cloak. Jesus' clothes healed because they covered the son of God himself. His power and his proximity are inextricably linked.

Where Jesus is, so too is the power of healing faith. Faith which comes from Jesus and is centered on Jesus. Just as Jesus drew a crowd that day, he drew the bleeding woman to himself. And today, through his Word and sacraments, he draws you near so that you may receive his good gifts.

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to become weak so that I might be saved. Help me to live in the power of His resurrection and the promise of mine.*

# GOING HOME

## SCRIPTURE:

LUKE 15:22-24

**But the father said to his servants, “Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” And they began to celebrate.**

---

The Prodigal Son is probably the most well-known parable Jesus ever told. A son asks his father to give him his share of the inheritance, the father does, and the son proceeds to waste it all on “reckless living.” It’s what happens when the son returns home to try to convince his father to hire him as a servant that makes the story interesting.

Repentance is an easy thing to get wrong. It’s natural to think of ways we can make up for what we’ve messed up. Like the Prodigal Son, we don’t understand our Father. We go to God making promises to change and be better but that isn’t what he is looking for. He is only looking for us.

When we go to God with our sin, he doesn’t listen to any of the imperfect promises or requests to be treated as less than his son or daughter. He interrupts our false ideas of repentance demanding the “best robe” be brought out and placed on us. This is repentance: being dead but brought

## GOING HOME CONTINUED...

back to life. It's being lost in our best attempts to get back in the good graces of God and being found by our good Father. It's going home and having your sin covered by a perfect robe only your father can provide and then celebrating.

—  
THIS IS REPENTANCE: BEING DEAD  
BUT BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE.  
—

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of repentance.  
Bring us home often to celebrate the riches of your forgiveness.*

# WRAPPED IN DEATH

## SCRIPTURE:

JOHN 11:38-44

**Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”**

---

We spend good money to cover the contents of a perfectly good gift just for it to be torn and tossed aside. Soon, many of you will wrap presents and hopefully the contents are something valuable, useful, and desired. But it's more than presents that get wrapped. In Jesus's day it was the dead.

## WRAPPED IN DEATH CONTINUED...

To us, this seems strange, but it was an act of deep devotion and a gift of love from those whose hearts were heavy with grief. As tender hands held Christ's lifeless flesh, strips of perfumed-soaked linen bound to flesh filled the air with a deep perfume. Soon the stench of death would be all that would fill the nostrils. That was the case for Mary and Martha. Their dear brother, Lazarus, was dead. He was wrapped and laid in a tomb. Like Lazarus, death wraps every one of us. Our hands and feet are swift to cause injury, our mouths are quick to spread lies. By our own fault, we are wrapped in the death of sin and its stench fills the air. We are the ones torn and tossed aside.

Amid this atrocity, Jesus wraps flesh upon himself and becomes one of us. He is delivered into death so that he might wrap himself in it and proclaim, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Wrapped into death, Jesus brings life, forgiveness, and freedom. And he promises to come for you, now, wrapped in wafer and wine, in the proclamation of his Word, and in the waters of your baptism.

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JESUS WRAPS FLESH UPON HIMSELF AND BECOMES ONE OF US. HE IS DELIVERED INTO DEATH SO THAT HE MIGHT WRAP HIMSELF IN IT AND PROCLAIM, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE"

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### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, give us ears to hear that our gift of life comes to us only because you wrapped yourself in death. Thank you for your work which turns all that ails us into that which frees us.*

# NAKED IN A DIFFERENT GARDEN

## SCRIPTURE:

MARK 14:51-52

**And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.**

---

It was in the garden that Adam and Eve were first clothed by God. In that act of grace, the Lord covered their sin and shame. And yes, as we see in the pages of Scripture, sin, death, and the devil continue to lay humanity bare over and over. And no matter how hard we try, no amount of human effort brings peace, comfort, or the clothing we need to overcome our sin and our shame.

Just think about the naked young man in Mark's Gospel. Just like Adam and Eve, he was found exposed in a garden where he must dash away, naked and afraid. Some believe this is the Gospel's author, Mark, confessing his own embarrassing story of nudity in the garden. Whoever he may be, we can all relate to the feelings such an exposure would bring.

You and I are like that young man. The law lays us bare before God when it confronts, criticizes, and condemns us. Try as you might to run away, there is no place to hide. But this is why Jesus came. In the incarnation,

## NAKED IN A DIFFERENT GARDEN CONTINUED...

Jesus is willingly stripped of his glory. He follows the will of the Father and as Paul says, was “born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4b-5). Jesus is the one who enters the world, naked, and who was hoisted upon a cross, naked once again, stripped of his dignity, so that you might be clothed with his righteousness, redeemed by his blood, and set free from sin, now and forever.

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IN THE INCARNATION, JESUS IS  
WILLINGLY STRIPPED OF HIS GLORY.

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### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, even though we find ourselves naked and afraid because of our sinful hearts, we trust and believe it's on account of your nakedness that we are clothed forever by your righteousness.*

# ONCE BAPTIZED, ALWAYS BAPTIZED

## SCRIPTURE:

GALATIANS  
3:27-28

**For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

---

Whatever we were before we were baptized, that is no longer our primary identity. This is one of the wonderful gifts God gives his children. In baptism, we are placed into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. “Your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). All that he has done now belongs to us. And at the same time, we have had Christ placed over us. We have put him on like a new set of perfect clothes.

Paul uses this language to teach us that putting on Christ changes how we see ourselves and our baptized brothers and sisters. Nationality, social status, and gender are not the primary things Christians should identify with. Our identity is Christ. His saving work is where we now live. His perfect righteousness is what we now wear.

In baptism, God washes our sins away and makes us his children. There is no more concrete identity than a forgiven child of God. He isn’t going to change his mind about us. He isn’t going to take back what he has done for us. Once baptized, always baptized.



ONCE BAPTIZED, ALWAYS BAPTIZED CONTINUED...

Life is still hard and as we struggle with sin, we will be tempted to find our identity in a thousand lesser things, but God is ever calling us to remember what he declared us to be in the waters of our baptisms. We belong to Christ. We are even dressed in him.

—  
HIS SAVING WORK IS WHERE WE NOW LIVE. HIS  
PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WHAT WE NOW WEAR.  
—

PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, help me remember what you gave me in baptism.  
Let that gift shape how I see myself and others.*

# GIVE UP AND FIGHT

## SCRIPTURE:

EPHESIANS  
6:13-18

**Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.**

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You cannot win, so you might as well give up. The enemy you face is much too strong for you. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places...” (Eph. 6:12). Baptism got you into this mess, you know. Once you came up out of those waters, Satan saw a traitor, a turncoat. You have a target on your back and live your life in the crosshairs of the devil. His flaming darts are flying at you. And, you can’t defeat them. So, give up!

## GIVE UP AND FIGHT CONTINUED...

If you try to conquer the temptations, lies, and accusations of the devil with your own willpower, your own knowledge, or your own self-justifications, you are playing right into his death-dealing hands. So, stop fighting, give up. Instead, run for your life to Jesus.

For Jesus not only can defeat the devil, he's already done it. By *his* baptism, fasting, and temptation, by *his* agony and bloody sweat, by *his* cross and passion Jesus has already conquered Satan and delivered us from his clutches.

—  
FOR JESUS  
NOT ONLY CAN  
DEFEAT THE  
DEVIL, HE'S  
ALREADY  
DONE IT.  
—

You are already on the side of victory in Christ Jesus even though the battle rages all around you, and that loser Satan will not stop harassing you. But, he cannot defeat you for you are baptized. And there, Christ clothed you in his full armor! His belt, his breastplate, his shoes, his shield, his sword. Satan is no match for Christ, and since you are clothed in Christ, he is no match for you. So stand firm, pray, give up on your own righteousness, and put on the full armor of God. The victory is yours.

### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the covering of baptism  
that we may stand assured of your armor, your victory,  
and the defeat of the devil.*

# A COLLECTION OF SAINTS

## SCRIPTURE:

REVELATION  
7:9-10

**After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**

---

When King Jesus first came to us, John tells us he was ushered in by a large crowd who cloaked the road in palm branches. “Hosanna!” or “Save Us!” they shouted (John 12:12). This was a crowd filled with the lost, the downtrodden, the sinful who awaited a Messiah. It must have been a crowd dressed in the usual eclectic wardrobe of any crowd, with some dressed to the nines and some wearing the only robes they owned: mothers with babies wrapped tight around their chests, little children with mud-caked feet, grandmas and grandpas squinting in the hard light to see the King on his donkey, and the smell of sweat hanging over everybody. “Save us! For each and every one of us is in need of saving,” their shouts implied. This was a crowd with no pretense about their needs.

And so King Jesus did what they asked. Our lowly King went to the cross and then the grave for that motley crowd, and for you and me. Just as the

## A COLLECTION OF SAINTS CONTINUED...

crowd begged him to, he took salvation into his own hands and became its owner by first taking our sins and making them his.

And so now, we wait. We wait in our drab garb, our designer shoes, and our fast-fashion trends, for the day described in Revelation 7 when we will once again usher in our King with palm branches in our hands and cries of joy spilling from our mouths. But this time, we will no longer be clothed as individual sinners but as collective saints from every tribe and nation, wearing white robes handcrafted by the King himself. We will be a crowd so large *no one could number*. And together, in every language known on earth we will no longer shout, “Save us!” But instead, “Salvation belongs to Our God, the King who has clothed us in his perfect righteousness.”

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“OUR LOWLY KING WENT TO THE CROSS AND THEN THE GRAVE  
FOR THAT MOTLEY CROWD, AND FOR YOU AND ME.”

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### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, give us patience as we wait to be clothed anew.  
Remind us that we do not wait in vain nor alone, but that we are  
surrounded by all your saints.”*

# THE ETERNAL GARMENT

## SCRIPTURE:

LUKE 2:7

**And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn.**

---

It is hard to imagine that God would be so vulnerable and at-risk as a newborn infant. In fact, the entire early account of Jesus' birth is one of multiple escapes from various dangers: no room at the inn, the threat of a divorce between Mary and Joseph, the shadowing pursuit of Herod's assassins. Our Lord is born in danger because we are always in danger.

God enters into our danger and makes himself come under it. He will, through the death and danger of the cross, overcome it. But before all that, in a quiet moment encircled by many dangers, Mary sits with her newborn son and wraps him in tight clothing (swaddling clothes).

The swaddling clothes serve a practical purpose—to help transition the baby from the tightness of the womb and into life. They prevent scratches and what we now call SIDS. The clothes were Jesus' first gift from his mother and father. They are a sign of love and tender care.

But the swaddling clothes have another aspect: Clothing was a gift from God after the Fall to cover over our sin and cover-up our shame. To give

## THE ETERNAL GARMENT CONTINUED...

Jesus clothing is to give back to God in some small sense what he first gave to Adam and Eve. It is a symbol of grace which has an inescapable history in shame.

Jesus is clothed in this symbolic sense as one whose shame is covered by clothing. Thus, clothing acts in both the Old and New Testaments as a symbol of shame being covered-over. But human coverings for shame are temporary and an ultimately insufficient means of treating the problem. Yet the little baby Jesus born amidst the dangers of this world will one day clothe his people in his righteousness (Isa. 61:10). Not only will this never wear out, but it will lead to a glorification where we shine like him in the Transfiguration.

Symbolized in all this imagery is a promise: a promise that we can only provide insufficient clothing for God, but God will provide eternal garments for us. Those garments cover our sin, remove our shame, impute righteousness, and make us shine like the sun. The baby Jesus' swaddling clothes are a promise of God's love, care, provision, and sacrifice—all for us, all gift, all grace.

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TO GIVE JESUS CLOTHING IS TO GIVE BACK TO GOD IN SOME  
SMALL SENSE WHAT HE FIRST GAVE TO ADAM AND EVE.

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### PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, take our shame away, protect us from danger,  
and cover us in the righteousness of Jesus, which we first see in  
the swaddling clothes of the virgin birth.*



1517.