

How to Dress For a Wedding

The Bible uses banquet imagery
To symbolize the kingdom of heaven.

A superb feast with all the trimmings
Where all are invited and all have a place.

It's beautiful symbolism.

One finds this imagery throughout Bible
But most notably in the Psalms, Isaiah
And the Book of Revelation.

Jesus uses this imagery in a couple of his parables
Including the parable before us today.

Luke and Matthew both record this parable from Jesus.

Most of time the imagery of a feast
Produces a warm fuzzy feeling of heaven.

Not this one.

It has a dark and sinister feel to it.

Today the children's story followed
The more positive version from Luke.

And I get to preach the more negative version from Matthew.
A king prepares a wedding banquet for his son.

He sends out his servants to invite guests.

They refuse.

The king gets angry and sends more servants out.

How to Dress For a Wedding

They still refuse.

And not only . . .

They mistreat and kill the servants.

The king is furious.

He sends out his army

Kills the invited guests

And burns their city to the ground.

Then he turns and tells his remaining servants

To go out and invite “everybody else.”

And guess what?

The wedding hall is full!

Well . . . duh.

Who wouldn't come after that display of anger?

Would you snub the king and risk getting killed?

I'd be first in line!

So everyone that hasn't already been killed is there.

The king strolls down the aisles

Looking for praise and approval

While the guests are there eating food

That had been previously prepared for others

Who had just been murdered.

The guests are stumbling all over themselves

Trying to praise the king.

How to Dress For a Wedding

Except one poor fellow.

Maybe he didn't get the note on appropriate attire.

You've seen that sort at weddings
Dressed in shorts and flip-flops!

The king picks him out of the crowd
Calls him "friend"
(The first sign the man is in serious doo-doo).

And asks him why he isn't dress in a tuxedo.

The king then has his servants bind him, hand and foot
And throw him out into the darkness
Where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus ends his parable with the words
"For many are invited but only a few are chosen."

The only chosen one here, as I see it
Was the poor guy dressed in beach clothes.

This king is quite the thing!

This is power gone off its meds!

If this is such as the kingdom of heaven
As Jesus says in the beginning of the lesson.

Then we enter the kingdom through fear and intimidation
Rather than through the love and grace of God!

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Obviously, this is a super-exaggerated allegory, hyperbole!

Most commentators suggests the parable

How to Dress For a Wedding

Relates to the great eschatological (end-time) feast.
The author of Revelation mentions in

Revelation 19:9 (CEV) Then the angel told me, “Put this in writing. God will bless everyone who is invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”

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Okay, so this is a parable of the history
Of God’s work of redemption.

Israel rejects God’s grace in Jesus
Like the initial guests who reject
The initial wedding invitation.

The king gets annoyed and burns down their city
Probably alluding to the destruction of Jerusalem.
He then tells his servants,
To go out and invite anyone and everyone,
So that his wedding hall is filled.

Most understand the others to be the Gentiles,
Everyone else who isn’t from Israel.

And the hall is filled as to the king’s request.

All well and good
An open invitation to all peoples everywhere
To the joyful wedding feast.

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But then we get to the unfortunate fellow
Dressed in his Hawaiian shirt
Shorts and flip-flops?

He comes along in with the others
But he’s dressed for a destination wedding
Not a formal banquet-type of wedding.

How to Dress For a Wedding

And God, the king, throws him into eternal darkness???

Well, yes, it appears so.

Wow! So how in the world are we supposed to interpret this?

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The wedding garment must symbolize something!

There are many passages in the Scriptures
That correlate clothing with virtue.

Job 29:14 (CEV) Kindness and justice were my coat and hat.

Revelation 19:8 (CEV) She will be given a wedding dress made of pure and shining linen. This linen stands for the good things God's people have done.

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The wedding garment, then, symbolizes
Good things done by God's good people.

The lack of proper attire, then, could mean the opposite
Bad things done by seemingly good people.

Jesus alludes to this in a statement just before our parable.

Matthew 21:43 (NIV) Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

It seems certain then, that there will be a time and place
Where all people will be judged for their actions.

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So how do you dress for a wedding?

How to Dress For a Wedding

You don't come dressed like knights in shining armor
 To save Jerusalem from the heathens
 As in the Crusades

Slaughtering men, women, and children
 In the name of Jesus!

President Barak Obama during a speech made
 At a National Prayer Breakfast in February of 2015

Called on people of faith to reject those
 Who use religion to justify evil – and in doing so –

Reminded people about the terrible things
 Done in the name of Jesus Christ.

"Lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ," the president said. "In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ."

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You certainly don't dress in Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes
 And then later in the dark of night
 Exchange them for a pointed white sheet.

You don't dress in clergy vestments
 And listen to the intimate confessions of a nun

And then in after hours and "cloaked" in secrecy
 Go and sexually abuse her.

The king in our parable
 Will toss you out into the darkness

How to Dress For a Wedding

Where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

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So, then, how do you dress for a wedding?

Paul says it succinctly in Colossians.

Colossians 3:12 (NIV)

¹² **Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

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In the devotion, *Bread for the Journey*

The late Henri Nouwen writes,

Being a believer means being clothed in Christ. Paul says: "Every one of you that has been baptized has been clothed in Christ" (Galatians 3:26) and "Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14).

This being "clothed in Christ" is much more than wearing a cloak that covers our misery. It refers to a total transformation that allows us to say with Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Thus, we are the living Christ in the world. Jesus, who is God-made-flesh, continues to reveal himself in our own flesh. Indeed, true salvation is becoming Christ.

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Imitating Christ in the world

Is not simply wearing something

That might convinced others we follow Jesus

Whether it be priestly vestments

A Brethren prayer covering

Or a tattoo of a Bible passage.

How to Dress For a Wedding

How will the world know we are Christian? By our love.

One of the founders of our faith

When asked how will the Brethren be known?

Alexander Mack, Sr. answered

“By the manner of our living”

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Come to the wedding feast prepared for you.

Come, your place at the table has been set.

Come dressed in your finest clothes

To celebrate the feast of salvation.

Come, desiring to change from filthy garments

Into the garments prepared for you.

Colossians 3:12-14 (MSG) So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.