

Garment

by Nimal Wijesinghe

Jesus has given us two parables - [Matthew 22:1-14](#) and [Matthew 25:1-13](#) on the one subject – The Wedding Banquet hosted by God for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time many ‘Christians’ will be invited to the Banquet but not all of those invited will be chosen and allowed to attend. The two parables help us understand who will and who will not be allowed into the banquet hall, though invited.

In the parable in [Matthew 22](#), it is about a person who is not clothed in the proper garment for the Wedding who is excluded from the banquet. In [Matthew 25](#) it is about those who are ill prepared for the Wedding, lacking in what is essential.

These are indeed most appropriate parables for the 21st Century Christians. Increasing numbers of Mainline Churches are experiencing a notable progressive drop in membership with a significant absence of the young. The prognosis by at least one Church Leader is that unless membership numbers increase and with it income, his Church was unlikely to survive the next 30 to 40 years. This is probably true today of all Mainline Churches.

No doubt the finest Christian minds are engaged in finding a solution to the problem. Books have been written, seminars and workshops designed in order to analyse, debate and evaluate the problem in search of a solution. Every so often one hears of a 10-point plan or a 7-point strategy or a 5-stage-solution to the problem of halting the depletion of congregations and boosting Church attendance and with it membership – a hope for some form of revival!

Considering the parable, one wonders if those Christians who turn up at the door only to be denied entry into the wedding banquet hall had ever really understood what the Lord expected of them during their life on Earth. They were invited, they arrived at the door, but then they were rejected and denied entry. They were deemed ill-prepared for the occasion.

People are often recognised by what they wear. Any member of the public wearing a long white coat with a stethoscope draped over the shoulder might easily be mistaken as a doctor of medicine. Similarly the uniform of a policeman or a baker would result in the wearer being mistakenly identified as a true policeman/baker although they might have nothing to do with the security services or baking. They would be imposters!

Something similar can be seen with some Christians. One who is not a born-again Christian can yet be a regular Churchgoer and participate in Bible Studies and Prayer Meetings and hold office in the Church and through these deemed to be a Christian. Their garment which identifies them as Christians would be made up of rituals and strict adherence to keeping appointments. But, until they are born again they are not true Christians.

Some may feel that because they were born into a Christian family or in a ‘Christian’ country, they are somehow heaven-bound or in the context of our current thoughts, that they believe that fact alone is the ‘garment’ they may put on expecting God to accept it?

Or it may be a garment made up of a good record of Christian service:
that we have an impressive record of Church attendance?
that we daily read the Bible
that we have engaged in prayer
that we have helped out with Church activities and engaged in Evangelism
that we have held office in the Church
that we have taught in Sunday School
that we have distributed tracts in the streets
that we have given of our wealth to God and to charity
that we have managed to walk on the clean side of the street of life?

And so on... i.e. all of the things we take credit for doing while on Earth

What Jesus tells us in the parables is that while all of the above are important for Christian living, they in themselves do not make true Christians nor are those who just want to call themselves Christian will as a consequence be a true Christian. Every true Christian has to be spiritually born-again.

In the parable we read that an invited guest was not wearing the garment provided at the door by the King. He probably felt that the garment he had made from the best material, using the best tailor and contemporary design and style was better than what was on offer. But it did not please the King who rejected the wedding clothes and the man wearing it. It was too late at that point for the invited guest to do anything about it.

And so, we may well ask, what is this garment the King approves? It is a garment He alone provides and is explained in Isaiah - [Isaiah 61:10](#) *I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed*

me with **garments of salvation** and arrayed me in a **robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Yes, unless we are clothed by God with the Garment of Salvation and the Robe of Righteousness, we will be ill-dressed for Heaven and the Wedding of His Son and thrown out of the banquet hall. But, many will be invited! It will then be the turn of the rejected to be speechless.

It is only the Cross of Christ that can speak to the young and old alike and it is only Christ who can provide the **Garment of Salvation** and the **Robe of Righteousness** that all of mankind need not only for the Wedding Banquet but for abundant daily life here on Earth.

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Matthew 22:14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

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