

“The New Clothes from God’s Clothing Shelf!”

Rev. Terrance Jacob on Matthew 22:1-14 at SALC, 10/11/2026

Weddings are not like they used to be! I remember a time when the guest lists were long and there were multiple meal seatings. Also, some people in the neighborhood would hang around the “wedding house” to get in once the speeches and formalities are over and the meal start. They would sneak in after the first seating – those were the “important” guests eating first. So imagine that, as the context of this parable. Also note that Jesus, as with other parables is kind of mixing a real story with an end-time happening – an “eschatological” happening. Let’s look at the story.

It seems unfair that the king would expect someone invited at the last minute to actually have wedding clothes, right? But even in that era, people made or bought special clothes for a fancy function. So perhaps one may argue in the defense of the person thrown out, that they were poor. But even the poor would borrow clothes from each other, especially the poor, even gently used clothes, so that they would be appropriated dressed.

The first part of the story is a continuation of the issue that Jesus was addressing to the religious who felt entitled to God’s favor, and that they would reject Jesus. In the context of entitlement and the rejection an “atypical” messiah, Jesus here raises the point that **everyone** who accepts him will be saved – not by their tribe, race or history!

Today in Christianity, as for centuries, this “Grace extended to all” is celebrated – “All who believe!” Paul in his letter to the Romans in Chapter 10 verse 13 says, “everyone who calls on the name of Jesus shall have salvation”. This is in line with Jesus declaring in John 3:16, “For God loved the world so much that He sent His only son that whoever **believes** in Him shall be saved!” Belief is

the wedding robe. So why is this guest being turned away? He had received the invitation to the party - the feast of salvation in Jesus, the marriage feast where Jesus is the bridegroom and the Church is the bride! Why was someone invited by the call to all the world, now rejected? One might even go on with Jesus words in John 3:16 to verse 17: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." This guest was thrown out because they did not have on the "I believe" robe on. I believe and you can see it in how I wear my faith in public – as evidence of faith.

Jesus is saying today, as did the great young Lutheran theologian and pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Grace is not cheap." We should not cheapen Grace to say that since the invitation is free, there are no expectations. Unfortunately, many Christians, even teachers and theologians proclaim that Grace means that no one can be lost. So, what they are saying is that "No one who comes to the banquet, perhaps no one who comes to church having heard the invitation to be part of the wedding, would be lost."

To that Jesus says in the end of the text today, "Many are called but few are chosen." Many are invited, but few are authentically part of the wedding of Jesus and the Church.

Paul reminds us to live a life worthy of the calling into which we are called. (Ephesians 4:1). If we are of the Spirit, we will bear the fruits of the Spirit. If we bear the fruit of the flesh, then we are not of the Spirit, we are not in the wedding but simply there to eat. We do not respect or abide by the rules of the host. We do not live by the laws of the Kingdom of God, but simply enjoy the general benefits.

Jesus is asserting that while Grace is free, there are still expectations. However, the religious of the time AND the religious of today seem to get those expectations mixed up. That

was the law that they asserted. I spoke about the expectations, but before I sit down, let's take a minute to ask: What are NOT the expectations? What are the expectations placed on people, that are not really the expectations or robe Jesus is talking about?

People tend to judge a church service and a person's knowledge of church by the **music**. As I wrote this, I was listening to Handel's Messiah and got caught up in it. I know many of you understand what I mean - and you gotta play that music loudly, and even become the conductor, right. It's beautiful, but often that tradition of music, western classical music becomes the definition of what church music is! Yet, the early church music would have been more like the middle eastern sound and the beat would be good for the middle eastern flowing dancing. So today in the traditional western church, songs from other cultures/traditions are considered "camp songs"! Yes we sing like "Thuma Mina" from South Africa or "Santo, Santo, Santo", from Spanish-speaking America. They are considered by some to be jingles to simply show that we are so welcoming! Then we teach those we welcome, the "real" church music - with the pipe organ and all. There's nothing wrong with western classical music - I love it! I love the sound of the pipe organ - but it's not what the wedding robe, the expectation of being church is.

Let's look at another expectation we place on people: knowing the liturgy. Liturgy literally means "the work of the people". It's something we created for public worship. It's not fundamental to being church or to being in that holy wedding - it's simply like know the music and the dance moves at the wedding. The people invited from the streets, most probably didn't know the moves, but that did not upset the host - it was the robe!

Also it's not how knowledgeable we are or articulate we are. English articulacy is the articulacy of a language most of your

cultures never had. There are very few of us whose ancestors spoke the imperialist language of the English, right? So it does not matter if you say “tomaeto” or tomato – just eat the fruit, or is a vegetable?

It's the same with **clothes** today. Jesus was not literally talking about clothes. Language, music, liturgy or clothes are not part of the requirements to be a wedding guest.

The general public – the whole world – is invited to the wedding banquet but there are expectations of the wedding guests. We ought to accept the invitation – to believe in Jesus, and to live that belief. We ought to be prepared to confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We have to confess that there is nothing good IN us that deserves this great salvation, but that it is all of God, all of Grace. There is no entitlement. There is no disrespect for the wedding host or the bridal party.

Jesus invites us and by His full and complete Grace, provides the appropriate clothes of righteousness. These clothes have been paid for by His blood. These clothes of righteousness are ours and are on the shelf of obedience to the Word. And if we cannot get to that free clothing shelf of obedience to His word, Jesus offers us the transportation of His Holy Spirit, who He says, “will lead us to all truth, all righteousness, all the right clothes.” Come let's get the wedding **clothes of righteousness** from God's Clothing Shelf, by grace through faith – and it's not gently used but always brand new! Amen!