

In most areas of the world there are varying degrees of cultural expectations regarding how people dress in public, at certain places and events. If you visit St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, it doesn't matter who you are, you better be wearing modest clothes or you won't be allowed in. We've all seen a sign at one point or another that says, "No shoes, no shirt, no service!" And so, when the king, in Jesus' parable, orders a man thrown out of the wedding feast for not attending the event properly dressed, the people listening to Jesus in the first century understood this as common sense. Coming to the wedding banquet ill-dressed was simply inconsiderate.

We have this king who represents the Father in heaven. The king's son represents Jesus as Son of God. This identification was already accepted by Jesus' disciples of the first century who would have seen the wedding banquet clearly symbolizing the incarnation- divinity has married humanity and become one flesh in the person of Jesus. The king sends out invitations to all the leaders announcing the marriage banquet of his son and is shocked to discover that many of the dignitaries ignored the invitation and some of them even abused and killed the messengers who brought the invitation. This wasn't lost on the ears of those listening because this scenario at face value is absurd. If the king gave you a personal invitation to attend a banquet, if you valued your life and the lives of your family, you better attend. We wouldn't look in our calendars to see if the date of the banquet conflicted with bingo or a ballgame? That the king got such a horrible response is unthinkable and therefore he sends out his soldiers to exact punishment. What's Jesus referring to? The messengers, Jesus is referring to, are the prophets God had sent Israel throughout the centuries heralding the coming of the Messiah. Israel had a long track record of ignoring and killing the prophets. I like to think of this as what can happen to the soul when we act against God's will in our lives, not in the sense of punishment but rather in the sense of consequences given that God knows what's best for us and we should listen. What happens next: the king then decides to invite the rest of the world to the banquet instead. The salvation offered to Israel in the banquet of the Son has now been extended to the entire world, not just Israel but also the Gentiles. All are welcome to accept the invitation to the wedding feast.

Which leads us to the fellow who wasn't dressed appropriately. He wasn't baptized and so he wasn't wearing the white garment. The salvation offered to the whole world at the wedding banquet of the Son requires a response from each of us. Just as we're dressed in a white garment at Baptism, once we're invited into the wedding feast, our faith must now look like something. The white garment is the outward sign of our Christian dignity. Our lives must be dressed in what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. At Baptism, we put on Christ. Our lives must visibly demonstrate reverence, charity, caring for the less fortunate, trueness to our word, trueness to our baptismal promises, honesty and uprightness, following the commandments and the precepts of the Church. Once we're invited into the Eucharistic feast, our lives must look like we belong there. God has graciously offered us a path to eternal salvation through Jesus. As we make our way to Heaven, we're given an important reminder: If we call ourselves Christian, our lives must look like it. We must be dressed in love, compassion, faith, and fidelity. When we head out the door each morning to work, school, a family gathering, vacation, on the road, on-line, wherever God is inviting us to be, the sincerest recommendation of the Gospel is that we not forget, as the baptized, we've been clothed in Christ and we're to be and act accordingly.