

Heaven Dress Code

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[0 : 00] Matthew 22, verse 1 to verse 14. Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet, to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some servants and said, Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready.

Come to the wedding banquet. But they paid no attention and went off, one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them, and killed them.

The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.

Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

[1 : 43] But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. Friend, he asked, How did you get in here without wedding clothes?

The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are invited, but few are chosen.

Now then, this lovely old parable teaches us that salvation in the Bible is compared to a marriage, a celebration of a marriage, where all things are prepared and ready, and the guests have only to accept the invitation.

God opens the door to such, promising each a place at the table. In loving appeal, he speaks two words, Come in.

Come in. So we can enter with confidence. And in the parable, many are invited to the wedding. Indeed, we know it's a picture of the gospel, whosoever wills may come in.

[3 : 20] Those first invited, probably a reference to the Jews, gave various excuses as they refused to accept the invitation.

Attending the wedding is not a priority in their thinking. So the call is extended, to use the authorized version, into the highways and the byways.

The offer of the gospel is what this parable is about. No paper invitations, just everyone is, I was at a wedding in June, but I didn't dare turn up without an invitation on paper.

But this invitation goes to the highways and the byways, and whosoever will may come. Now then, we as members of the church have been entrusted to deliver a message from God that is meant for every person under heaven.

It's the reason why God leaves us on the earth after we're saved. To get the message out to the world, to everyone within reach, we must issue the call and say to them, come, for everything is now ready.

[4 : 40] It's all been done. All you have to do is come. And as we issue that call, and I've been issuing it now for 63 years to one and another, a separation begins to take place.

That's inevitable. You remember, Jesus at the commencement of his public ministry issued a call as a result of which some separated unto him.

They came unto the Lord's side. Preaching the gospel has a separating effect. Mark chapter 1 verse 15, Jesus said to his listeners, the time has come.

The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the gospel. That was his message. That was his invitation. But you notice that it's not just an invitation.

It's also a command. Repent and believe the gospel. Some repented. Some didn't.

[5 : 50] So there's a division. And rejecting the invitation was a personal slight on the king. He was offended.

Some came later. Others went further than just being indifferent.

We're not interested. Sorry. On your way. We get that, don't we, from people? They're just not interested. But they went further. They mistreated and even killed the messengers.

This was hostility. And that's what's happening in the world today. People, in our own country, it's mainly hostility to the gospel. But you live in a Muslim context and it's hostile.

hostile. As is happening in so many countries in the world. But being hostile or being indifferent either is being, is an affront to the king.

[6 : 52] And there are those that we come across who will not receive or respond to Christ's call under any circumstances. They are resolved not to come. Matthew Henry, I read him just this morning on this parable and he said, none are excluded except those who exclude themselves.

Interesting comment. Jesus said, many bidden to attend the wedding made light of it and went their way. And there are ever those around us who feel no need for or interest in the gospel.

It's heartbreaking for us who labor in the gospel. But they, there are people who say the gospel is not for them. Thank you.

The Richard Dawkins and the, the Chris, many in this world have just rejected him. They're not interested. They say no beauty in Christ that they should desire him.

So then, what do they do? They prefer other things. one goes to his farm and another to his business. Money, business, pleasure.

[8 : 05] They prefer those things to the gospel. Room for business, room for pleasure, but for Christ the crucified, not a place that he can enter in the life for which he died.

So Jesus came into the world not to unite people. That's a fallacy. He himself said, I came to divide people. Matthew 10, 32, Jesus said, some will confess me before others, some will disown me.

Don't think I've come to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. You see, the gospel is a two-edged sword. Jesus' words attract or repel at one and the same time.

Even within one family, parents and children, brothers and sisters separated on the issue of the gospel. That's the first part of the parable.

But then there's this second part which is, perhaps, surprises us a bit from verse 11 onwards.

[9 : 14] one man had responded positively to the invitation but he singled out for special mention. He has successfully deceived the servants who delivered the invitation.

Deceiving the king would be an entirely different matter because the king is an expert at detection. each individual had to give an account of themselves.

He saw this one man. Now what's the application of this? Well, as I see it, this man professed to belong to this gathering but the way I put it is it was profession without possession.

It seems there he is in the assembly of the people that had been invited by the king.

It seems as if there's a path to outer darkness from the very gates of heaven. Some questions arise as we read this second section.

[10 : 31] What is the wedding garment? Who doesn't have one? And why is it so important? Why was the man speechless?

Now what has the parable to say to Westerhales in the 21st century? Well, there is in this section a second act of judgment.

The first act of judgment on the part of the king was verses 5 to 7. They paid no attention to the servants and went off.

one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized the king's servants, ill-treated them and killed them. The king was enraged, destroyed those murderers and burnt their city.

That's one judgment. Justice already meted out on the king's enemies. They'd insulted him by their refusal even to attend the wedding.

[11 : 33] Judgment for them is severe. This later problem is one of illegal entry, if I can put it that way.

Someone seated at the banquet was no friend of the king. The man came when invited but this feast was arranged in honor of the son not primarily for the pleasure of the king.

It was not just a nosh up. From this man there was no loyalty or affection for the king or for his son the groom.

Verse 10 on entering the feast both good and bad those terms have to be qualified good and bad nevertheless who filled the wedding hall had been clothed with an essential wedding garment in compliance with the custom and the command of the king.

All the guests there apart from one had obediently and cheerfully accepted their garment. When the king arrived to greet them his eyes lighted on the man not wearing a wedding garment defying the rules of the palace insulting the king by wearing clothes of his own choice.

[13:10] He was conspicuously out of place like a sore thumb as you appreciate people called in from the streets the highways and the byways were unlikely to be dressed suitably for a wedding.

Ladies agree don't you? One's outfit at the wedding should be wedding-y. I've discovered from experience I almost said painful experience a wedding outfit is a serious business there's the hat and the handbag and the shoes and the accessories it's important I read one man who took his wife to get fitted out and she was upstairs having the fit and he was downstairs having a fit when the bill came in and he had to pay the money the king made inquiry maybe the man could explain friend how did you get in but the man was speechless the silence of obvious guilt he had no defense no excuse it was a grave offense he had not entered in the appointed way he'd been presumptuous no one who stands before

God in that day will have an acceptable explanation as to why he's not wearing a wedding garment but what does this mean for us well the king's wardrobes are full of garments the supply is inexhaustible there is a garment for each who comes that will fit perfectly just for you it's just your size the king knew you were coming anyway that's another theological matter we talk about election sometime chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world but just for the moment the king knew so he had it all prepared all things are ready there'll be no surprises for the king meaning God at the marriage supper of the lamb heaven's guest list of names is there it's called the book of life and my name's written down there nobody's interested that my name is recorded in

Somerset House in England it's still going I was born on the 9th of April 1900 and none of your business and it's there that was when I was born into a natural family but then when I was 14 I was born again and my name is in the Lamb's book of life that's not due to any merit on my part that's the grace of God now this guest had rejected the prophet wedding garment at the point of entry and for this he's going to be judged he had refused wedding robes and was thus an intruder and he despised the simple condition of a dress coat befitting the occasion of a wedding which he decided to ignore he came in like Jeremy Corbyn that's not funny is it but you know dress is important if you're going before the queen you've got to be dressed all right he preferred his own fashion anyway there are people willing to pursue and receive gospel blessings they may be here this morning but whose hearts have not been changed they have no love for the son of God the wedding garment represents something indispensable now what is it well it's something indispensable before God but to some people it is unacceptable unacceptable to the unbeliever I was at a lecture the other night church in Edinburgh and the debate was as a result of a sermon he preached I won't say who it is but the minister said you've heard Christ died for your sins nonsense don't go down that road it's not true that's a statement of unbelief and unacceptance

[18:27] Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and we have people in our pulpits now telling us that's not the case tell you more about it afterwards if you wanted to know God can read human hearts he knows whether we've been washed whether we've been changed whether we've been made ready whether our hearts are being renewed John chapter 2 many in Jerusalem saw the signs that Jesus were performing and believed oh he believed in his name but Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all people he knew what was in each person he can't fool the Lord their faith was external and this intruder represents those who identify with other guests externally a situation

I found in all the churches where I ministered professing Christians associated with the church visibly like Simon Magus who was baptized and joined the group and Peter later had to say you have no part or lot with us repent a situation as I say I found professing Christians associated with people they're among them but not of them say where you are this morning I don't know you are you not only among God's people are you of God's people the presence of the king was no threat to the true hearted wearing the distinctive dress they were in true fellowship both garments both garments and feasts were given and freely received some had nothing of their own they were poor

they were crippled they were blind they were beggars now this morning you're in the church as we say question to answer is are you so far of the church do you really belong are you at home with those who unashamedly identify with the children of

God who name the name of Christ have you honored the command of the king have you got rid of your everyday worldly clothes everyday thinking and an unbelieving mind what is the symbolism of this crucial garment in practical terms before I answer that question a slight digression a concept of heaven that I've discovered is virtually universal is that to get to heaven you have to be good well the goodness God requires of you and me to get into heaven is compared to clothing in the Bible all we have in our personal wardrobe of goodness is the filthiest rags imaginable we don't have anything decent to wear before the king let me read this to you from Isaiah how then can we be saved all of us have become like a person who is unclean and all our righteous acts all of our goodness are like filthy rags psalm 14 says the fool has said in his heart no God they're all corrupt there is none that does good no not one the gospel summarized is believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and receive his righteousness his goodness as a gift he who lived perfectly on the earth he lived a perfectly sinless life and during his days on earth all he ever thought said or did was only pleasing to the father yet he took the wages of our sins he wore our dirty clothes at Calvary he became sin for us who knew no sin he bore our sins in his own body on the tree so you see the great exchange those sins that separated us from God also separated him from God when he bore our sins in the body on the tree and he cried out from the sixth he cried out during that time the sixth hour to the ninth hour my God my God why have you forsaken me imagine that from all eternity God had never forsaken his son but he became sin for us not a sinner he became sin for us the one who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him I hope you see where I'm going in all this that was the penalty he bore the call of the gospel to you and me is change your clothes nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul I to the fountain fly wash me savior ere I die no one can survive in God's presence wearing anything of his own clothed with his own righteousness goodness now I responded to the invitation of the gospel a long time ago 1953 and as time went on and I moved among the guests

[24 : 59] I discovered not judgmentally I discovered that there were gate crashes in the church their lives and their words showed it we read of the eloquent excuses earlier on a practice that comes easy to human lips to make excuses for rejecting the covering that God insists must be acceptable now there may be someone here this morning who isn't a Christian what excuse have you made for not coming to Christ having found yourself in the company of Christians you've realized that you do not share their faith or their convictions being honest God knows your heart well I've got to wrap it up here Isaiah 61

I delight greatly in the Lord my soul rejoices in God and why does he say that because listen he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness the Bible says of believers we are to put on Christ I can't put my jacket on I can't put my top coat on put on Christ the man who pleased God I've got to put him on if any person is in Christ he's a new creation Galatians 3 26 in Christ Jesus you're all the children of God through faith for all who were baptized into Jesus Christ have clothed themselves with Christ you get the picture Christ is the wedding garment he is the wedding garment he's many other things and we're acceptable in him Romans 13 14 clothe clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about gratifying the evil desires of the flesh you were taught with regard to your former life Ephesians says to put off your old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires to be made anew in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness Colossians 3 9 you've put off the old self with its practices and you've put on the new self it's all over the Bible Philippians 3 9 that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from my efforts to keep the rules of behavior but that righteousness which has been given through faith in Christ

Jesus that comes from God on the basis of faith Jeremiah 23 chapter 6 gives a title to God and this is it he's the Lord our righteousness Jehovah Sikken there's an old hymn that's the title that he bears every human being in heaven is a saint you'd expect that and every Christian on earth is a saint because a saint is just a sinner saint by grace you know that God I hope you like white Romans Revelation 7 13 and 14 John asks the question in heaven these dressed in white robes

who are they and where do they come from answer these are they who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb the robes of white linen what does the Bible say about the white linen the white linen is the righteousness of the saints it's a garment without this white linen no one shall see the Lord the same faith by which a person is justified is the faith that sanctifies him well are there any good people here this morning not one not one person in

Wester Hills is good in the absolute sense that the Bible means we are made good only as we are in him and there's coming a day when people think they're alright Lord we went to church even preached Jesus said to them depart from me I never knew you I never knew you and in the absence of the only acceptable wedding garment the command was solemn bind him hand and foot throw him into outer darkness where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth if we would attend the great marriage festival of the king's son called the marriage supper of the lamb which is in the future we must die clothed with

[30 : 59] Christ otherwise we die in our sins Charles Wesley has written some great hymns one song not so often he says in Christ accepted and brought near and clothed in righteousness divine I see the path to life made clear and all your merits Lord are mine death hell and sin are now subdued all grace is now to sinners given and so I plead the atoning blood and by your gift receive your heaven we're going to die one day or we're Christians we'll be raptured when the Lord comes again soon there's a song that I used to enjoy the London

Emmanuel choir singing it's this when he shall come resplendent in his glory to take his own from out of this veil of night oh may I know the joy of his appearing only at morn to walk with him in white when I shall stand within the court of heaven where white robed pilgrims pass before my sight earth smarted saints and blood cleansed overcomers these then are they who walk with him in white when he shall call from earth's remotest corners all who have stood triumphant in his might oh to be worthy them to stand beside them and on that morn to walk with him in white a wedding garment that only

Christ under God can give you I hope we're all in Christ this morning but it would be foolish presumption to say that we all are you know your own heart and we're going to sing a closing hymn and we're going to sing about Jesus blood and his righteousness my glorious dress so we'll sing it together for