

Do you want to be here? (Matthew 22:1-14; Philippians 4:1-9; 28A)

The king doesn't want just anyone at the wedding banquet.

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It was the Halloween dance in sixth grade, and having never really been that much into Halloween (I'm still not), I looked around my bedroom for some sort of costume.

I found a shirt that had a slightly country/western look to it, threw on jeans, and grabbed a straw cowboy hat from my dad's closet. I was a cowgirl.

My mom dropped me off in front of the school, and I walked in and to the cafeteria with social awkwardness dripping off of me. It is a rite of passage familiar to many: boys on one side of the room, girls on the other, and way off in the distance a snack table surrounded by teachers and chaperones. Little did I know my social future was hanging in the balance, and it didn't take long for it to come crashing down when one of the popular boys noticed me long enough to shout, "Ha! A Halloween party and Kathryn came as herself."

Ouch. I mean, possibly deserved, but still—ouch.

The end of the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew also gives us an "ouch" moment based on an uninspiring costume choice. But is it deserved?

The original guests to the wedding banquet cannot even be bothered to attend. This man with no wedding robe comes to the party as a last second invitee. What does it matter what he chooses to wear?

Maybe it is less about outerwear and more about how what the guest is wearing reflects where his heart is. My lack of originality in costume design back in the sixth grade was absolutely an outer reflection of my own inner apathy about Halloween (and apparently about fitting into the middle school social scene). The king doesn't want just anyone at the wedding banquet; he wants those who care to be there. A lack of a wedding robe reflects an inner apathy toward being a guest at the banquet.

When we are baptized, we are welcomed into God's grace and covenant with the church. We symbolically put on the fresh garment of Christ. But day in and day out, how do we dress our hearts for this banquet that, by God's grace, we are invited to attend?

Paul reminds the Philippians that it is something different to be a disciple of Christ than to simply be a citizen of Rome. We dress our hearts differently. We rejoice in the Lord, we let our gentleness be known, and we do not worry.

In this passage, Paul offers us a variety of ways we can put on the fresh garment of Christ. By doing these things, we show outwardly that we have received God's grace and are engaged in active discipleship. If we clothe our hearts with these things, then there will be no doubt that we have fully accepted the invitation to be at the banquet.