

Sermon: 1st Sunday in Advent

Text: Romans 13:8-10 (v. 14a): “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Or: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”)

Theme: Christ, our uniform.

Goal: To assure that we are clothed with Christ’s righteousness, and this causes a huge impact on our behavior.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: When we woke up this morning, we raised a question: What clothes shall I put on for this day? It’s Sunday: Am I going to church? Oh, I have to put on my suit and my tie. And we chose the tie that matches the suit. – Or: It’s Sunday: Oh, I will go to the club; and I chose some sportswear. – Or: It’s Sunday: Oh, I will stay at home and will just leave my pajamas on and rest all the day...

It is a daily decision we have to take, for some people an easy decision, for others, more complicated, especially if we have to go for a job interview, or for a wedding or a reception. The way we dress has much to do with our feelings and state of spirit.

And when our clothes are dirty, we have to wash them, of course!

Our text says that we have to “clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus”. What does it mean? How and when does it happen? How does this affect our behavior?

I - We were clothed with Christ when we were baptized

Paul wrote to the Galatians (3:26,27): “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” This is a gift of God. It is not just a command like some read it: “Clothe yourselves with the Lord

Jesus Christ.” We cannot do it by ourselves. The righteousness of Christ is given to us as a gift and a present from God to be our own, the best gift we can ever receive!

When Christ came down from heaven, as we remember now in this Advent Season, He left His royal dress with His Father and put on a human dress, dirty and stinky with our sins; and He wore it all His 33 years lifelong in deep humbleness. He became one of us in the most poor and humble way, was born in a stable and wandering through towns and cities, facing dusty roads, hunger and thirst. In spite of all the good He did for many, He was hated by some and suffered a strong opposition, until He was put to death on a cross.

Did He deserve it? Never! He did it on our behalf, to pay for our debts and sins, to conquer for us new clothes, clothes of children of God! At His resurrection and ascension, He regained His royal clothes in glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and He offers to all His white robes of righteousness. Those who believe in His Word and in His promises, receive the new clothes. Those who despise His Word and His promises remain with their dirty and stinky clothes and will not be allowed to enter the Father’s house.

Advent brings to our memory year after year this love story of a God who has concerns about His creatures, and who wants us all with Him in this life and in eternity. We celebrate with gladness the first Advent of our Lord in flesh, clothing ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ like for a huge reception when He comes again. We are ready dressed for the big party that will never have an end!

II – We wear a uniform

Clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ affects our whole life and behavior. We cannot put Him on only on Sundays, and leave Him hanging in our wardrobe during the week, waiting for us till the

next Sunday, if we come to church. It is like a uniform, but with one difference: We don't wear it only when we are on duty. We continuously wear it. And a uniform has something to teach us:

When we see a nurse or a doctor in uniform, we respect and trust them. When we see a fireman or a police in a uniform, we feel protected. Usually children have one behavior when they wear the school uniform, and they change their behavior when they dress casually.

But what does it mean to be clothed with our Jesus Christ like a uniform day after day? Paul summarized it at the beginning of our text, when he wrote: “Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.” And then he quotes some Commandments; he warns against some deeds of darkness, like drunkenness, immorality, dissensions and jealousy; and he encourage us to “put on the armor of light”, who is Christ Himself with His Word and spiritual weapons.

Our Christian uniform prevents us from following the bad behavior of those who do not wear our uniform, and serves as an example of life and hope to all, because Christ is shown through our words and behavior. Christians make a difference in this world, even if some are not aware of it. To those who are not aware about the good responsibility and opportunity we have as Christians, Paul writes: “The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believe... So, let us put aside the deeds of the darkness and put on the armor of light.”

To the Colossians, Paul is more specific in this matter. He wrote: “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and

patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievance you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” . (Colossians 3:12-14).

Our clothes and uniforms become dirty and need to be washed from time to time. They become dirty not only with the dust from outside, from the roads and from the air, but they become dirty also due to our own body, that sweats and needs to be washed too. Can we apply this to our spiritual life as well? Yes. Martin Luther wrote about the daily renewal of the Baptism in our life, that we need to be washed daily, returning to God’s grace for forgiveness and cleanliness. This happens when we repent and ask for forgiveness, when we receive the Absolution, and when we receive by faith the body and blood of Jesus in the Holy Communion. We are cleansed and refreshed for a new day of serving God and loving our fellows.

Conclusion: Pastor use the white robe when he officiates the Service and other sacred rites. Our altar and pulpit are specially clothed for this Season, and pastor’s stole matches them with the same color: blue, the color of the sky, from where Jesus came, to where He ascended, and from where He comes again. This is something to think about. Clothes deliver a message. Advent is a time of hope and preparation, to be dressed properly to receive our Lord. This is not our work, as we prepare our houses and even the church; but it is a gift of God, that gives us the uniform and preserves it clean by His grace and love. We have to honor this gift of God by displaying outwardly what has already taken place inwardly. Faith shows itself active by love. Amen.