

“THE KING HAS YOU COVERED!!”

The 18th Sunday after Pentecost—A

PR. 23, Lectionary 28

October 12, 2014

Peace Lutheran, Grass Valley, CA

Pastor Tom Miller

JOKE:

The grandson was visiting his Grandma. “Grandma,” asked the child, “do you know how you and Grandpa and God are alike?”

Grandma mentally polished her halo, and then asked, “No, how are we alike?”

“You’re all old,” said the child.

TEACHING POINTS:

1. Stolen Oscars and a new tux.
2. Pentecost “kingdom” language paints a picture of heaven—a wedding banquet.
3. There is a “dress code”, but the King has you covered—when you’re willing to accept the King’s garment.
4. The King has you covered with the garment of salvation, the life preserver, Jesus Christ.
5. What can I do?
 - a. Listen for the invitation.
 - b. Examine life.
 - c. Let God reshape life with the King’s cover of grace.

MESSAGE:

You may remember this story. Or, you may not. Back in March 2000 fifty or so of the Academy Awards Oscar statues were stolen. The cache of golden statues was found under a dumpster a couple of days later by a street person. The Academy rewarded this man by giving him a good seat at the Oscar ceremony, taking him to the awards in a limousine and making sure he was “covered” for the ceremony by getting him to a tailor for a custom fit tuxedo.

By the time this part of the Pentecost season rolls around we start to hear a fair amount of “Kingdom” language. We are reading those parts of the Jesus story from Jesus’ last days on earth. At the end of Jesus’ ministry, the focus and attention had turned to his own death. Using stories and parables, Jesus paints pictures of a vision for God’s perfect Kingdom and God’s eternal reign.

These stories paint pictures that are surprisingly different than our expectations. Besides that, Jesus is not just talking about some time in the future (what we might call heaven), but the reality of now — how God’s rule impacts our lives together daily. Sometimes, even often, in these readings it isn’t necessarily all that clear what Jesus has in mind.

The image today is of a wedding banquet—an echo of the banquet on the mountain foretold by God through Isaiah.

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a wedding banquet being prepared for the king’s son. It will be a kingdom celebration that no one is going to want to miss. It will be the party of a lifetime. No one would want to turn down this opportunity. No one would want to miss this affair.

But people do. People want to be about their own business. People don’t find themselves “good enough” for this party. Or they find themselves as “too good” for this party.

Then there are all the folks from the streets, invited to fill the hall. The outsiders and outcasts who weren’t expecting to be invited, who get to come any way. People, who, apparently, need to make it by the tailor’s shop to be properly clothed for the party.

So, we might wonder, who are these folks who would turn down the invitation? Who is this guy who showed up at the party with out the right attire? Just what’s up with the way the kingdom looks?

I wonder if it doesn’t have something to do with their willingness to be subject to the King. Would showing up at the party leave them indebted to the king later on? Would having to “borrow” the wedding clothes (there is some indication from out side the Bible story) that this was a norm for the society) provided by the king leave one in a difficult position? Would it have to do with priorities and self-sufficiency on their own? Or might it have to do with a lack of willingness to bow to the King’s rule.

On a tangential track, I was told this week, and I presume I was told correctly, protocol does not allow one king to bow to another king. There will be handshakes all around, but to bow is to indicate that one is subject to the other.

Is that part of what’s going on here? Some were not willing to bow to the king, shown by their excuses or the one guy’s lack of a wedding garment,

there-by revealing their own sense of being “king” of their lives, being in charge of their own lives? Were some not willing to subject themselves to the King’s generosity, there-by revealing their sense of self-sufficiency?

At best the meanings of this parable are hard to discern. But no matter what track we go down it is clear that the King in generosity has each guest who shows up for the wedding attired correctly. Perhaps the king has made sure each guest has been fitted to meet the proper dress code of the affair. If so, the King in generosity provides the wedding garment.

The Kingdom story, then, says, “The King has you covered.” Literally, the King has you covered. The King has the garment of salvation, the right clothing for the banquet.

You see, in God’s economy, in the kingdom, it doesn’t matter if things are falling apart, if one is imperfect, if one doesn’t measure up, if one is far away, or distracted, or grieving, or sick, or broken or hurting, the King has you covered. In the kingdom it doesn’t matter if not everything is in order, if something is not perfect, if the kids are crying and the parents are frazzled, if the boss is crabby and nothing is going the way it should, the king has you covered. In the kingdom it doesn’t matter if the house is out of order and company is coming, the king has you covered. In the kingdom it doesn’t matter if you’re not quite ready for the banquet, the King has you covered.

Remember God stitched the first garments in the Bible--for Adam and Eve. God slew, skinned, measured, fitted and sewed Adam and Eve’s garments to cover their shame, to cover their sin. God provides what Isaiah calls “garments of salvation, robes of righteousness” (61: 10). We don’t need to make our own robe, provide for ourselves or hire a tailor. The King has us covered. We are clothed more wonderfully than the lilies of the field (Matt 6: 28). We’re covered!!!

If you’ve ever been on a cruise, you’ll know that before one gets very far go sea, there is a “lifeboat drill.” An alarm sounds, people go to their cabins, retrieve their life jackets and gather at the appropriate places on deck near the assigned lifeboats. It is an amazing scene. Every man, woman and child on the ship wearing the same kind and color of life jacket. No matter what, each one clad in the standard issue cruise ship life jacket: finely dressed women with nice jewelry on the arm of handsome well dressed men; teens wearing “flip-flops”; 20 somethings in tank tops and tattered jeans; the cabin stewards; the cleaning stewards; the cooks from the kitchen and yuppies in designer polo’s. Everyone covered in safety—because the cruise line has you covered!

The King has you covered!! Every time we gather at this King's banquet, the King has us covered. Every time we respond to our Kings invitation, the King has us covered: with the same life preserver, Jesus the Christ, our Lord.

Being covered is a metaphor for change. Being covered is about being something new. A new set of clothes may be the first step in reshaping our lives. Being clothed with Christ is the first step in more like Christ: forgiven, blessed, cleansed, empowered people who are in the world for a purpose.

So – there are a few responses we can make to Christ's invitation:

First, listen for Christ's invitation. Listen to where God is leading you, where God wants you to be and what God wants you to do. When you hear his call, answer it. Come to the party!

Second, examine your life. Has taking on God's salvation made a difference? Do you spend time in worship? In prayer? Are you willing to let God reshape you into someone beautiful – someone holy? Christ has big plans for you – for you personally. He wants you to accept His invitation – but He also wants to change you.

Third, let Christ reshape your life. Let Him make you into a new person. Know that the King has you covered and for this life the King must change us, mold us, shape us.

So, the bottom line is this: the King has us covered for the Kingdom party.

The King has covered us with Jesus.

We are clothed in Christ.

We are a new people.

So, come, come to the banquet.

Amen.