

Sermon Title: Choosing the Right Clothes, April 5, 2015 (Scripture is from ESV)

Introduction

Happy Easter, Sillim. It's a blessing to be able to preach to you all today.

After becoming campus pastors here at Sillim there was one particular past sermon of mine that I felt I needed to share here, and it's actually a sermon from over four years ago. After counseling different leaders and members there has been a common theme among our church. And so while I'm going to re-preach a past message, you all are going to get the upgraded version. I'm a much better preacher now than I was back in 2011 and I've tweaked the message quite a bit. The title of today's sermon is, "Choosing the Right Clothes."

In my past Sillim services I've shared personal testimonies like my how Sky and I fell in love and how God led me to serve the orphans of Korea. I'm going to start this sermon with another powerful testimony... regarding... my clothes.

Clothes were always a source of trauma for me in the past because I am slightly colorblind and I have no idea how to match colors. My mom would buy clothes for me as I grew up and I absolutely loved the baggy clothes era. I loved it so much that I kept wearing baggy clothes long after I moved to Korea in 2005. I never bought new clothes. Since I was no longer living with my family, I just kept wearing the same shirts and pants that I had always had. If you look through my old Facebook pictures you'll see the same clothes through the years, expect for a few new shirts that people got me here in Korea.

Easter is a holiday celebrating new beginnings and is meant to be a day where we are freed from our past and our shame, so I'm going to share some old pictures with you guys so you can see how God has redeemed me.

SLIDESHOW: Slides 1 – 6

Until I dated Sky, I never realized just how important clothes are. And I really mean that. The fashion world has often been written off as materialistic and filled with lust, but the truth is that God was the true creator of fashion. God made the first clothes for Adam and Eve. God was very clear and detailed about the clothes of the priests and the high priest. Jesus Himself wore such a nice linen garment that the soldiers divided up His clothes before they crucified Him. And whenever prophets in the Bible speak of visions of God they almost always describe what God or Jesus is wearing, and it is always pure and awesome, fitting for the king of kings. Clothes are very important to God.

Clothes usually symbolize a person's identity. Joseph had the coat of many colors and knew he was favored. The priest has his priestly garments. The king has his kingly garments. The prisoner has his prison garments. The soldier has his armor. The leper or beggar has his rags. What you are wearing tends to represent what type of person you are.

So my question for you all today is: What type of clothes are you wearing? More specifically, what clothes are you wearing in the spiritual realm?

Please open your Bibles to Isaiah 59:6. In this chapter Isaiah is prophesying a rebuke to the people for how their sins have separated them from God.

Isaiah 59:6 – Their webs will not serve as clothing; men will not cover themselves with what they make. Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands.

I want you to highlight the line, “Men will not cover themselves with what they make.” I think the New King James Version says it even better...

Isaiah 59:6 (NKJV) – Their webs will not become garments, *nor will they cover themselves with their works.*

In other words, our works here on earth won't be able to cover us when we are in front of God. I am going to hammer this point home tonight. Just listen.

Turn a few pages to Isaiah 64, verse 6...

Isaiah 64:6 – We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. I think you have all heard that verse before, but I want it to sink in tonight. So many of us try and justify ourselves before God and before men by our works. We try and clothe ourselves with our works. If we are doing well, then we walk like we are clothed like kings. But when we are struggling or have fallen into sin, we walk with our heads down like we are clothed in rags like lepers. But the truth is, all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. **ALL OUR WORKS** are like a polluted garment before God. **The salvations as a result of your evangelism, the healings as a result of your prayers, the love, time and effort serving the poor and oppressed... none of that is clothing that will justify your standing before God.** In fact, if those are the clothes you are wearing, God considers you filthy.

There is a natural inclination within us to identify ourselves by our works. And for most of our generation, if we are not doing something we consider extraordinary, then we feel insecure and even worthless. **We are the fast food generation and tend to expect quick results. So if we aren't achieving our dreams or making a huge impact or at least doing things right, then we tend to feel like we are disappointments.** We are encouraged to dream big, but when we don't see much happening in the present we tend to throw away the dreams and perhaps even feel like we failed them. But along with this mindset, if we end up succeeding and achieving our dreams our self-worth explodes and a feeling of self-righteousness can step in. The thoughts, “Now I'm really being used by God, now I've really arrived, God really loves me!” can seep in. But God addresses this mindset in His letter to the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3...

Slide 8

Revelation 3:17-18 – For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

In this letter Jesus speaks of the works of this church, and then calls them naked and shameful before Him. Obviously this church is unaware of their lack of clothes, their nakedness, in the spiritual realm.

Clothes and their importance are found throughout Scripture. In Matthew 22 Jesus shares the parable of the wedding feast. The king has gathered all the people and filled his wedding hall. We know that this is a parable speaking of God's kingdom.

Matthew 22:11-14 – But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, “Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called, but few are chosen.

Whew! Are you convinced yet that clothes matter to God? Here God calls the guy, “Friend” and then has the guy tied up and cast out because he wasn't wearing wedding clothes. No mercy!

So if clothes matter so much to God, then what is He wanting us to wear? What can we do to get the wedding garments that will allow us to be in God's kingdom? What is God calling us to be clothed with?

The answer is simple: grace. **God is calling us to be clothed in His grace.** His grace is the wedding garment we are to wear in heaven. No matter how great the works we do here on earth, before God's majesty they are but filthy rags. We can only enter His presence if we are clothed in the garments of grace purchased by Jesus' blood on the Cross.

Adam and Eve tried to clothe themselves with fig leaves after they sinned. One of the symbols of the fig tree is our quiet time with God. It was under the fig tree that the Pharisees and the students of God's Word would study. But Adam and Even knew they were still naked despite their garment of fig leaves. They knew they still couldn't be in His presence. No acts, no matter how “righteous” they may seem, can clothe us before God.

So what do we do? How do we clothe ourselves apart from our works? How do we learn to be clothed in God's grace? Are you ready for the answer? Here is the main point of this message... **“Relax and rest before Him.”** Relax and rest before Him!!!

Isaiah 30:15 – In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

It's when we relax that we stop squirming and can let God clothe us.

Isaiah 61:10a – 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.

We only get our garments of salvation from God and only He can clothe us with them. Adam and Eve couldn't clothe themselves with their fig leaves. Instead we read that God made garments for them and clothed them Himself. Adam and Eve did nothing to clothe themselves before God. God took care of them.

Leviticus 8 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. It is the chapter of the ordination of the first high priest, Aaron, and his sons. Do you know how Aaron was ordained as the great high priest over Israel? If you read Leviticus 8 the steps go like this... Aaron is brought forward by Moses and Moses washes him with water and then clothes him with his garments. Aaron just stands there, naked, as his brother Moses washes him and then clothes him. Next

Moses takes anointing oil and pours it over Aaron. Aaron isn't allowed to do anything but stand there. Next Moses slaughters a bull as an offering on behalf of Aaron and anoints Aaron with the blood from the offering. Aaron continues to just stand there. This process of making offerings on behalf of Aaron and anointing Aaron continues. And Aaron continues to stand there. Once Moses is finally done, his instructions to Aaron are to stay inside the tent of meeting for seven days and not do anything but eat and enjoy the meat from the offerings made on his behalf. If Aaron leaves the Tabernacle he will die. So he must just stay in there and not do any work for seven days, then he can be considered worthy to serve the people.

What do you think God was trying to hammer home through this process? “Aaron, you are high priest not because you have done anything to merit the position, you are only high priest because of my grace. I washed you. I clothed you. I anointed you. I set you apart. **And if for a moment you think it was because of your works, then you're going to die, Aaron, you're going to die.** You got it?”

If for a moment you think because of your works your identity is secure before God, then you are in danger of death. You have completely missed how we receive true salvation. Let me read Isaiah 30:15 again...

Isaiah 30:15 – In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

Often we hear the commands, “Rest before the Lord” and so we try and slow down for a moment and rest. But what usually happens is after a few moments we become restless and begin thinking of all that we could be doing. And so we stop resting and get busy again. Now I am not saying doing works and being active for God is bad, not in the least bit, but what I am calling out is the heart behind the works. Are we stressed? Are we burdened? **Do we feel if we fail to follow through that something is going to fall apart? Do we fear that God will think less of us if we mess up?** Even rest itself can be work if we are doing it to earn God's approval. Instead it must be backward: we are able to rest because God already approves of us, **no matter what.** God approves of us! God demonstrates His own love in this, while we still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)!

Let's think about two of the most important people in the New Testament other than Jesus... Peter made the most mistakes of any of the disciples. He was rebuked by Jesus a number of times and Jesus even expressed at one point that He knew Peter would deny Him three times. That is pretty harsh when you think about it. Imagine if a friend told you, “I know you are going to fail me in my greatest time of need. And you're not just going to fail me once, you're going to fail me three times.” Such a statement would make you wonder whether your friend loves you or believes in you. But despite Peter's numerous mistakes and despite his denials of Jesus, Jesus still chose to make him the leader of the church. Jesus made this poor, uneducated, fisherman the leader of His church. Jesus gave *this man* the keys of the kingdom of heaven!

And who was the other great leader of the early church? Only one of the worst persecutors known to the early church: Saul, who would later be called the apostle Paul. Saul was a man who thought he had it all right. He had the best education. He loved God and was super zealous for Him. Saul was so zealous for God that he began imprisoning, persecuting, and even executing Christians who he felt God was displeased with. Only Saul was completely off. Despite all his education and religious acts, he was completely outside of God's plan. So God had to appear before Saul and reveal Himself in such a powerful way that Saul became

blind from God's light. Saul had been in such darkness that upon finally seeing Jesus his eyes couldn't handle the light. Yet despite Saul's failures, God chose him to be a mighty apostle in his name. God didn't penalize him for his past mistakes. And Paul didn't let his past mistakes hinder him.

Peter and Paul are both great examples that while we might make great mistakes before God, we are still chosen, loved, and called by Him. **Peter and Paul are both great examples that we cannot fail. We cannot fail!** There are no failures in life, only lessons. While we may make mistakes, we are not judged by our mistakes. We are judged by grace. God chose sinners, not perfect people. We can only come before Him if we let Him clothe us with grace. Grace is white. It is pure. It is clean. It is stainless. It is perfect. There are no blemishes to it.

Towards the end of Ezekiel there are a number of chapters referring to the end times and the new temple that will be built. Ezekiel 44 lists the rules for the priests, those who will come before God to minister to Him...

Ezekiel 33:17-18 – When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen garments. They shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen turbans on their heads, and linen undergarments around their waists. They shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat.

These linen garments represented grace. These were the same garments that the High Priest would wear once a year when he would approach God on the Day of Atonement. Jesus was wearing this same garment when He was about to be crucified. Jesus' garment was so precious that rather than tearing it, the soldiers cast lots for who would get it. This garment represented grace not just because it was white and pure, but because it was cool and comfortable and would not produce sweat. What does sweat represent? Exertion, effort, work. Our approach to God should never be exhausting. It should never be painful, or filled with fear or worry or stress. Rather, we should approach the throne of God with confidence that we are justified by the blood of Jesus, both now and forever!

What's beautiful about the passage of Ezekiel is that it no longer refers to just the High Priest, but to a group of priests chosen to approach God. In 1Peter 2:9 we read that we, as believers, are all a chosen people and a royal priesthood. We are all priests before the Lord! And so in the Spirit we are all clothed in this beautiful white garment of grace. While we may be individuals with different personalities and gifts, we all possess the same acceptance before God by His grace. And through this grace we are able to relate to each other.

March Madness

For this Sillim campus, the month of March was a very trying month for many of us. A number of leaders endured some really tough things: surgery, car accident, miscarriage, kidney stone, and a number of other things. Sky and I did more hospital visits last month than we have in all our years of ministry. In response to all the tough things happening, I called a corporate fast for the leaders of the church, not just to pray for those hurting but to also pray for our church as a whole. And God's grace moved powerfully as a result of the prayers of the church! Jay who was hit by a car just two weeks ago and was feared to be in the hospital for a long time is with us today. Other leaders who had been struggling with heavy burdens or pain felt these burdens and pain lifted in a tangible way after opening up to the leaders. Before they had been trying to carry their burden on their own and had been struggling. But once it was brought to the open, grace abounded!

And why did grace abound? Because we were covering each other. Those hurting were no longer alone, cold, and suffering. They were covered.

When my wife is cold, I take off my jacket and give it to her to keep her warm. When a friend stains his shirt really bad, I give him one to wear the rest of the night. When a young girl came to the orphanage on Christmas Eve with only one pair of clothes because of abandonment I went and bought her a couple new outfits as a Christmas gift to her. That's what love is. That's what a loving community does for each other. We cover each other. **We make sure each other is clothed, warm, unashamed, honored, and accepted.** When someone is going through a hard time and is struggling to feel God's grace, we lean in and extend God's grace to them.

We can't cover ourselves. Only God can. And when we can't feel God covering us, that's when we go to the church, God's hands and feet, to tangibly feel His covering. We are never alone. Some of you who have been struggling, you need to stop trying to figure things out on your own and go to your leaders to share and to receive prayer. Do not hold things in by yourself. Let grace abound!

***Invite praise team up

A few months ago I preached about how family is God's greatest weapon. I shared that just before Jesus was crucified His number one prayer request for the church was that we would be one with God and with each other just as Jesus is one with the Father. In other words, Jesus' number one prayer before He died was that we would be family with God and with each other just as Jesus and the Father are family. As we celebrate Easter today I want to honor His prayer by letting the family of God do what we are called to do, cover each other.

*Invite up people who are struggling with striving and feeling accepted by God, let leaders speak grace over them

Lead prayer against a self-condemning spirit (speak to Sillim like Pastor Daniels spoke to me)

Sillim is called to be a fashionable church. Perhaps not so much in the physical, but in the spiritual realm, we are all outright amazing.

Luke 15:22 – But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.’ The ring represented identity and authority. Slaves were barefoot but sons wore shoes.

Luke 24:49 – And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.