

Sermon: October 12, 2008
“What kind of robe is this??”

I needed to see the sunrise this morning ... it was as beauty!!
A bit of hope ... after all that's happened the past couple weeks.
Nobody owns the sunrise ... we all share it. The sunrise isn't affected by the DOW ... or by who is running for president. The sunrise isn't Jewish or Christian or “non-denominational.”

IT IS WHAT IT IS.

Hope. Goodness. Beauty. It screams “peace” ... it echoes decency ... it points us to a power beyond ourselves.

We don't know where life will take us. Maybe today our future is a little less certain than it was last week. Our faith certainly has been tested ... the certainty with which we try to live isn't quite so “certain” anymore.

Yet ... on this quiet morning ...

*45,000 runners are crazy enough to run 26 miles through the streets of Chicago.

*A little baby at Christ Hospital has one less tube invading her body.

*Middle America scrambles to work, and pay bills, and care for their families.

AND ----- the sun rises ... as a reminder: life, in all its varied packages, is a GIFT.

In the middle of all this is the crazy gospel for this morning ... a king throwing a banquet. If you ever wonder why Bible study is important ... well, try to understand a passage like this on your own!!

One of my colleagues asks me: “Don, why don't you take the Bible literally?”

My answer: “I DO TAKE THE BIBLE LITERALLY!!”

You do not!! Yes, I do!! Don, you don't!! Wanna bet????

Anyone can read the Bible in English ... and claim they have read and believe God's word.

Well ... I'm not sure God speaks English ... and the Bible wasn't written in English ----- some Hebrew, a pinch of Aramaic, a bit of Greek ... but not English!!

And besides ----- God didn't stop speaking to us once the Bible was put together. The Bible isn't an answer-book ... sometimes we gotta make decisions on our own!!

To read the Bible literally ... we need to go back in time ... to the original language ... and find out what this means for that specific time. And then ---- have the courage to bridge the gap between “long ago” and today!

The king announces --- the banquet is ready. But everyone seems to have an excuse ... too busy, too much “other stuff” going on. We have the same excuses today. God's grace is here ... our altar is open ... and we put other things first. Such is life!!

Well, “the king” isn't happy. So, he extends the invitation to all “God's goofs” ----- go into the highways and byways and bring in all the sinners!!

What bothers me is the way this story ends. The people are gathered around the table ... and there is a guy who is not wearing a “wedding robe.” The kings ask him ---- how did you get in here without a robe???

The guy is stunned ... “you invited me ... what's the deal?”

This would be like me going to take Communion at another church ... and the minister comes up to me and saying ----- “You can't receive Communion ... you are wearing blue jeans!!”

Then it hit me.

The “wedding robe” he's supposed to wear ... it's really not a regular “robe” at all ...

IT'S A SPIRITUAL ROBE.

A robe of decency and goodness ... a robe of humility and gentleness.

The robe Jesus wants us to wear is in our heart ... it's part of our spirit.

This is precisely what the “king” wants at his banquet table ----- *it's not the clothes you wear ... it's the person you are.*

You can run for president.
You can be our governor.
You can be a pastor, with fancy robes and smooth-talkin' sermons ...
You can serve the finest wine ...
But ----- in life ----- it's what you *wear in your heart* that counts.

As the economy whittles away at our pensions ...
as the nasty-ness of another election whittles away at our patience ...
as life continues to test us everyday ...
This **“little fire inside our soul”** God gives us ... this inner spirit making you YOU and me ME and each one
of us UNIQUE ... yes, this “intangible spirit” becomes the most precious of all gifts.
It's strong.
It's priceless.
And don't ever let anyone take it away from you.

This morning I'm thinking of a young lady in our church.
She's cool ... she's unique ... she is vital ... she is a caring person.
Lately ... she's been “beaten down” by the *mean girls*.

She doesn't feel safe.
She's beginning to doubt herself.
Her self-esteem ----- a bit wrinkled and fragile.

Whether we're 4 or 94 ----- each of us needs SAFE PLACES.
We need places ... where *kindness* is the blueprint. We need banquets with open places ...
surrounded by people wearing “wedding robes” laced with goodness and grace.

Yes ... it was a beeeeeootiful sunrise.

And ... no matter what happens ... IT WILL COME UP TOMORROW.

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