



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Have you ever gone to a social function and felt totally out of place because of what you were wearing? I certainly have, even though as you all know I am not a Betty Fashion nor a Betty Crocker for that matter. Well, since most of us here are from the old school, we remember the importance of being dressed correctly. I actually remember back to high school. We were not allowed to wear pants, slacks. And if you had to walk to school in the winter sometimes you wore slacks under your dress, but you had to remove them before going to class. Remember ladies?

Actually, it was not too many years ago at St Olaf that I felt funny going to worship on Sunday morning in slacks. Or how about always being respectful and wearing black to a funeral. Been there done that?

And men have you ever gone to a nice restaurant wearing a pair of slacks and a button down shirt and were handed a suit coat or a tie so you could enter the establishment. Or walked into a black tie affair in a suit when everyone else had a tuxedo on.

Well, today clothing does not seem to appear to be quite so important. In fact I was at a restaurant in Minocqua while I waited for Rodney's surgery to be over and I noticed the clothing people had on. Every single person in Tula's

that morning had blue jeans on, but me. I never have liked jeans. They are stiff and hard. Just not a fan. So guess I was the odd one out in that instance.

Well, what I am trying to get at is that being improperly dressed can be a nightmare, literally. Did that ever happen to you? It can make you feel uncomfortable and even embarrassed.

Today, I am not sure that being dressed properly is as important as it used to be in my day, our day. Today the embarrassment might come from who made your jeans, or your shoes or your sweatshirt. Those darn designer labels are so important. Guess if you buy your clothes at Walmart, you might be on the outside of the cool group at school, looking in.

Well, today our Gospel reading is about being properly dressed. I do not mean whether you are wearing your swim suit to the homecoming dance or sporting a tie at a track and field meet, but rather that you are clothed in the righteousness of God. God is willing to clothe you in the garments of Christ, but it is up to us to put them on and wear them faithfully to the glory of God.

Our reading from Matthew today is actually two parables tied together. The first one has to do with a king who wants to give a huge banquet for his son. All the friends and family are invited to this royal festive occasion. But the king's servants come back to the king with only rejected invitations.

In Jesus' day the king would send his servants to tender the invitation and bring back a reply, not like our email invites of today that hope you will RSVP, even though many young folks do not even know what that means. Well, in our story, the servants come back with invitation rejections. And that was tantamount to a declaration of war. But those invited were still not willing to come to the wedding banquet on a second invitation. In fact they ridiculed all the king's servants and they once again defied the invitation. You can imagine that the king by now is furious and probably a bit embarrassed that he cannot garner a huge crowd for the wedding feast. And so the king goes to war with those folks that would not attend. And so what can the king do now to save face? He invites anyone, commoners and street people to come to the palace for a celebration of his son's wedding.

This plays to the fact that God gave the offer of salvation to the Gentiles in light of the Jew's rejection, as they were the ones to accept the invitation to celebrate that Jesus was the Christ. The kingdom of God was at hand and the

banquet hall must be filled and if you are not ready, your seat will be offered to someone else.

And we come to know, the message is the same. Whatever your excuse, the kingdom must go on. God will continue to work in the world, bringing people into his kingdom even if you are not willing to be part of it. The kingdom will go on to reconcile those who say yes to the invitation.

This means that we are invited to make Jesus a number one priority in life. We are asked to offer those “rent” items we talked about last week of time, talents, money and clean living. We are honored guest of Christ and should put these things on to “Dress Accordingly”.

And that brings us to the second parable in our reading for today. The king mingled with his guests at the banquet he provided and finds that one person was not wearing the appropriate wedding garment. The guest looked out of place. So was he clueless or he was actually being disrespectful.

When invited to a royal wedding banquet you were expected to wear festal garments. For the wealthy folks that meant embroidered robes and gowns covered with jewels. For the poor, it meant your best clean clothes and if you came without a robe one would be provide for you by the host. Wearing the proper garments would signal that you were ready to fully participate in the joy of the feast.

So to the contrary if you did not wear a proper garment, you were just there for the food and drink. You were not seen as someone who was there to honor the king and truly celebrate the marriage of the king’s son. So no proper attire could not only signify that you were there to just scarf up the free food but also you would be interpreted as having disdain for the king. And therefore the king had every right to throw out such a person.

The Bible has always put importance on clothing. This is especially true when it comes to being dressed in the righteousness of God. Many times in the New Testament Paul talks of putting to death the old self and bring forward a new creation that is clothed in Christ. From the letter to the people of Ephesus to the folks in Galatia, He writes over and over again that we are to put on the armor of God.

That suit of armor we wear is to protect us when the realities of anxiety and stress, conflict and anger in our world try to grab hold of us. For me as a

called and ordained minister in this church, I wear a clerical collar. Not originally designed with women in mind, they are uncomfortable, but certainly they are a reminder of whom I serve. Sometimes that collar makes me feel self-conscious. And it makes one stand out in a crowd. But what it also does is to make me think twice as people then take note of how I handle various situations. Guess, one of my jobs is then to set a good example.

But you probably don't have a clerical collar to wear, but just maybe you wear a cross on a chain around your neck, or perhaps you might even have a tattoo with a cross on it. As a Christian, no matter what our call in life is, we are to be clothed in Christ and that means living by a higher standard of righteousness than the world around us. When we live clothed in Christ we are witnessing to Him. And then others can see the Spirit of God at work in us and hopefully will be encouraged to follow our example.

And so I suggest to you to give some thought to how you are clothed this day. Is there some tangible way you can "put on Christ" as Paul would say? We wear pink ribbons for breast cancer or a yellow ones in solidarity with our soldiers overseas. Maybe it is that cross around your neck, or one on the back of your vehicle, a tattoo, a WWJD bracelet, a key ring, or whatever. Do something to set your self apart as a disciple of Jesus, not to call attention to yourself, but to let others know and possibly to remind yourself who's you are. You belong to Jesus, claimed in the waters of your baptism and renewed each day dressed in the clothes of Christ.

Yes, it is embarrassing to show up to a social function dressed incorrectly. But for me, the greatest social event is being invited into the Kingdom of God. So put on your garments of Christ. Clothe yourself in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, generosity, patience and love to honor our Savior Jesus, who gave His life for us on the cross so we could have forgiveness, abundant life here on earth and the promise of eternal life in heaven some day.

This, people, is the greatest party the King of the Universe has invited us too. It is totally free and underserved. Only by God's love are we invited. And God wants us all to come. And all we have to do is accept His invitation, try to follow the examples of Jesus, and each day we will be renewed in the grace of God. **AMEN**