

(Read Matthew 22: 1-14)

The sermon title today is “The Naked Man”. Have I got your attention? Truthfully, he wasn’t really naked, he just wasn’t wearing the proper clothes for the wedding. But he might as well have been naked – he was kicked out of the banquet because of his attire.

What would you feel about being asked to leave the church service because you weren’t wearing the right thing? I don’t mean a nice pair of pants and freshly pressed shirt or top. Thankfully church has moved way beyond the “proper” attire to be welcoming. I appreciate when someone comes to church in the clothes they just jogged in –they are, after all, here and God has a chance to speak to them.

But what if you hadn’t come dressed in the right state of mind? When you look around at people who go to church, do you see people who are rejoicing, people who are happy, people who know how richly they have been blessed? Or do you see long faces, and hear complaints and grumbling?

And when you talk to other Christians, do you sense in time real joy over what they believe in? Or do they only talk of the wonder and peace of heaven as if it was something that can only be experienced in the future – some time after you die?

Do you rejoice in your faith? Or do you see the gospel of Jesus Christ as a burden? A burden that you carry because you think it is the right thing to do?

The story in Matthew is about a wedding banquet where the invited guests decide not to show up, so the host invites those that normally would not be included on probably anyone’s who’s who list. And amongst all the new guests, the good and the bad, there is one man the king singles out. “Friend, why didn’t you wear the proper clothes for the wedding?” And the man is speechless; he has no answer for the king. So he is thrown out of the party.

Why do you think that the man was speechless? Looking at it from his point of view, I think he expected that everything was ok.

He was an invited guest, and all kinds of people were there, some of them with very unsavoury backgrounds, so what did it matter what he wore? The host surely wouldn’t care about that – after all he had thrown his doors wide open. Our “naked” man certainly wasn’t crashing the party. But that view point is not really reasonable, is it?

When you go to a wedding do you not put on your best outfit? Do you not go prepared to celebrate; do you not go prepared to enjoy yourself, prepared to help the hosts rejoice?

What kind of churlish person would not do their best, and what host would not despise a guest who failed to come prepared to celebrate with him, especially when all the clothing that a guest needed was provided at the door? Just as it is for us.

We here today, have been sought out by God and invited to His banquet of life, a banquet in honour of the royal Son, Jesus. We have been invited to richly enjoy life, both in this world and the next, and we have accepted the invitation. We have come to the wedding banquet of our King.

Are we prepared to celebrate as God wants? Do we have the faith we need? Have we put on the clothing of righteousness and joy and thanksgiving that Christ offers to us? Have we changed for the party? Or do we try to wear our old clothes and live in the old ways.

A legend tells the story of a fisherman called Aaron. Aaron lived on the banks of a river. Walking home with his eyes half closed one evening after a hard day's work, he was dreaming of what he could do if he were rich. As he walked, his foot struck against a leather pouch of small stones.

Absentmindedly, he picked up the pouch and began throwing the pebbles into the water. "When I am a rich man," he said to himself, "I'll have a large house." And he threw another pebble far out into the river. He threw another one and thought, "My wife and I will have servants and rich food, and many fine things." And this went on until just one stone was left. As Aaron held it in his hand, a ray of light caught it and made it sparkle and it was then that he realized that it was a valuable gem. He had been throwing away the real riches he held in his hand, while he dreamed of that which he might never achieve in the future.

The legend summarizes the condition of many Christians. We have been given everything we need or could want; it has been placed in our hands and we have been invited to enjoy it. But for some reason we do not look into our hands, we do not take what God has given us and actually give thanks for it and use it. Instead we dream of the day when

The Christian life works a bit like the way a freezer does. If the freezer is almost empty, every time you open it you let out a lot of the cold air and warm air rushes in to replace it and makes the motor work extra hard to chill it. And that is costly.

Now if we keep the freezer closed, there is no problem. But keeping it closed also means we get no use out of it. The secret is to fill the freezer with good things. Then when we open it to take something out, there is no room for the

warm air to get in. The motor does not have to work so hard and there is less strain on the system.

In light of Thanksgiving, I'm giving you homework this week. I want you to read the book of Philippians in the New Testament. It's only four chapters long. You can even do it in one short sitting. The letter to the Philippians is called the Letter of Joy and chapter 4 includes four ways in which you can don the wedding clothing provided for the celebration. I'll give you a hint to one of them. It's in Philippians chapter 4 verse 8.

It's Thanksgiving! Do you feel thankful, truly thankful? Or are you just waiting to get the service over with so you can finish preparing today's meal before the family descends on your home? I've often heard people say that Thanksgiving is all about family, but they are wrong. Thanksgiving is all about God – after all He is the one who has blessed us with the home, the family and the food with which we celebrate. Put on clothes of praise and joy and come fit to celebrate, not just this Sunday but every time you stand in the presence of our glorious God.

In Philippians, Paul mentions 4 ways to don the proper attitude for the celebration God invites you to:

Phil 4:4 *“Rejoice in the Lord always.”* And especially when you don't feel like it.

Phil 4:6 *“Don't worry about anything but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.”* When you worry, you suffer twice.

Phil 4:8 *“Keep your mind on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper”.* Stop dwelling on the negative. Our thoughts govern our feelings which impact our actions.

Phil 4:9 *“You know the teaching I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do. So follow my example. And God who gives you peace, will be with you.”*