

## HOW DO YOU CHRISTMAS CLOTHES FIT?

***"I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seed to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God."***

How do they fit? I mean your new Christmas clothes, of course. Everyone gets clothes for Christmas. Have you worn them, yet? Sometimes people put them on right a way. Other times people, but especially with kids, are so busy playing with their new toys they forget they got clothes. Others maybe don't like the style or fit and exchange them for something else. Sometimes we don't like the new clothes but put them on anyway to make Aunt Mabel happy.

Today is the second Sunday after Christmas and our question is, "Are you wearing the Christmas clothes the Lord has given you?" At first they don't look very impressive, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Where is the gloating about what we have done? Not in these clothes. Some don't like them and never wear them. Others exchange them for something else. Others grudgingly wear them only to keep the family happy. Still others are not all that excited about them and prefer to play with the toys of the world. But how about you? Today we see how the Lord clothes us in the garments of salvation and how we are to model those garments.

### *I. The Lord clothes us in garments of salvation.*

Just out of curiosity, I checked out the average costs of weddings. In New York City the average is from \$48-88,000 and California it is around \$37,000. Don't worry. The average cost of a wedding in Minnesota is half that at \$19,004. I am more interested in how much the bride and groom spend for themselves. The average cost for the wedding rings is about \$1,600 and the engagement ring is \$5,764. The average for the bride's dress is \$1,509 and the veil is \$166. The average tuxedo rental for the groom is \$286. The average for bouquets and flowers is \$2,379. My daughter's wedding last summer didn't cost that much. Whew.

Now, why am I sharing this with you? Am I making a case for eloping instead of shelling out money for weddings? No. Am I suggesting that weddings need to be extravagant affairs with lots of money spent? No. So, why am I sharing these figures with you? Well, weddings are special. People dress up. They want to look as nice as possible. I mean, I am yet to do a wedding where the bride and groom showed up in shorts and rock and roll tee shirts.

In our text, the Church, that is all believers, is speaking and she describes herself on her wedding. ***"I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."*** This picture makes me think of the wedding picture God gives in Ephesians 5, ***"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."*** The Church is beautiful. She didn't use to be. She use to be as ugly as sin full of wrinkles and blemishes and wearing sinful clothes a homeless person would throw away. But Jesus changed all of that. He died for her and cleansed her with his blood. He has washed her clean in baptism. And he clothes her, not with some cheap off the rack gown, but with the most expensive and radiant dress ever, bought not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. As a result she, the Church of believers, is spectacular.

A key here is the Lord gives us such clothes. Righteousness is being right with God. It is what a judge would say to an innocent person. "The court finds no fault in you." As hard as we may try, we will not be right before God. So he provides a righteousness for us. Jesus as true God was righteous. He obeyed his parents in everything. He prayed constantly. The Lord was always first in his heart. The Lord now covers our wretched sinfulness with the robe of Christ's righteousness.

And it came with a price. Did you have a good Christmas? Now it is time to pay for it. Maybe you charged a number of presents to your credit card. Well, soon the bills will come. It would be nice if we didn't have to pay those bills. We could throw them away when they come, or shove them under that stack of papers. But they will contact a collection agency and collect what we owe. God doesn't just sweep our sins under the rug. They had to be paid for, and Christ, as true man did with his death on the cross. The bill comes and it says to each of us, "Paid in full." We may say, "But I know I racked up a lot of sins. What happened?" Jesus paid for them.

No wonder the Church in our text is happy. ***"I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God."*** Sadness may enter our lives. Our faces may grow a little long with weariness and burdens, but deep inside, in our hearts, we can still rejoice for we know that we are robed more stunningly than the richest wedding couple. Don't exchange that for some toy the world

offers; don't consider it the wrong fashion; don't wear it only to please family. Joyfully wear the clothes the Lord gives you for Christmas. And as you do, model them for others to see.

## *II. Model them for the world.*

***“For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seed to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.”***

The picture here is simple, just as seeds in the ground sprout, so also will the Lord make righteousness and salvation spring up all over the world. The Lord is making a promise here. He promises that as time clicks on, this salvation in Christ will spread to all nations.

We a living proof of that. We are separated from Christ by a couple thousand years and a couple continents, and yet we believe because the Lord has caused his Word to be planted among us. Since the ascension of Jesus Christianity has grown like wild grass all over the world, first in Jerusalem, then to Judea and Samaria and to the four corners of the world.

And Christians make an impression. ***“You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.”*** I have heard people call Christians some pretty bad names. But others don't mind Christian neighbors. They are impressed and they begin to call these Christians by another name. And just what is it? Verse four explains, ***“No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah [which means “my delight is in her”] and your land Beulah [which means “married”]. Verse 12 adds more when it says, “They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.”*** No longer will we be called sinners and outcasts and unworthy. Rather through the gospel of Christ it will be made known that the Lord delights in us, that we are holy, redeemed by Christ for the Lord.

And God puts us on display. ***“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.”*** God is proud of what he did for his Church. He will make sure that people see her glory as plain as the dawn or a blazing torch in the middle of the dark night. How about you and me? Will we keep silent? Is the gospel of forgiveness shining like a torch in our lives?

God has clothed us in Christ. Model the garments of salvation in your life by what you say and do and how you treat one another and the Lord. The Sunday after Christmas I often ask people if they are wearing that new sweater or shirt they got for Christmas. And they tell me. Don't wait for someone to ask, “Are you wearing Christ.” Tell them right away. And can the glory of God's salvation be seen in our lives? I think of the comments made of the Christians in the book of Acts, how they cared for one another and the whole city of Jerusalem respected them highly. God's righteousness shines as we truly love one another. And when we don't always do what we are suppose to do and someone can accuse us of a sin, we can still make an impression when we model Christ through repentance and forgiveness. Then people will see how beautiful it is to be clothed in Christ. And you know, God would be fulfilling his promise through you, to let his salvation spring up in other places.

So, how do they fit, your Christmas clothes? God has clothed you in Christ. Wear these garments of salvation and model them for the world. INJ Amen.