

A Believer Rejoices in the Righteousness That Saves.

Text: Isa 61:10

Suggested Hymns:

Tan: 71, 271T217, 214, 289, 154

Ade: 71, 779, 271, 214, 154

1) Because it is not a righteousness which we must work out for ourselves

2) Because it is the righteousness with which the Saviour has clothed us.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Isaiah 61:10, ***¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In our Gospel for this Sunday (Matt. 22:1-14) our Lord Jesus, in a parable, describes a guest being cast out from a wedding feast because he had refused to wear the wedding garment which had been provided by the host.

This should remind us of the fact that there is a great wedding feast coming for us. In order to participate in that feast, we too need a special garment, the garment which the Bridegroom Himself provides. It is the garment made white in the blood of the Lamb, the garment that will enable the sinner to stand before God. It is the garment of the righteousness of Christ, the Son of God.

If we are clothed in this garment, then we can joyfully look forward to the salvation that awaits us and say with Isaiah in the words of our text, ***¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.***

These are the words which we are going to consider today. Our theme is: A believer rejoices in the righteousness that saves because it is not a righteousness

which we must work out for ourselves, but because it is the righteousness with which the Saviour has clothed us.

May the Lord bless our meditation and grant us all His Holy Spirit so that His Word may be a power of life and action within us!

1. A Believer Rejoices In The Righteousness That Saves Because It Is Not A Righteousness Which We Must Work Out For Ourselves

As children of God we are looking forward to attending the marriage feast of the King's Son in heaven. We are among the invited guests. However, at this feast only those people who have the robe of perfect righteousness will be permitted to remain. The rest will be forced to leave.

No weaving machine in the world can weave the cloth for this garment. No tailor in the world can make it. The most gorgeous and costly garment made by people are only shrouds and will return to dust. You cannot gain entrance into heaven by wearing such garments.

The righteousness that saves is not a righteousness which we must work out for ourselves. If you are trying to establish your own righteousness by your own works, then you are seeking shelter under your own shadow. You are trying to cross a river by walking on a rotten plank. You are like the person who tries to build a house on the quicksand, where every stone disappears as soon as it is laid.

This means that self-righteousness is really self-deception. No external morality or a certain code of respectability can weave the robe of righteousness. There are many people who imagine themselves righteous, even though they are not righteous before God. They are self-righteous. Attaining a certain standard of righteousness in the eyes of other people, they think they are righteous also in the sight of God. They ought to know better. By nature, and of themselves all people are very unrighteous before God. Why? Because all are sinners. *"There is none righteous,"* says the Bible; *"no, not one."*¹ *"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"*² in God's sight; they are dirty, they are moth-eaten, they are not worth anything.

Do you remember what Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, told His listeners? *"Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*³ That was a startling statement. The scribes and Pharisees were theological leaders and

were considered models of holy living. They knew the Scriptures; they were zealous in keeping the Law; they wore certain ornaments at their church services. And yet they were found unworthy.

With all their holiness they were hypocrites. The trouble with these men was that they were externalists, that is, men who were holy in an outward way but corrupt within. Still they considered themselves entirely righteous in God's sight. Having no sense of sin, they felt no need of the Saviour. Like the rich man, they had Moses and the Prophets, but they heeded them not.

That spirit has made its way dangerously into many church bodies today. It is a deceitful thing, because those who are cursed with it are rarely aware that it has taken hold of them. It is a subtle disease. Most people see it in other people; few people will acknowledge its presence in themselves. Seldom will a person be found, no matter how wicked, who does not secretly flatter himself that there is somebody else worse than he is.

The answer is that self-righteousness must be renounced. If a person is to be saved, it is absolutely necessary that he give up all self-righteousness and confess that he has no merit, and no worthiness of his own. He must renounce his righteousness and come to the Lord and say, *"I am a miserable sinner, Lord. I have no assets whatsoever. I am hopelessly insolvent. I am helplessly guilty.* The hymnist writes, *'Naked, I come to Thee for dress. Thou must save, and Thou alone.'*"⁴

A famous artist met a ragged beggar on the streets of Rome. The artist gave him a piece of gold and told him to come to his studio the next day, and promised then to give him ten times as much. The beggar went to a barber and had himself cleaned up; he took a bath, hired a clean suit of clothes, and, deeply impressed with his appearance, went to keep his appointment. When the artist saw him, he was disappointed and said: *"You are not the man I invited to come. You have spoiled everything. I wanted you to come just as you were yesterday, with all your ragged clothing; by your vanity you have defeated my purpose."*

In a similar way, God wants us to come just as we are, without trying to make ourselves better. The righteousness that saves is not a righteousness that we can work out for ourselves. Our good works cannot patch up our rags. Our own efforts cannot give us a clean robe.

No; God will give us the attire that we need. He will do the cleansing. We ourselves can do nothing to wash away our stains. Sinful as we are, let us go to God, acknowledge our sins to Him, and ask Him to declare us righteous for Jesus' sake.

2. A Believer Rejoices In The Righteousness That Saves Because It Is The Righteousness In Which The Saviour Has Clothed Us

With Isaiah we can rejoice and be happy as he says in our text, ¹⁰ *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Firstly, we note that righteousness is God's gift. Isaiah admits that God had clothed and covered him. God had put on him the garment of salvation. God had covered him with the robe of righteousness. As a mother dresses her helpless infant for whom she has sewed the dress, so God had dressed Isaiah. Isaiah had not dressed himself, neither had Isaiah prepared the robe.

God had done both. God had prepared the garment and He had given it to Isaiah. In this righteousness Isaiah felt as happy as a groom decorated with ornaments and as a bride with her jewels. His soul was joyful in his God, and he greatly rejoiced in the Lord.

Luther commented, "Adam received the promise of the Seed before performing works and offering sacrifices, that the truth may firmly stand that righteousness and forgiveness of sins are obtained before God by faith, without works, out of pure grace."⁵

God has prepared the robe also for us, for you and me. And we need it too. By the fall of man into sin you and I and all human beings had lost the dress of holy beauty in which God had created man. But Jesus gave His life a ransom for our sins and thus redeemed us from the curse of the Law.

Because our filthy garments were placed upon Christ, because the sins of which we were guilty were charged against Him, He was stripped of His clothing and was punished for our sins by being scourged and crucified. He hung upon

the cross poor and naked in order to cover our shameful nakedness and to gain for us the robe of everlasting righteousness and holiness.

God *“made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*⁶ Our robe of righteousness was woven not on the looms of Scotland, but on the Cross of Calvary. That is what makes it such a wonderful robe.

Every believer may rejoice that God has covered his or her sinful life with the robe of righteousness. Jesus fashioned this robe from the threads of His perfect life. Then He wove it on the loom of the cross and colored it with His own red blood. God freely gives the cloak of His Son’s perfect life to the sinner, and it covers every sin, rebellion, and deviation from God’s standard. This robe of Christ’s righteousness is long and wide enough to cover every twisted human thought, word, and deed. But this robe comes only from God. No human can erase a single sin.

Only God’s grace in Christ can cover human sin. Forgiveness cannot be achieved by human effort, no matter how godly that effort may appear to other human eyes. We are justified, that is, we are declared righteous, freely by grace. By faith we put Christ’s spotless robe on our shoulders and make it our own.

Because this robe covers the deepest stain of human sin, it becomes also a garment of salvation. Humans stand before God dressed in this robe. God sees the believer clothed with the perfection of His own Son and welcomes the believer into his presence.

Without the righteousness of Christ, we are turned away from God and sent to the eternal torment of hell. But the perfection of Christ mantled about us by faith brings eternal life and deliverance from judgment. We rejoice because God has given such a garment of salvation to us and claimed us as His own.

Spurgeon commented, “As God’s children we are now wrapped about with a seamless robe which earth and heaven could not buy. For texture it excels the fine linen of the merchants; for whiteness it is purer than snow. No looms on earth could make it, but Jesus spent His life to work my robe of righteousness. ... Was there ever a robe like this? He arrays His people as a bride adorns herself with jewels. What riches of grace, then, must there be in God who thus clothes His children!”

Are you wearing this robe through faith in Christ? God wants you to wear it. It is your wedding garment. He is offering it to you. You need it. You must have it in order to be saved. Do not reject it! Put on this robe which Jesus wants you to have! Let Him remove your sins and wrap you in His own righteousness!

Our Saviour says in Revelation 3:18, ¹⁸ ***“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*** Possessing this white raiment which the Saviour has earned for us, we have forgiveness of sins, and we are acceptable to our heavenly Father.

Therefore we can exult with Isaiah and say, ***I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God.***

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness⁷
My beauty are, my glorious dress,
Wherein before my God I'll stand
When I shall reach the heav'nly land.

And there, in heaven, I shall be numbered among that blessed company of whom the Bible says in Revelation 7:14, ***So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”***

Finally, let us consider the glory of this righteousness. This white robe, this righteousness of Jesus, which we have even now by faith, that is our soul's trust and stay.

It is the great anchor of the ship of faith in which we are sailing heaven-ward across the storm-tossed sea of this life. We lower it when the huge waves threaten destruction. The anchor sinks and catches on the Rock of Ages. It holds with a firm grasp and keeps us unmoved while the surges sweep over the main deck and carries off masts, rigging, and all.

This righteousness which the Saviour has earned for us is our pilgrim's food, our manna and water, on our journey to the Canaan which is above. It is the pillow on which we finally lay our weary head when, with the shades of death gathering about our breaking eyes, we lie down like Jacob on the barren land of this dreary and desolate world, and in blissful dreams see visions of heaven and

God's angels descending to lift us up and carry us home to the glory of the righteous, to the saints in heaven.

Therefore be happy, prepare for the great wedding feast that is coming and say with Isaiah, "***I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.***"

Show your gratitude for the glorious robe prepared for you by Jesus! Sing and praise God! Let it come from the heart! Thank your dear Saviour for the robe of righteousness with which He has clothed you.

Thank Him for having made you so sure of your salvation, and say with the great Apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 1:12, ***for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Romans 3:10

² Isaiah 64:6

³ Matthew 5:20

⁴ Hymn 330

⁵ E. M. Plass, *What Luther Says*, St. Louis: Concordia, 1991, No. 3919

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁷ Hymn 477