

Jesus was renowned for welcoming outcasts and sinners as a matter of course. Something just doesn't seem right with this parable. His parable about a wedding guest who was tossed seems very out of place and awkward. Even more so as we learned it was so important to have the banquet full that he sent servants back out to find anyone they could. So why reject someone who came voluntarily?

For several years we were used to signs that said unless you wore a face mask, you could not enter. We are used to signs that say "no shirt, no shoes, no service!" There are countless requirements as to appropriate attire as well.

Clothing has so many purposes – protection, a fashion statement, and it can conceal what we want to hide. But the issue of appropriateness is confused by differing values and perspectives. What is worn to a wedding is different from what is worn to the gym. We get it, but who decides what is appropriate clothing?

Consider how clothing is a tangible expression of the result of sin which is revealed by multiple barriers between God and each other. Adam and Eve didn't need to worry about garments. There was no one to impress, offend, hide from or be protected from. There was perfect harmony with God and creation! As the first parents stepped out of God's plan to introduce selfishness into creation, guilt caused them to hide their intentions.

They were embarrassed and fearful that God would see through them. change was that "I" and "Me" became a priority rather than God's gift of creation. And that selfishness is what characterized so much of society's pain today. Their garments symbolized their punishment and pain. Like clothing, life was temporary, would wear out, and eventually need to be buried. Consider that Jesus entered the world to drastically change our dress code with the gift of his love.

As kids, many of us loved the Superman series on TV. I remember Clark Kent doing his phone-booth-clothing-change, revealing the hidden Superman. Later on Batman was the rage and made similar clothing and character changes. Of course, that is make-believe, but Jesus literally did that for real, as he entered the tomb with the rags of death and emerged with dazzling garments of Easter! He pronounced funeral clothing out of style. Wedding garments are in as faith has transitioned us from death to life!

Jesus' story of the wedding guest with the wrong garments has nothing to do with fashion. It had to do with our relationship with God and people of faith. To "dress appropriately" is not a snooty fashion judgment but a challenge to celebrate the marriage between heaven and earth. The guest who arrived with the wrong clothing insulted everyone by not participating in the marriage feast. He came for the food but not to share in the event. Similarly, to live without faith makes a similar fashion statement! It is like wearing inappropriate attire.

In their world, a wedding stopped the clock in a village. Everyone wore the best garment they had (which likely meant their second robe that was clean and saved for moments such as this.) It was a sign of respect and joy. A wedding was like Christmas, Thanksgiving and birthdays all wrapped into one moment. Nothing else mattered! Everyone totally invested themselves in giving joy to the host and the married couple. But one man chose not to fully embrace the moment or respect the host.

Daily, people of faith are in conflict between what is appropriate behavior, and what is not. In a symbolic way it is about what we decide to wear or clothe ourselves in each day. Paul writes extensively of gifts of the Spirit and faith as clothing.

His encouragement is to wear Christ just as you might wear despair, or anger, or fear. To surround oneself with Christ is to announce to the world – my life has been changed by Easter!

When we put baptismal gowns on babies, or hang confirmation stoles on our young people, those are symbols of the new life we wear. It doesn't mean that you can't wear jeans or shorts to church, but it does mean if church clothes (like faith, hope, and love) are only worn on Sunday, then we really don't get what it means to be the Church. That was the point of the guest at a wedding celebration who really wasn't supportive of our engaged in what was going on.

A uniform is only a uniform – what is in our heart and soul is the true clothing that makes a fashion statement to all. Our relationship with God and our love for one another trumps anything we can buy, create, or come up with on our own!

What do you chose to wear at home? At work? At play? We live in an angry world of hatred and death. We are surrounded by messages of gloom, frustration, anger and fear, whether it has to do with climate change, politics or a pandemic. Jobs, savings, and friends can disappear. Loved ones face illness and all will die. Daily living can be tough, and surprises catch us off guard.

At the same time, we have been invited to a wedding feast in which God makes us one with him. We have been assured death is now the beginning. That forgiveness is a gift. That sacrifice and servant love give us opportunities to share this good news with others. Whose clothing line will we wear? Satan's rags of earthly doom or Jesus' garments of Easter joy?

What will you choose to wear in response? Not that others take notice of you, but that others see Christ in you! Look in a mirror. Is it faith or fear that you wear all day long? "Appropriate attire" has to do with your relationship with Christ the bridegroom, not with the problems of an imperfect world. Today is a good time to consider your wardrobe – what is it time to throw out and what is it time to wear more often?

And remember, it is not about clothing, but about "clothing yourself in Christ!" Why not wear (every day!) what will REFLECT the joy and excitement of a God who loves you; ASSIST you in setting your daily mood and attitude; and ANNOUNCE to the world that we have been invited to a wedding! It isn't what we wear that makes this happen, but because of what has happened for us, we really should think about what we wear. We have been invited to a wedding feast and should not be afraid to show our joy, our love, and our willingness to participate in every way that we can! That is the wedding garment of the faithful!