

Goal: That the hearers would daily celebrate their baptismal identity and hope in Christ.

Ken was a divorcee and the single father of twin high school boys. He loved sports, especially baseball, umpiring numerous local games and keeping up with the national leagues. He worked for the Nevada Department of Transportation and regularly attended and served the church as vice-president, usher, lector, and assisted with communion distribution. Ken's usual attire for church was a polo shirt, khaki shorts, and slippers, feeling it didn't matter if he wore a 3-piece suit or shorts, as long as he was there. Many agreed with him, well except Lois.

Lois had been a member of the church for over 50 years. She was widow, member of the church choir, as well as multiple community choirs. She retired after 45 years at the Naval Air Station as secretary to numerous rear admirals. In her professional career, she had been the boss, but in retirement she was struggling with not being in charge. She thought everyone should do what she thought was best, and Ken was usually at the end of her barrel. She felt Ken's attire was scandalous and he should never be allowed in the church, let alone the chancel. Lois would often tell me that if Ken did not dress appropriately, I shouldn't allow him to participate. My challenge as pastor was to tell Lois that it wasn't Ken who was dressed inappropriately, but herself.

Jesus teaches us about God's kingdom saying, ***"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'"*** (Matthew 22: 2 – 4) But they didn't come. Note this is the king's wedding feast for his son and he is inviting the subjects of His kingdom. For them to come, he's given them special festive clothing to match the occasion. Could you imagine subjects of a kingdom, who've been given special festive garments, telling the king, *"I'm busy. I have better things to do. Don't bother me."* It's not surprising that the king was so angry that he sent his troops to kill them and burn their city.

Remember the circumstance when Jesus told this parable. It was Holy Week. He had just ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of Hosanna! He went to the temple courts, turned over the money tables and called everyone to repent for the Kingdom of God is here. However, the Pharisees of the Jews weren't going to have any of it. They held to their traditions and righteous practices instead of God's, defending their ways to the point of killing God's Son.

Now look back to Jesus parable. ***"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is***

ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

(*Matthew 22: 8 – 10*) Those words sound familiar? Jump ahead a few chapters as Jesus commands His disciples to, “*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*” (*Matthew 28: 19 – 20*) Today, we witnessed the expansion of our ohana and God’s kingdom as Maya and Isabella received new spiritual birth by water and God’s Word.

But the biggest fashion faux pas is to arrive at the King’s banquet underdressed. But I’m not talking about what you wear to church, although, what you wear here is a confession about what you believe happens here. If you believe the Lord of the Universe comes to you in this service, speaking to you through the Word proclaimed by the pastor, in the waters poured in His name, and in the bread and wine to give you Himself, you’ll dress accordingly.

The same goes for pastors. We may not wear whatever we wish, no matter how warm it is, but the Church has selected a uniform, vestments, to cover the man and display the beauty of the Office of Christ. Beneath the vestments, the men are interchangeable. But even from the hand of a man wearing shorts and a polo Jesus can distribute His Body and Blood. And your clothes, no matter how nice or how shabby, can’t make you worthy or unworthy to be welcomed at the King’s banquet. Only the wedding garment does that.

So where do you receive this required garment? Here at the font. God tells us, “*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. (There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.) If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” (*Galatians 3: 27 – 29*) When each of us was baptized we received the kingdom clothing of Jesus and this morning we again hear God’s invitation to His wedding banquet. But the only way to be welcomed in the wedding banquet is to be wearing Jesus, His holiness, covering your sin and yourself.

The good news is that the garment accompanies the invitation, delivered freely in Holy Baptism. The warning, Jesus says, is that you can lose the wedding garment. (“*But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 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.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.*” (*Matthew 22: 11 – 14*) How can that happen? How might you, like

the man cast out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, lose the garment of Christ's righteousness, placed upon you in Holy Baptism? There are two ways.

First, you may reject the garment of Christ's righteousness by choosing to clothe yourself with your own righteousness. If your hope for salvation rests on your belief that you're basically a good person, or in the works that you do in worship and in life, you'll be disappointed to hear the Lord's fashion critique. Isaiah writes, "***We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are filthy rags.***" (*Isaiah 64: 6*) No, those clothes won't work.

The other way is you can lose the garment of Christ's perfect righteousness if you fill your life with things that can distance you from God and in turn re-clothe yourself in sin. Author Jane Smiley describes her family's spiritual life saying: "*We came to church to pay our respects, not to give thanks.*" When faith becomes a compartment of life instead of life's vibrant center, when you're just stopping off to put in your time or pay your respects, squeezing God in between everything else that you clearly value much more, then you reveal yourself to be an impostor. You've taken off your festive wedding garment, when you put work and entertainment and sports and leisure ahead of coming here, to be in God's presence with our kingdom ohana, to study His Word, receive His sacraments, and commune with each other. "***How can we who died to sin still live in it?***" (*Romans 6: 2*) Repent. Your own righteousness and sin are equally filthy.

The proof that God does not love you just the way you are is in the Incarnation. God became Man. The Word of God clothed Himself in human flesh. He took human flesh to be clothed with humanity's sinfulness. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "***Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.***" So He did. In His Baptism, Jesus took your sin and made it His own. He was clothed with your sin. And when He died He took away your sin, all of it. Jesus has taken away your sin and given you His righteousness through your Baptism.

God's promise to you in Baptism is your reality, every day. You wear Jesus. When God looks at you, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, He doesn't see your sin. You're wearing Christ. You're a Christian. So, today cherish your baptism and respond to God's invitation to come to His altar banquet, a foretaste of the feast of His return. Here, your Lord clothes Himself in bread and wine, to feed you His own Body and Blood. Washed in that crimson flood, your clothes are pure white. You wear the righteousness of Jesus. And look you look forward to the heavenly banquet to come. Amen.