



Dressed to Dazzle

Defeating Death With Linen of Light

February 9, 2025

Today we're talking about how to dress to defeat death!

So, **what are you planning to wear when you die?** I don't mean what you leave behind, down here. I mean when you get home, up there. Because, in John's vision of Jesus' Revelation, he saw:

The armies of heaven ... dressed in fine linen, white and clean. – Revelation 19:14 NIV



[Which is why] The Ruler of God's creation ... [warns, that] "You do not realize that you are ... naked. [And] I counsel you to buy from Me ... white clothes to wear" – Revelation 3:14-18 NIV



[Because] It was given to [the bride of the Lamb] [the body of Christ] to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. [Oh, it's symbolic] – Revelation 19:8 NAS



There're only a few things that make it beyond the grave: truth, love, God's children, scars, and acts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. **Jesus often called death: sleeping;** and in Revelation, He says:



"Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame." – Revelation 16:15 NRS



I grew up in this *building* when it was a *wrecking yard*. I look in the *back*, and I can *still* see the *parts*. And I look up *front*, and I can still see the *men* who worked here. And a week ago *Friday*, Joe Lukens' *ashes* were *right up here*. And I have *no doubt* that Joe is *richly dressed!* But when I was a *teenager*, Joe *rebuilt transmissions*, right *here!* And I can't *imagine* what Joe would've *thought* had he been *told* that one day his *memorial* would be *held* in that *very spot!* Cuz **we just can't imagine what our Father has in store!** Like Solomon who laments:



No one has *power* over the *spirit* to *retain* the *spirit*, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war – Ecclesiastes 8:8 NKJ



[But, contemplating this, Ethan asks the Lord] Have you created Adam's descendants for *no reason?* [If not] Can a mortal go on living and never [even] see death? [If so] Who can set himself free from the power of the grave? [Three guesses!] – Psalm 89:47-48 GWT



He was *crucified* in *weakness*, yet *He lives* by *God's power*. Likewise, we are weak [even] in Him, yet by *God's power* we will live with Him to serve you. – 2 Corinthians 13:4 NIV

Now, why would Paul *end* with: **to serve you?** To remind us that **eternal life begins here and now**. So don't wait till you die to start walking toward the light, with the *Light of Life* at your side.

For You *have delivered* me from *death* [past tense] ... that I *may walk* before God [present tense] in the *light of life*. – Psalm 56:13 NIV

[Therefore] If we say that we have *fellowship* with Him, and *walk in darkness*, we *lie [to ourselves]* and *do not practice the truth*. But if we *walk in the light* as He is in the *light* ... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. – 1 John 1:6-7 NKJ

[But] Those who *trust* in their *wealth* ... *none* of them can by any [worldly] means *redeem* his *brother*, nor give to God a *ransom* for him— for the *redemption* of their *souls* is *costly*, and [worldly wealth] shall cease forever— [so “what man can live and not see death” and “redeem his brother” and “deliver his life from the power of the grave” by “giving God a ransom for him”] that he should *CONTINUE* to live *eternally*, [at the point of death] and *not see the pit*. [“For they have all been *delivered to death* ... who go down to the *Pit*.” (Ezek 31:14)] ... but God will *redeem* my *soul* from the *power of the grave*, for He [not death] shall *receive me*. – Psalm 49:6-15 NKJ

I'm not afraid of flying; I had a pilot's license, but I am afraid of taking off. As the plane lifts off and climbs steeply, I always pray the same simple prayer: “Catch me.” And, it calms me and comforts me by reminding me He's ready to receive me.

Because, eternal life doesn't begin when He receives us, but the moment we receive Him. And so:

When calamity comes ... *even in death* the *righteous* have a *refuge*. – Proverbs 14:32 NIV

[As Jesus said] “If anyone keeps My Word, he will *never see death*.” – John 8:51 NIV

A year before the cross, Jesus calls the crowd to come to Him to receive rest for their weary souls.

That by His death He might *destroy* [the devil] who *holds the power of death* ... and *free* those who all their lives were held in *slavery* by *their fear of death*. – Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV



[And] An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” [Jesus] replied. [“You're the expert; you tell Me”] ... He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; [which is between you and God] and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” [Which is between you and everyone who knows you] “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. [So take your own advice] “Do this and you will live.” But [he didn't want to do this; and with the tables suddenly turned] he wanted to justify himself, [To whom? To himself and those who knew him] so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” – Luke 10:25-29 NIV

This guy is lookin' for loopholes. Because, **under the law, we just can't love 'em enough to earn it.** Whereas, **under grace, we just gratefully do what we can to live in love.** We had a windstorm a while back on garbage day. And my empty can was rolling in the road; so I secured it; and secured my neighbor's, across the street. And then noticed, in both directions, so many cans! And I stood there, like ol' Loophole there, pondering **how many houses were technically neighbors.** And how many cans I'd have to secure to love 'em as myself.

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from *Jerusalem to Jericho*, when he fell into the hands of *robbers*. They *stripped* him of his *clothes*, *beat* him and went away, *leaving* him *half dead*. ... When [a *priest*] saw the man, he *passed by* on the other side. [Cuz if he got within *six feet* – or even *let his shadow* fall on a *corpse* – it would *defile* his religious *purity* and he’d have to undergo an *inconvenient cleansing process*] So too, a *Levite*, [a *priest’s assistant*, who *both wore white linen* (Ex 28:39-40; Ezek 44:17-18) as a symbol of *holiness*] ... But [here’s where everyone *expects* Jesus to say, an *ordinary Jew*; cuz *that’s* how parables *went*: a *priest*, a *Levite*, and a *regular guy*; but Jesus *catches ‘em all off guard*, saying] a *Samaritan*, [a *despised, intermixed, Jewish-pagan* whose people ran a *rival temple* – like saying, “a *Christian-hating, church-desecrating, militant cult member*] *as he traveled*, came where the man was; and ... *took pity on him*. He went to him and [took some *olive oil* and some *wine* that he *happened to have*, and] *bandaged* his *wounds*, pouring on *oil* and *wine*. [And, by *doing* what he *could*, dressing his wounds with *what he had*, he *dressed himself* in that *linen of light*] Then he *put* the man on his own *donkey*, [cuz he *chose to get off* his *donkey* and *walk ... in the light*; and] took him to an *inn* and took *care of him*. ... [Now] Which of these *three* do you think was a *neighbor* to the man who *fell* into the *hands of robbers*?” The *expert in the law* [who can’t even *bring himself to say the word*: *Samaritan*] replied, “The one who had *mercy on him*.” Jesus told him, [so] “Go and *do likewise*.” – Luke 10:30-37 NIV



Sections of the road that Jesus refers to still exist. And in the story, we can see *three paths* we can *choose to walk*. 1) **The robbers who take and leave for dead**. And, 2) **The religious who keep and leave for dead**. And, 3) **The righteous who give and lead to life**. So *which* of the *three* do you *live by*? *Trick question*. Cuz we can *only live* by walking in the *light of love*. Because:

Anyone who does not *love* REMAINS in death. – 1 John 3:14b NIV

Why does Jesus say the *robbers left* the *victim “half dead”*? Was Jesus a *pessimist*? It isn’t a *known expression*. Jesus just *joins* those *two words*. And it’s *only used here*, until *centuries later*. And I *find* it *fascinating* because He says, **“they stripped him of his clothes”**. And, as Jesus *knows*:

Death is naked before God [which makes a *living, naked victim half dead*] – Job 26:6 NIV

[Whereas] “The one who is *victorious* will ... be *dressed in white*. [And, says Jesus] I will never blot out the name of *that person* from the *Book of Life*” – Revelation 3:5 NIV

[And in Revelation, *John saw*] A great multitude ... standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb ... *wearing white robes* ... [Because] These in white robes ... have *washed* their *robes* and *made* them *white* in the *blood* of the *Lamb*. – Revelation 7:9-14 NIV

[And] “They will *walk with Me, dressed in white*, for they are *worthy*.” – Revelation 3:4 NIV

[Remember when] Jesus took *Peter, James and John with Him* and ... was *transfigured* before them. [And] *His clothes* became *dazzling white*, *whiter* than anyone in the *world* could *bleach* them. [Because they *represent His righteous acts!*] – Mark 9:2-3 NIV

[And, as] [Jesus had] said, “*I am* the *Light of the world*. [So] Whoever *follows* Me will never [willingly] *walk in darkness*, but will have the *light of life*.” – John 8:12 NIV

[Because] In Him was *life*, and that *life* was the *light* of all mankind. [And] The *light* [of life] shines in the darkness [of death], and the darkness has not overcome it. – John 1:4-5 NIV

[Because we don't fear death, for] We know that we have *left* our old *dead way of life*. And we have *entered into new life*. [Walking home with the *Light of Life*. Know how we know this?] We know this because we love one another. – 1 John 3:14a NIR

[It's that simple] Anyone who does not love remains in death. – 1 John 3:14b NIV

[And] We belong to Christ Jesus, [so] we have *killed* our selfish feelings and desires. [Cuz] God's Spirit has given us *life*, and so we should follow the Spirit. – Galatians 5:24-25 CEV

For if you live according to the *flesh*, [the *sinful nature*] you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the *misdeeds* of the body, you will live [even though you die (Jn 11:25)]. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. – Romans 8:13-14 NIV

So *kill your earthly impulses* – Colossians 3:5 VOICE

[But you gotta be dressed to kill, so] *Clothe yourselves* with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not [even] think about how to gratify the desires of the *sinful nature*. – Romans 13:14 NIV

[But] *Clothe yourselves* with *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness* and *patience*. ... *Forgive* as the Lord forgave you. And over all ... put on *love* ... [and] Let the *peace* of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be *thankful*. – Colossians 3:12-15 NIV

For [As Wisdom herself says] *whoever finds me finds life* and receives favor from the Lord. But ... *all who hate me [apparently] love death.*" – Proverbs 8:35-36 NIV

[And, like Jesus said] "*Wisdom is proved right by all her children.*" – Luke 7:35 NIV

[Because] "*Wisdom is proved right by her actions.*" – Matthew 11:19 NIV

So: Why did the Priest and the Levite cross the road? **To sidestep an inconvenience.** And, in a remarkably religiously twisted way: **to supposedly honor God by avoiding a sinner.** So let this serve as a warning. Because, **our mind will always find a way to justify our heart's desire.** But in the end, it'll all be exposed. Are you wondering what I did with all my neighbor's garbage cans? I just threw mine back in the road! No. **I did what I could with the time I had;** and I left the rest, guilt free. So, **who might God be calling you to show mercy to?** Because, in all probability, like with that lawyer looking for a loophole, **it'll likely be exactly who you're hoping it's not.** What with the whole "love your enemies" and "bless those who curse you" (Mt 5:44) and all that. But, **how do you decide who to help and when?** How should I know?! Sometimes, **we can help to their hurt** – it's called **enabling.** And sometimes, **we can hurt to their help** – it's called **tough love.** Because it's **situational** and **relational** and **subjective** and **messy.** And God allows it to be, because, **He opts for messy relationships over tidy religious robotics.** But then, it's not rocket science.

"In everything, [just] do to others what you would have them do to you, [and you'll be good] for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." – Matthew 7:12 NIV

I think Jesus' point is to just **stop looking for loopholes.** And **look to Him for inspiration and motivation.** And walk in the light on the **only path** that leads beyond the grave. And watch for **true needs along your way.** And if you can help, just get off your donkey and do what you can.