

“Dressed in Righteousness!”—Isaiah 61:10

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Dressed in Righteousness!”, is Isaiah 61:10 → *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Wouldn't it be great if you were right all the time? Arguments would disappear since whomever you encounter would have to think your way because you are always right. Every task you do would be right, even those tasks shared with others who will gladly follow your instructions because you're completely right! Problem is, if you ever think you're wrong . . . you're then as well! However, the quest to be right all the time is natural since you were created to be right all the time! Yes, you heard me right! You were created to be right all the time!

Let's review what we prayed together in the Collect of the Day on your worship insert. “O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us.” God created human beings with the intention of them being perfect and righteous at all times. It continues: “And in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature.” When God took on human form in Jesus as the babe of Bethlehem, He did so to restore your original righteousness which Adam and Eve lost when they fell into sin, throwing all of us into unrighteousness. In order to experience God's original intent for you to be right with Him forever and always, your human nature needs restoration —a restoration **which only He can accomplish for you!** Thus, Christmas and His incarnation!

Because you were born unrighteous it is only natural to think of your human nature as bad, so corrupted by sin as it is. Unlike Adam and Eve who had the privilege of knowing righteousness before experiencing unrighteousness, we have only known unrighteousness because we were conceived in original sin. The corruption is so bad that Isaiah 64:6 tells us *all our **righteous deeds** are like a polluted garment* in His sight. Even the “righteous” things you do are tainted, stained and polluted by sin! It is easy to believe that you are a “lost cause.”

However, the human nature which the LORD created is not bad and you are not a “lost cause.” You are a lost soul whom He finds in His grace by taking on human flesh in Jesus to restore your human nature to its original righteous! This is the message of Christmas as well as the promise in our text.

Isaiah says that we have reason to **greatly rejoice in the LORD** our Savior because He has “dressed us” in a special way. This dress consists of *the garments of salvation and . . . the robe of righteousness.* When the LORD “clothes” you with these *garments* and *robe* it happens in His special way! It is His doing!

This “clothing” depicts being changed from an old way of life to a new way of life which results in your rejoicing **greatly** because of the **righteousness of Christ**, not your own righteousness! Scripture makes it very clear that this *salvation* and *righteousness* will be the LORD's doing. He will make it happen based on His faithful promises! Isaiah 61:11 says *the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.* The *righteousness and praise* which the LORD desires for all humankind will “shine” or show forth in the unique behavior of His restored people!

Clothing is used many times in the Scripture to describe or depict a person's total commitment to the Lord. For example, instead of living in sinful, evil ways, Romans 13:14 tells you to *clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* (NIV) Being “clothed” with Christ pictures the desire to obey Him in your actions and words constantly. Look at the Collect of the Day again. Because our human nature has been restored in the righteousness of Christ we ask God to “grant that we may ever be **alive in Him** who made Himself to be like us.”

Throughout this section of Isaiah's preaching He is describing the LORD establishing an intimate marriage relationship with people as His delight! This happens as the Holy Spirit works faith, praise and obedience through them by "clothing" them in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:27 says that *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. You were clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ in your baptism, given a whole new identity with a whole new name—"Christian," which means "belonging to Christ." As you continue trusting in the salvation and righteousness of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you will have reason to rejoice greatly!!

Even while dressed in *the garments of salvation and . . . the robe of righteousness*, we still struggle with the presence of sin, sinful worldly influences and devil this side of the final restoration of all things on the Last Day. In an effort to "deal" with our sins, too often we fall into the sin of depending upon our own "right" acts to straighten out our lives and make up for the wrongs we've done. Any "right" acts on your part cannot satisfy the demands of sin. Satisfaction for sin must be found elsewhere.

Such delusions of "self-righteousness" leads us to think we are always "right" and lose sight of He Who is righteous. We make self-righteous rather than Christ-righteous judgments of others. It even leads one to think he knows the unseen and can make judgments about a person's heart and motives and, if not verbally then mentally, point out the hypocrites! Such self-righteousness finds its ultimate danger point when a person is told of his being wrong in his sin, needing to repent and receive the forgiveness accomplished by Jesus, and then respond by refusing to believe it. "I'm right and you're wrong!" Refusal to trust in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, leads to eternal damnation in hell.

You can never right a wrong. Instead, you must depend upon the *righteousness of Christ* to wipe out the wrong forever and trust in Him to "cloth" you with His protective *righteousness*! Being dressed in His righteousness means that you trust in His righteous obedience under God's Law **for you**; that you trust in His righteous sacrifice on the cross to satisfy all that is necessary for the forgiveness of your sin; that your new identity is evident for all to see as it shines forth in praise and joy in Christ!

Being "dressed" in *righteousness* means that the LORD looks at us sinners as "right" with Him or "worthy" in His sight **totally because of Christ Jesus!** Romans 3:22-24 describes it as *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe*. *For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. You are declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ—the Righteous One! The focus is on Christ.

Because you have been declared *righteous* through faith in the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ you can rejoice and live Christ's *righteousness* in your daily life and dealings with others! Christ's righteous humility is the "clothing" you wear as you deal with your own sin, coming to Him in humble repentance and faith. Christ's forgiveness becomes your "fashion" as you deal with forgiving sinners daily! Christ's righteous obedience to God's Law is your "dress" as you desire to live for and serve Him everyday. Your human nature has been graciously restored in the incarnation and the righteous life, death and resurrection of the God-Man Jesus Christ **for you!**

Take out your worship insert again. Let's pray together the Collect of the Day as those dressed in *the garments of salvation and . . . the robe of righteousness* in Christ.

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.