

**Isaiah 61:10-62:3** - *“Garments of Salvation”*

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What are you wearing today, *“Garments of salvation”* or fig leaves? I’m not talking about your physical clothing but your emotional clothing. Your emotional clothing (your “heart on your sleeve,” as they say) is usually visible by what you say and do. And depending on where your heart or faith is right now, you are wearing either *“garments of salvation”* or fig leaves. Let me give you an example.

It’s not unusual, after Christmas, for people to feel a bit down or depressed. From my own experiences, whenever I feel let down after the holidays, like Christmas, it most often comes as a result of focusing too much on my actions or the actions of others. It may be that I didn’t get done all I wanted to. Or, perhaps, others didn’t respond the way I was hoping they would. Being a bit of a perfectionist, it’s easy for me to become disappointed in myself and others.

Whenever this happens, whenever we find ourselves relying on ourselves or others for our joy, it’s like clothing ourselves with fig leaves. That’s what Adam and Eve did after they disobeyed God and took matters into their own hands. *“They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths”* (Genesis 3:7) in an attempt to cover their sins.

How foolish was that?! About as foolish as you or me trying to make and keep ourselves happy by what we do, or relying on other people to make and keep us happy. If we are relying on ourselves or others to make us happy, we’re headed for a rollercoaster ride that will end up at the bottom.

That’s where God’s people in Isaiah’s day found themselves around the time of our text. They had been turning more and more to man-made ways to keep themselves happy instead of turning to God; clothing themselves with man-made fig leaves instead of God’s *“garments of salvation.”* God, through Isaiah, warned the people over and over again that this would lead to the Babylonian Captivity. But do you suppose they listened as long as things in their eyes were going well? No. It wasn’t until Isaiah’s prophecies were fulfilled, the city of Jerusalem lay in ruin, and the people were taken into captivity that some finally listened.

As we consider how the history of Israel is repeating itself in our day, let me ask you a question. Who is more open to God’s blessings and restoration, those who are doing quite well with their man-made success and the fig leaves they have clothed themselves with, or those who are also wearing fig leaves but for whom things are not going so well? Most likely it’s those who are at the bottom of the rollercoaster ride.

It’s those at the bottom who were rejoicing in our text. Why? Because, by the grace of God, they could see more clearly that they could not save themselves and were, therefore, focusing on God’s promise to save them. And even though their full salvation had not yet come, God’s promises are certain, therefore they responded by saying: *“My soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.”*

We today look with confident faith to the “now and not yet” fulfillment of God’s promises in Jesus Christ. St. Paul writes in our Epistle reading from Galatians: *“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”* Earlier St. Paul spoke of this adoption in relation to Baptism. *“In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:26-27).

And when God clothes us with His *“garments of salvation,”* it involves a sacrifice, the shedding of blood, since that’s the only way to pay for our sins. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). That’s the way it was with Adam and Eve after they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves, *“The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them”* (Genesis 3:21). This would have been the first time in creation that blood was shed, and it was shed to cover man’s sin, pointing ahead to the all sufficient blood of God in Jesus Christ, which He shed on the cross. The blood of the God/Man Jesus Christ, is our covering—our *“garment of salvation.”*

But His skin is not dead but alive. He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! The risen Christ is still in His skin, wrapping His almighty, forgiving and loving arms around us through His Word and Sacraments, and therefore giving and sustaining in us true and everlasting peace and happiness. For He assures us that our future with Him in paradise is not dependent on what we do, but on what He has done and continues to do for our salvation.

In verse 11 of our text, Isaiah switches to a garden illustration to emphasize the fruit of our faith. *“For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.”* God has designed nature to be fruitful/productive. The same is true when He plants and nourishes faith in our hearts—faith in the salvation which God has made possible through Jesus Christ. Our resulting praise of God is the fruit which God works through to plant the seed of faith in the lives of others.

If we relate this same truth to the *“garments of salvation”* illustration, we could say that in Christ we are not all dressed-up with no where to go. Instead, God clothes us with His *“garments of salvation”* and plants us in the mission field of this world, that our joy may be evident to all as we wear His “heart on our sleeve,” giving all glory to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children’s Sermon] I’ve been talking about how God replaced our old clothes, which were permanently stained by all the bad things we do, with new clothes, which Jesus bought for us through His death and resurrection. He put these new clothes on us when we were baptized.

But God doesn’t stop with just giving us new clothes. He also talks about giving the boys something to put on their heads [In that part of the world it would be a turban. Here we wear caps]. And for the girls God talks about putting *“jewels”* or jewelry on them. These things could also be called *“ornaments,”* like the ornaments on this Christmas tree.

This morning I’m going to give you some shiny wire sticks (pipe cleaners) which you can bend into an ornament like one of these. Then you can either put a string on it and wear it around your neck, or you can attach an ornament hook to it and hang it on your Christmas tree. Each of the ornaments God gives us (like this cross necklace) tells us something about Jesus and all that He did and continues to do for us as our Savior, so that we can rejoice like the people in Isaiah’s day and share this same Good News about Jesus with others.

All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.