

October 9, 2011 Matthew 22:1-14 Notes “Dress Codes”

Prayer

How do we follow the words of the Apostle Paul in our reading from Phil. 4 to rejoice in the Lord when an invited guest of the king in our parable from Matthew, who’s wearing the wrong clothes, gets cast into the outer darkness? (*idea – Pastor Mary Anderson*)

You wear the wrong thing and suddenly there’s gnashing of teeth? What’s going on?

Talk about dress codes at certain events (*Gracia Grindall, “Dress Codes” in Christian Century 2002*)

Schools – no advertisements of alcohol or tobacco

Youth trips/events – specific rules on what’s appropriate and decent

Celebrity weddings – on invitations, all guests must wear specific color, style, etc.

Eating at a tie and jacket kinda’ place – if don’t have it, one will be provided – standards

Even David’s grandmother, very proper, was kicked out of one of her regular restaurants b/c she showed up in her golf shorts (not allowed)

Story from several years ago that was recently in the news again about group of young women who met the President – were well-dressed, fashionable, but focus was on the fact that most of them were wearing flip flops (now, most people wear them – it’s become a part of the fashion culture)

What about you? Can you think of a time when a “dress code” situation arose in your life – for good or bad? What do you think about dress codes? Are they helpful, appropriate, or just another thing to worry about?

Dress codes can be confusing – depend on place, people, who sets the rules and what’s considered important

Sometimes even churches have unwritten rules about dress codes. Ties or jeans – or both – what do you feel comfortable with/in or where do you feel welcomed? When I was pregnant and leading worship – didn’t fit into my pastoral collar shirts; felt like a billowing bell wearing my pastor’s robe – yet, didn’t feel like a dress code barred me from what I was doing – welcomed anyway.

Dress codes are somewhat important though b/c even when Adam and Eve were to leave the garden – what did God do first? God dressed them! (Gen. 3:21)

We get to the parable of the wedding banquet. Now, this is the third parable in a series where we find Jesus continuing to talk to the same group of people – they must not understand what he’s saying (or just don’t want to understand), so he gives them another parable. Another parable that at least has to be rated PG-13 b/c it also includes violence. A parable that still makes us ponder what Jesus’ point is that he’s trying to get across to his listeners!

After those who are invited don’t come and even react in violence, those from the main street are invited – everyone – good or bad – to fill the wedding hall.

The king comes in and focuses on one guest, a man not wearing a wedding robe – which is the dress code, the custom for weddings. He confronts the man and reacts harshly to him. How does the king's reaction to the man w/o wedding clothes make you feel? Do you wonder why he's so angry at him? He was invited at the last minute! Maybe he didn't have the correct clothing? Maybe he didn't have time to go back and change? Maybe he thought it was better to go even if he didn't know the king's son? As listeners to the story, we want to make excuses for the man and defend him from the tirade of the king, but there's more to the story than what we hear. If a guest of the king couldn't find suitable clothing, the king would provide something to wear (1 Sam 18:4; Esther 6:8; Rev 19:7-9)! All of the people that are invited to the wedding – good or bad – were offered wedding garments by the king! Did this man reject the clothing that the king offered to him?

Does that change how you feel about the parable? About the king? The man?

“Many are called, but few are chosen.”

God knows us and STILL invites us and chooses to clothe us! God hands over Christ, his son, to us and clothes us in what we cannot get on our own!

We come to the banquet – to God's feast – in response to the gracious, unmerited invitation of Christ.

Some may say no and go about their usual business. Others may come in, but reject the clothes that God gives out.

I can't tell you why some people don't accept what God gives and hands to all of us – I wish I knew, but what I do know is that even though we are all undeserving, just as Adam and Eve were when they left the garden, God clothes us in the grace of God!

The invitation is extended from God.

Christ is calling us to new life right here and right now.

It's time to stop wearing the same old stuff and follow God's dress code and wear the party clothes of grace handed to you.

Will you join the celebration? Who else needs to know they are invited?