

# Sermon Helps

## “Oh, Ragman, Dress Me!”

(Proclaiming Bellefield's Core Biblical Value #2: Developing Disciples)

Oct. 31 was Reformation Day, a time of reveling in the great Biblical teaching so central

to our acceptance in God's sight: *justification by faith alone*. It goes to ultimate issues of life & death, because it hones in on our only possible acceptable identity before the purity and holiness of God: *that identity of Christ's righteousness vested to us by faith alone in Jesus*. That faith dresses us in the

finest of clothes: Christ's own righteousness. These clothes—*His*—replace our torn & filthy garments. A *Ragman* gives them to us....



His Clothes become our clothes.

## Gettin' the Tar Beat Out of Me

I want to start out with a moment of sad personal history, for the sake of engaging our *emotions & sacred affections* around this gargantuan Biblical doctrine of *justification by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone, by glory alone, for God's honor alone*. Thank you for bearing with me on this one, as a sophomore at Plum High School, on an autumn eve.

“Practice these things, devote yourselves to them, so that all may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:15).

So what to do about it this week?

### Bellefield Presbyterian Church

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*Our vision is to spread a sacred passion for the supremacy of God's glory in all things for the joy of all generations & nations in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### Preaching:

Rev. Dr. R. Geoffrey Brown,  
*Pitt Alumnus*

- **First**, will you come Biblically humbly to *The Ragman*, falling to your knees before Him and asking Him, “Dress me”?
- **Second**, will you decide now to invite someone to the King's banquet? You can do this by telling them about *The Ragman* in your own words; or you can do this by inviting someone to come with you to Bellefield next week, since in a way, Sunday worship is a recurring banquet for anyone who will come hungry. *The Ragman's* here.
- **Third**, since this is election week, will you pray for our nation's leaders, that no matter what else they do, they will not be too busy, too filled with excuses, to respond to the invitation of the King, concerning His Son, the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, to come to Him, to live for Him.
- **Fourth**, will you recall a moment of shame from your own past, and then realize that Christ has given you new clothes for those filthy torn rags?

## 4. God Is Not Only Solicitous, but Also, Deadly Serious

Mathew 22:11-13

“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



A profound sadness to weeping & gnashing of teeth. Avoid at all costs.

gnashing of teeth.’” This fellow needed something external to cover him and make him acceptable to the king. So what is this wedding garment? How do we lay our hands on it, since God the King is deadly serious about it? It's given to “both good & bad” (v. 10), so it's not something *in* us. See, 2 Corinthians 5:21, & seeing it, let's take in Walter Wangerin's *The Ragman*, & worship.

### Matthew 22: 1-14 Sermon Moves @ a Glance

- Our deep need is for new clothes before God....
1. We are *iniquitous*, so Christ's new clothes for us are joyous;
  2. But instead of being joyous, general humanity is *mutinous*,
  3. As humanity is *mutinous*, God remains *solicitous*—for now.
  4. It's all deadly *serious*, so come dressed to His table of mercy....

## The Word of God, *Zechariah* 3:3-5

“Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing be-

fore him, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ And to him he said, ‘Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.’”  
Let’s connect *Zechariah* 64:6-7: “We

all have 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....”  
We don’t have any righteousness at all before God’s holiness & glory.



*God’s not just washing our clothes in Zech.; we get new ones in Jesus Christ.*

### 1. God’s Justifying Righteousness Is Joyous

**Matthew 22:1-2**  
“And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to

a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast...”

Some joyous party here! The great Messianic banquet of our salvation. *Isaiah* 26:6ff shows the feast!

“The Lord of hosts will make...a feast of rich food filled with marrow.... ‘Let us be glad....’”



Not just passive, but a joyful obedience.

### Defining Righteousness Biblically

Righteousness in its highest Biblical sense is the quality of being free from iniquity with a behavior that enacts all that is holy. It is not only being sin-free, but completely law-fulfilling. It’s not just a passive state of purity, but an active engagement of total obedience to God.

### 2. Instead of Joyous, Humanity’s Mutinous

**Matthew 22:3** “And [he] sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.”  
One fellow put a piece of dirt ahead of the salvation of his soul. Another put cat-



Mutiny’s not new at all.

tle ahead of the invitation to eternal life. Still another puts sexual fulfillment out there as #1 concern, he’s just gotten married....And so it goes, even today. In a study of near Eastern culture relevant to these concerns, it turns out these are all actual insults because they are really phony, empty excuses.

### 3. To the Mutinous, God Remains Solicitous

**Matthew 22:9**  
“Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.” Verse 9 here is actually the third time the king solicits the populace to

come to the wedding feast. Everybody’s welcome in Jesus.

C.S. Lewis: “You come Sunday & see the people you’ve been avoiding!”

“God solicits our presence, and we turn Him down? What is it? In the back of our minds, we don’t have time for a party with the Savior Jesus Christ the Lord?”

### “Both Good & Bad”

We catch a glimpse of part of our mission as God’s church at this point. It’s all over the Bible: we exist to glorify God by calling & inviting all

types, classes, nationalities, good & bad people, to come into the banquet of the King’s son’s salvation. And so become co-glorifiers of the Son Jesus Christ with us.



God’s feast is better!