

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer; Amen.

When I was in college there was a show on television called “What Not to Wear”. The show had two hosts who would secretly follow someone around who was nominated by a family member or friend, that dressed terribly. Sometimes they would wear clothes that were too tight. Sometimes they were clothes that looked like they just rolled out of bed. Sometimes they would wear too much makeup and costume like clothing. No matter which category they fell into, the two hosts came out of hiding and surprised them in their natural elements, and then the host and the make-over candidate would watch the secret footage together and come up with a plan for change. And then the best part; the hosts took the person who need help dressing better shopping. The show ended with a total makeover of hair, make up and clothes, but even more than that they had a spiritual or internal make over that showed them that they were worthy of dressing on the outside the way that they felt on the inside.

I bet you’re wondering why I am telling you about this television show? Well when I read our gospel lesson for this morning I couldn’t help but think of the poor soul who showed up to a wedding banquet he was invited to at the last minute, inappropriately dressed. I think that’s my worst nightmare. Wedding invitations don’t usually tell you what you are expected to wear. They usually give little or no direction. And yet, we have a poor guy being chastised for this mistake. In fact, he is bound up by hands and feet and thrown into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! Yikes! There has to be more to this story, right? A fashion faux pas can’t really be deadly can it?

First let’s look at the actual story. This story is a hot mess! It’s about a king who sends out invitations to a wedding banquet, and not only did his guests refuse to show up, but they beat

up and murdered his slaves! After the king finds out what has taken place, he takes an eye for an eye approach and slaughters peasants and burns their city! Talk about vengeance! Following his fit of rage, the seemingly calmer king sends out invitations again and invites everyone, whether they are good or bad and his guests fill the halls. While the king is greeting his guests he notices one of his wedding guests is inappropriately dressed, he does not have the expected wedding robe on and then the king explodes again! And binds the poor man up and throws him into the darkness, seemingly to die. Whew. There has to be more to the story right?

As I was thinking about this text I couldn't help but wonder what the "more" is. What more is necessary for this story to make sense? What more is expected of this man? I mean did you know that in biblical tradition it was the responsibility of the host of the wedding to provide the guests with the appropriate robes? Did the host run out? Did the man refuse to put one on? Or did he come in a back door and miss them being handed out? If that's the case, that it was the hosts fault for him being inappropriately dressed, then what in the world is going on? But the more I thought about it the more I wondered is the focus of this story really on the fate of the poor fellow who didn't have a robe? And I began to think about what the parable is telling us, the simple truth; the kingdom of God requires something more than accepting an invitation to discipleship. It's not enough to just RSVP and then show up.

In the waters of baptism God clothed us in Christ. He gave us the "robe" if you will for life. That robe isn't just something you throw on in the morning and forget you have it on. The robe is supposed to change the way that we do life. It's supposed to create a lens for which we see the world, and that lens is supposed to be through the eyes of Christ. It isn't simply something we put on and then we live our lives however we feel want to.

You know I have been sitting in a lot of seminars lately about the decline in the mainline churches. And I've listened to pastor after pastor and bishop after bishop try and guess what is happening in our congregations that is responsible for the decline. And as I listened to them talk all they talked about is numbers and statistics and how millennials are killing the church...and while they are important what I have yet to hear them talk about is a creating and making disciples. I think for the longest time the church has been satisfied to have people come into our congregations on Sunday morning and simply become members. As long as we have numbers on Sunday morning and have a decent offering we are satisfied with our church life. But what about our expectations of those people who are sitting in our pews? What about teaching them WHY they are sitting there in the first place? As preachers we are too careful with our words, afraid that we will offend people and they won't come back the next week. We are too afraid to truly say what it is that God is calling us to do, and he is calling us to do something. The result is mediocre Christians who think it's good enough to just come to church on Sunday, without learning or experiencing a renewing or a transforming of our minds or hearts. In the book of Revelation God says it's easy to work with those who have no faith and it's easy to work with those who are zealous, but it's almost impossible to work with those who are lukewarm in the faith. Is that what we have become? Lukewarm Christians?

Today our parable is reminding us that it is not enough for us to just put on a robe. The robe of Christ which we were given the day God claimed us as his own in the waters of baptism call us to something more, something bigger. It means that everything we do in our lives should reflect Christ; the way that we spend our money, the way that we are in relationship with one another, the way that we care for our homes and the land around us, the way that we steward our gifts, especially our time. Our parable reminds us that it's not enough for us to hear the sermon

on the mount, but it should spring us forward into action, serving and living our lives for Jesus by serving and loving others. It's not enough to say that you are a Christian and remain silent when life, liberty and love are in jeopardy. It's not enough to say that you are a member of a church and only come to worship. Our lives must be a response to the robe that Christ has so generously given to us to wear.

So, at the risk of getting thrown out of the church, I hope you have heard me say this parable is about being thrown into action, it's about standing up and living your faith in your daily life. It's about making sacrifices to participate in the kingdom of God breaking into this world, not just when it is convenient to you, but every day. It's about the "more" that God is calling us to be. We can't be on that TV show "What not to wear" because God has already given us our best outfit. Now he's calling us into response, not idleness or laziness or complacency. How will you respond?

Get up. Get dressed. And go serve this world as the light of Christ, not because I want you to, but because that is what God has called you to do, who Christ has called you to be. Listen to the Spirit blow and follow where the Spirit leads. Amen.