

To God Alone Be The Glory

Well, I must say, that does not sound like a very pleasant sermon text for Thanksgiving! Where's the joy? Where's the giving of thanks? I doubt this fellow who was thrown outside was giving thanks. It's cold out there today! *If this text is about Thanksgiving, where's the turkey? Where's the meal? Didn't the king throw a banquet? One of his children is getting married. This just doesn't seem very much like a good Thanksgiving sermon text at all. Maybe not at first glance. But the more you think about it...

What we have here, friends, is the tail end of Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet. You remember the story, don't you? The king's son is getting married. So he sends out invitations. But the guests refuse to come. The king re-sends the couriers with repeat invitations. But the invited guests pay no attention: some go off to their fields and businesses, others take the king's couriers, mistreat them, and kill them. If you were the king, what would you do? The king in Jesus' story sent out his soldiers and destroyed those insolent murderers.

But the king still had a problem. His son was getting married, and there were no guests to share his joy. So he sent his servants out to the grocery stores

and the fitness centers and the coffee shops and the sportsmans clubs to invite anyone they found, even criminals and homeless people—it didn't matter to the king. He wanted everyone to come to the wedding banquet and share in the happiness of the day.

But the hour was late. The people did not have had time to go home and change their clothes before the wedding banquet. The feast was now. "Come as you are. Just come." It didn't matter to the king what anyone wore because he had a solution. He intended all along to give each guest a specially made change of clothes just right for a wedding feast. Everyone who arrived got new clothing. "It's beginning to sound a lot like Thanksgiving."

Everyone was sitting at the table, eating and talking. It was quite a din. That's when the king walked in to the banquet hall to interact with all the people who were sharing in his joy. As he looked around, he spotted this yahoo who had refused to put on the special wedding clothes the king had provided. The nerve of the guy! When the king gives you clothes, you put them on. That's how you honor the giver. The king's garment was designed to go right over the street clothes you came in. But not this fellow! "I'm good enough just the way I am. It's tyranny for the king to insist I wear his clothes. He's just trying

to make himself look good anyway, and I'll have none of that. I don't like authority, and I don't appreciate those who wield it." Again I ask you, if you were the king, what would you do? Well, you heard what this king did. He confronted the insolent man, who, of course, had nothing to say. The guy knew he was in the wrong. He learned the hard way that authority is a real thing, and you never get away with showing disrespect for authority, not forever. The king had him tied up and thrown out into the darkness, the outer darkness, so far from the light that he wouldn't be able to see any light. *Can you imagine being that person, knowing that the king had given you every opportunity to share in his joy, but you were so stubborn you wouldn't go along with the plan? Weeping and gnashing of teeth isn't a very pleasant thought, is it?

Ok so how does all this apply to our Thanksgiving festivities? You've probably figured out that the parable is about God the Father inviting us to share in the joy of the wedding banquet of His Son, our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ, the one we just celebrated last Sunday, Christ the King! Those who initially paid no attention to the invitation are a picture of everyone who makes excuses not to feed their faith on God's Word. They've got somewhere else to be, or they worked so hard this

week that now they need to rest, and they don't intend to tune in to the worship video later on. It never seems to occur to them how important the Bible is for a life full of blessings now and eternal life to come. They just keep on ignoring the invitations.

Now those who get invited at the last minute—that's a picture of you and me. We thought we were going out to buy groceries or get coffee or get a workout, but our heavenly King gave us a much better offer: eternal happiness in his presence. He even went to the trouble of supplying what we needed in order to look right for the wedding banquet.

Will you take a few moments to examine with me the set of clothes our Lord has provided to us? You are wearing the garment right now, by the way. Close your eyes and feel the garment. Oh my! What fabric! You can even feel the individual threads that make up the fabric. Uh-huh, there's the thread of faith. It runs all through the garment. The thread of faith in Jesus keeps this garment perpetually clean and looking new—just the way our Father in heaven likes us to look. Faith has laid hold of Jesus' life and death, making them what God sees when he looks at us. He's the reason we are ready for the Wedding Feast at the end of time. And if you think about it, he's the best reason for us to be thankful this holiday.

Consider faith by way of some history. Years ago a widower of great wealth died. He had no heirs, and he left no will. His son, who had worked with him, was killed in an accident some years earlier. The man's friends were amazed that the wealthy man left no will, because he was always so thorough in his planning. Several of his employees who had worked personally with him were invited to come to his office to see if there was some personal item they might want as a remembrance of him. The last one to be consulted was the woman who had served him as his personal secretary for many years. When she was asked if there was anything she might like, she replied that she couldn't think of anything in particular, and she left. But in a moment she returned to say, "There is one thing. I would like that painting of his son." When they took the painting from the wall, an envelope was discovered taped to the back. It was the man's last will and testament. It said, "The person who takes my son receives my fortune."

That's God's message to us in his last will and testament, the New Testament. To receive God's Son in faith is to receive his "fortune," his blessing in our lives now, and the blessing of eternal life to come. The threads of faith woven into the wedding garment leads

us to enjoy 'today' in a godly way, to look forward to our future under God, and not to worry how the Lord will provide for all our needs.

Ooh, there's another thread in our garment. Feel it. What is that? Do you know what it is? It's hope. We need hope, especially when we have all our plans set, and then God decides to change our plans. That's probably a blessing in disguise because too often we lay great plans with earthly goals, and we don't think about setting spiritual goals, or we don't say, "If it be your will, O Lord, I would like to do this." Earthly plans and earthly life, as good as they can be, have something in common with the toilet: they can be flushed at any time. Then where do we turn? Hopefully we turn to our Lord and his promises for this life and the next. That's what hope holds on to. Hope is one of the threads in your wedding garment from the king. Hope in the Lord is what allows us to look up from our earthly troubles and enjoy Thanksgiving Day as a tiny taste of the banquet of joy awaiting us in heaven.

There's a third thread in your wedding garment. Do you feel it? No, it's a little to the left of where your finger is. There! Do you feel it now? That's the thread of love, God's love for you. If you want to know whether God loves you, feel for this thread in your

wedding garment. Don't look at how well your life is going. Too many people make that mistake: "I know God loves me because life is going well for me right now." Does that mean God hates you if your life takes a bump? Come on! When you want evidence of God's love, look to the cross. Did he let his own Son die in your place? And look to the tomb. Did God raise his Son from the dead so you could rise too? That's love! "What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul. What wondrous love is this, O my soul."

This wedding garment God gave you has brought about a change in you. Did you notice? This story may help you see what I mean. A mountain man from the back hills was brought to New York City by a TV network that was doing a documentary on life in the backwoods. The man gawked and gaped in amazement at all the things he had never seen before because he had no TV and had not traveled. He watched with interest as a little old lady entered an elevator in the lobby of the RCA building. The door closed, the light blinked, and she was gone. He stared at the elevator's door for a time, trying to figure it out, when suddenly, ding, it opened again. Talk about a complete change! His eyes bugged out: there stood a gorgeous young woman. "Ya just can't beat science," he drawled. "If I'd a known about that contraption I'd

a brung my old lady along." *The wedding garment from God has brought about an even greater change in us. We went into the elevator dressed in our sins. The door closed, the light blinked, Jesus died on the cross, and our sins were gone. When the door opened again, out came a wonderfully dressed you, wearing as your garment all the good deeds Jesus did in his life. Now you are ready for the wedding feast at the end of time. You are also ready to celebrate a godly Thanksgiving. You are wearing APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR THE FEAST.

If things turn ugly during your Thanksgiving Day celebration—let's say you speak unloving words to someone with you, or you speak angry words into your empty home because the virus is keeping you apart from your loved ones, or let's say you soil your wedding garment from God with other sins, old or new. Just grab your sinful flesh and drag it back into the elevator for another change. The only ones who get thrown into outer darkness are those who refuse to wear the gift of Christ's perfect life as their wedding garment. Every time you approach the king and ask him for a clean garment, you'll always be given fresh threads so you can wear APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR THE FEAST.