

December 28, 2014
Sermon for The First Sunday aAfter Christmas
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Isaiah 61:10–62:3 (ESV)

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. ¹ For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. ² The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. ³ You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

One of the most well known fairy tales is the story of Cinderella. One of the oldest versions of this story comes from 9th century China. In Europe, there are over 500 variations. The most familiar one in the US is the Walt Disney animated version. When you think of a princess, you think of Cinderella.

Several times in the movie, Cinderella exchanges her rags for beautiful new clothes: first with a dress her animal friends helped her make; then with the dress the fairy godmother zapped up; and finally, with the lavish wedding dress she wore when she married the prince.

As Christians, we have a Cinderella story of our own. We have gone from rags to riches. We have exchanged our rags of condemnation for beautiful garments of salvation. However, there is a big difference between our story and Cinderella's story.

Our story is true.

Let's examine our garments. Our garments of condemnation; our garments of salvation, and our garments of celebration and proclamation.

Our garments of condemnation is the ugly part of the story. We don't always like to hear this part, but it is where the story begins. It's the clothes we started out with; what we were wearing before we were given our garments of salvation.

Adam and Eve were created naked. That wasn't a problem because there was no sin in the world. With the first sin came shame, fear, and guilt. The nakedness of their new sinful condition was exposed.

Something had to be done. Adam and Eve's response was the same as our response today.

We try to cover the nakedness of our sinful condition with garments of our own making. We try to hide the naked truth that we are sinners.

However, there is a problem with the garments we create to hide our sin.

They are of no value.

Our debt of sin is so great that all of our good deeds can't even scrape up a decent down payment – let alone pay the price of our sin.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah speak about our attempt to save ourselves with good works: ⁶ *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isaiah 64:6 ESV).*

There is nothing we can do to atone for what we are and what we have done. On our own, we are left with nothing to wear but the garment of condemnation. We can't hide it and we can't take it off. That means that we are not dressed appropriately to stand before God, who is holy and righteous.

In the parable of the Wedding Banquet, Jesus explains what will happen to people who try to stand before God in garments of their own making: *"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "* (Mt 22:11-13 ESV).

Our condition would be hopeless if it were not for the love of God. Out of pure mercy and grace, and because of Jesus, God has given us garments of salvation. He has placed robes of righteousness on our shoulders. God's provision for us moved a man named Zinzendorf to write this hymn lyric:

Jesus, your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Jesus took upon Himself our garments of condemnation and, in return, gave us His garments of salvation.

This act is what Martin Luther called the "joyous exchange." Here is how Luther described it: *Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is the bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are the bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his.*

When Jesus takes your sin upon Himself, He takes all of your sin.

His garment of salvation doesn't cover just part of you, it covers all of you. There is nothing left to be atoned for. There are no deeds required to pay for even the smallest part of your sin because there is no sin.

How does this "joyous exchange" happen?

Luther says it comes about through faith, created by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. In other words, your garments of condemnation are exchanged for garments of salvation through faithfully receiving Baptism, Holy Communion, and the life-saving message of the God's Word.

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul writes: *All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ* (Gal 3:27 NIV).

There is no news more wonderful than hearing that your sins have been forgiven, your debt has been paid, and a good relationship has been established between you and the God of the universe.

You, who were once lost are now found. You, who were once on the outside, are now on the inside, you, who were once the enemies of Christ, have now become the bride of Christ.

This wonderful news causes us to put on our garments of celebration. Every day of our lives should be a celebration of what Jesus has done for us. Not just once or twice a year, not just being Christmas and Easter Christians, but joyful Christians every day of the year!

And, in our celebration of what Jesus has done for us, we put on our garments of proclamation.

Sincere celebration of our salvation will naturally spill over into proclamation. As we begin to appreciate our Savior, we will experience a burning desire to share the good news of this joyous exchange. We will be compelled to tell everyone about our new wardrobe – paid for by the blood of Jesus.

That is exactly how Paul felt. In his first letter to the Corinthian Christians, Paul writes: *I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!* (1 Cor 9:16 NIV).

The best way to live for Jesus is to tell others about Jesus.

How many of you received new clothes for Christmas?

How many of you will exchange those new clothes because they don't fit, they're not your style, or they're just not what you wanted?

Christmas presents aren't always perfect.

However, the Christmas present that came with the baby in the manger is a perfect "one size fits all." Jesus brought the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness to our sinful world.

You will never need to exchange these new clothes. These garments are always a perfect fit.

You will never outgrow them.

They will never wear out.

They will always be the perfect outfit for any occasion.

The guarantee on your new garments is backed by Christ.

His birth, life, death, and resurrection.

In a short while, the celebration of Christmas will be just a fading memory. But our celebration of what Christmas is truly about should never end.

You can keep your celebration going by thanking Jesus every day for your garment of salvation and your robe of righteousness and by proudly wearing your new clothes for all the world to see, every day!.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

Exchanging our Clothes

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

1. Our garments of condemnation.
2. Our garments of salvation.
3. Our garments of celebration and proclamation.