

Written Copy: Isaiah 61:10-11 “Who Dressed You?”

1st Sunday @ Christmas
Sunday, December 27th, 2020

Text: Isaiah 61:10-11

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. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

Exegetical Statement

This is the response of the Christian to the wonderful gifts received in the Gospel: the garment of salvation that saves me from the eternal suffering and death I owe because of my sin. And my joy over all my dirty sinful thoughts words and actions being covered by Jesus' robe of righteousness. With these gifts I am dressed as elegantly as a bride and bridegroom on their wedding day. The reality may not look like this now, and the final judgement day when I will need to be wearing these garments may not look like it will ever come, but just as the seed buried in the soil doesn't look like anything will happen until the day when it sprouts., so too the LORD who causes all things to grow will bring His salvation plan to fruition on the Last Day. Until that time the Spirit will move the Church to proclaim this beautiful garment Christ has made for all men so that all will see the truth, either now in faith, or at the end in judgement. When we rest in the hands of the LORD by faith we are made to be a crown of beauty that will mature into a royal crown on the Last Day.

Focus Statement:

The Father send His only Son on Christmas morning at just the right time, as the fulfillment of His promise to save all people, so that by His life, death, and resurrection we are given the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness. With these garments we are welcomed in His presence now and will be welcomed into eternal life on the Last Day

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Although we may see ourselves as pretty good people the sin that covers us makes us unworthy to be His people now or His children who inherit eternal life.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Use God's gift of the means of grace to keep these garments clean and thereby be the Spirit's tools to proclaim these wonderful gifts out in the unbelieving world. We can do so by proclaiming the reason Jesus came to earth as a baby and how He could make us holy garments that could clothe us

Subject Sentence: Jesus gives the gift of perfect clothing for eternal life

It's the Sunday after Christmas. Do you know what that means? This is the Sunday where you get to show off your brand-new Christmas gifts! And that's OK, it's not a bad thing. Someone may have spent a lot of time and brain power to choose a gift that was right for you, that was useful for you. And if it was an item of clothing, a gift they spent time making sure would fit you. There's nothing worse than getting someone a gift that doesn't fit. A watch with the watchband that is too small, a tie that isn't long enough, or the pattern/colors don't match your shirts and pants, earrings and jewelry that don't go with anything you have to wear, purses and watches that are just not functional for what you need, too big to carry around or too small to fit in there what you need to carry around. So when you actually wear and use your brand new Christmas clothes and gifts, it's not necessarily a bad or boastful thing. It shows the person who bought them for you that they did a good job in their selection. Because there's nothing worse than buying someone a gift, putting a lot of thought into it, only to see it remain in the closet or in the top drawer and go unused.

Now this is something I'm preaching to myself. I'm guilty of getting new gifts at Christmas and not using them right away. An example are some clergy shirts that my kids got me last year. They are a set of different color shirts that match the different colors of the seasons of the Church year. There's a purple one for Lent, a red one for Pentecost and Reformation, a blue one for Advent, and a brand new black one for the other seasons of the year like Epiphany and all those Sundays following Pentecost. The correct color for a shirt would be green, but they decided not to buy one that color because the girls said it would make me look like a big booger. These shirts have been hanging in my closet, and up until the beginning of the Advent Season that just passed, I hadn't worn any of them. Why? Not because they don't fit, they fit just fine. Not because I don't wear clerical shirts, because I do. Not because I don't love them, I do. And maybe that's the closest thing to a reason right there, it's because I do love them and see them as being special.

What inevitably happens to the nice clothes we get as presents and wear? We spill food on them and they get stained. Or we wash them, and after several washings the colors begin to fade. There's always the chance that I might snag myself on something, or get my sleeve caught on something and rip them. So, I leave them hanging in the closet and don't wear them to keep them nice for...well, that's the thing, for what? Some future day. But that future day never seems to come. I realize that taken to excess this could be seen as the trait of a hoarder. I know that. And I know where I got this from: from Mom and Dad who got it from there Mom and Dad, my Grandma and Grandpa who lived through the Great Depression. Grandma and Grandpa Pretznaw had a whole room: The Living Room, that they never used. We never sat in there. They kept all the furniture covered in plastic, saving it for some unknown day in the future that never came. They had their "best china" that they kept stored away in a china cabinet and never used it, never. Not even for special events. Not even for their 50th anniversary. Grandpa had a closet full of brand-new overhauls still wrapped in the plastic that they came in. Instead of wearing them, Grandma

would put patch upon patch upon patch on the same pairs he always wore. I see this, see it as dysfunctional, and still find myself falling into it.

Of course, we can fall into the opposite problem, where we overuse a precious gift, or use it for the wrong thing and in the wrong way and so ruin it. We can get careless with the care of those precious gifts. I did that with my blue Advent shirt. I wore it on a Wednesday Mid-week Advent service and then needed to wash it to wear it the upcoming Sunday. In my hurry and carelessness, I neglected to change the water temperature setting from hot back to cold. I washed it in hot water. I've noticed ever since then the blue color has dulled, it's not as sharp as it used to be.

Well, that's just clothes and they can be replaced. But our Old Testament Lesson uses the analogy of clothes to point out a spiritual truth. It talks about the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness. These garments are very special gifts that have been given to each of you here today. As a matter of fact, these gifts came to all men because of the child that was born on Christmas Day. That's why He was born. Only God who joined Himself with humanity in the womb of Mary could make such garments for you and me.

You know, if a gift is really special, the manufacturer patents and copyrights it so no one else can steal it. Sometimes they keep the method of manufacture and the ingredients secret so no one can make a knockoff of it. But Scripture doesn't do that. It tells us just how these were manufactured. The planning stages took a long time, as it does whenever you're going to make something very special. God had been planning this since the beginning of time. In **Galatians 4:4-5** we read **⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.** The time of the manufacture of these garments was when the fullness of time had come, otherwise known as December 25th, give or take a month or two in the year 6BC -4BC. The place it all began is Bethlehem. These gifts took 30 some years to actually produce. During that time the baby that came on Christmas Day lived out our life under the law. He made the necessary material by living out our human existence, but doing so perfectly, never sinning.

Then when the perfect time came, according to the Father's will, that baby turned man, whose name is Jesus Christ, took all the perfect material He gathered and put these garments all together by climbing on the cross, and hanging there until He might pay for all the sins of all men in the entire world. He kept the law yet suffered the punishment for all the ways we break the law, all the ways we take the good gifts given and hoard them, making them more important than the giver who is God Himself. He suffered and died for all the ways we misuse, devalue, and fail to give thanks for the good gifts we receive and therefore fail to give thanks and praise to the giver. On the cross He fashioned the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness. The garments that hide the sin that we keep committing and would otherwise force us out of God's presence now and eternally. The garments that are made from Jesus' perfect life. Perfect garments, sinless garments. Clothes

that are good enough to wear before the Father now and all the way until our entrance into eternal life.

He wants us to know just exactly how they were made so that we realize we could never fashion them on our own. If we tried then all it would take is one little sin, one little flaw, and the whole garment would unravel and be ruined. Jesus had to make it for us. We couldn't afford to buy such an expensive garment; we don't have enough money. In fact, there's not enough money in the world for you or I to buy it. Jesus bought it. He paid the highest price, His own life. He made it for you, bought it for you, and gives it to you as His gift of love in the Gospel Message. We receive it every time we hear about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

But there's still one more problem, you can't put this garment on yourself. It's like when you're half asleep trying to put on a pair of pants or a shirt that's turned inside out, only you don't realize it. You pull the sleeves through and think you've got it fixed only to find its still inside out. The garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness can only be put on by faith. And that is Christ's free gift to you to. Through the power of His Spirit its as if His hands come and get the sleeves and pant legs all pulled into the proper position. He lovingly guides your hands into the sleeves, you legs into the pants, and then buttons up your shirt for you, getting all the buttons and buttonholes aligned right the first time. That's a pretty awesome gift isn't it? And while you may occasionally forget it, that fact is that you are wearing it right now. You've been wearing it since your baptism.

Now there is no need to fret about over-wearing them. The garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness will never wear out, even though we are occasionally careless with them at times. They can never get stained. The stain of sin refuses to stick. It keeps being washed off to the cross. And you never have to worry about the color fading or the whites turning grey. The blood of our Lord and Savior has awesome power. By the same power that created all things that blood not only washes away sinful stains, but also mends rips and tears, it keeps our salvation garment always looking like new.

Given such a great gift what should we do? Wear it. Wear it proudly. Now the garment itself is invisible, but your neighbor can see by your life that you are in fact are wearing it. The garment of salvation and robe of righteousness create a joyful outlook in our lives. They create a differing kind of happiness then any other gift you have received. And rather than selfishly hoarding things, those garments move us to share our other gifts with others out of that special Christ-like love that is part and parcel of wearing these clothes. But one of the clearest signs that you are wearing the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness is the forgiveness that flows from your heart and out into the lives of others. The world sees it in the way you forgive unconditionally. And it sees in the way you confess when you are wrong and ask forgiveness of those you have wronged. Only those wearing the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness will do those things.

Unlike those shirts I wanted to leave hanging in my closet until some unknown day in the future, or my Grandma's furniture, or the fine china that sat unused for a day that would never come, we have a very special event to wear our garment of salvation and robe of righteousness for. It's the Last Day. And its coming one day, we just don't know when. But when it comes all those who are wearing the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness will be welcomed into eternal life. And all those who have taken it off won't have the time or the means to put it back on. They will be sent to the place of eternal torment and suffering. Since we don't know when that day might be, wouldn't it be best to keep that garment on you at all times? But don't worry about it getting ripped, worn, torn, or dirty. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work washing, mending, renewing the color and quality of fabric. He works through the means of grace and is at work in you right now. So that whenever the Heavenly Father looks at you, He sees the beautiful clothing His Son died and rose again to give you. And on that day that the Son, our Savior returns, you will be dressed to the nines and ready to enter into eternity.

So, wear you garment of salvation and robe of righteousness openly, confidently and gratefully. Give thanks for such a wonderful gift by praising the one who came on Christmas as a baby boy to make such wonderful garments for you and has given them to you free of charge. Amen