

# What Ya Wearin'?

A LENTEN REFLECTION

Some people have recurring nightmares where they're standing in front of lots of people and then suddenly realise that they are completely starkers. Yes, naked in front of a whole crowd of people.

That thought makes us cringe.

There are some bits of us that the public just does not need to see.

That's where clothing comes in handy.

For most, being caught undressed in public would be their worst nightmare. It would be totally EMBARRASSING and HUMILIATING, and that's exactly why the Romans crucified people naked.

That's right, all of those nice little pictures that you've seen of Jesus on the cross with that loin cloth strategically placed ... they are **not** historically accurate.

**Jesus would have been crucified without a stitch of clothing on, just like every other criminal was.**

There's something about the thought of Jesus naked on the cross that makes us very uncomfortable. We wouldn't put the naked Jesus on the cross and hang that picture in the middle of our churches. We wouldn't want to look at that. Jesus, who was one with the father, the exact representation of God, the one through whom all of us were made. This unique son of God was nailed naked and exposed on a cross.

It's just not right!

*“The soldiers divided his clothes” (Matthew 27:35).*

He would have worn five pieces of clothing - a headdress, an inner tunic, an outer tunic, sandals, and a belt. Remember there are four soldiers in the execution team. That means that each soldier would have taken one piece of clothing and one was left over. That remaining item was a seamless inner tunic (or undergarment). It was probably quite a valuable item. Perhaps if it had been sown ordinarily, the seams would have simply been unpicked to divide it. But because it was seamless, they decided to leave it whole and gamble for it.

This happened to fulfill a prophecy (John 19:24, referring to Psalm 22:18).

**Jesus is stripped of all his dignity, totally humiliated, rejected, and disgraced.**

There is nothing majestic about it.

He’s a repulsive sight,

battered and disfigured,

totally exposed physically and spiritually.

Yes, physically and spiritually.

Whilst the uncovering of Christ happened on a physical level, I think there is something deeply significant that is happening here on a far deeper spiritual plain.

Let's go back to the beginning.

Remember Adam and Eve in the garden?

Remember how they were naked to begin with and it wasn't a problem?

Remember what changed that?

## S I N

When Adam and Eve DISOBEYED God's direct instruction (i.e., they sinned) they realised they were naked and felt the need to COVER themselves.

So, they got busily sewing.

They made themselves some nice little get-ups from fig leaves.

Did you notice that after God confronted Adam and Eve about their sin, He made them new outfits? Genesis tells us that: *"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them"* (Genesis 3:21).

God Himself clothed them.

## WHY?

They were already covered, weren't they?

Wasn't the fig leaf covering good enough?

## NO IT WASN'T.

Only God can provide a suitable covering for sin. The covering Adam and Eve created was not adequate at all.

When Adam and Eve sinned it left them exposed. **Exposed** to a holy, perfect God. **Exposed** to a God who had a right to be very angry with them. They'd disobeyed Him, after all. They'd disobeyed a very direct instruction. However, God provided the way for that disobedience to be covered.

Skip forward to the New testament.

There's a parable Jesus told that has always troubled me.

It's about clothing.

A man is invited to a wedding and when he turns up he arrives without proper wedding clothes.

Do you know what he gets for that? He gets tied hand and foot and thrown outside into the darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 22:11-12). The guy wore the wrong clothes and for that it sounds like he got thrown into the pits of hell. Just a little bit O.T.T! Talk about an extreme reaction. The guy just had the wrong clothes on!

At least, that's how it seems to me. But in Jesus' culture it was a big deal.

In Jesus time it was customary for guests at a wedding to have their clothing provided by the host. When this man wore his own clothing to the wedding he offended the host because he was really saying: *“I don't want what you have provided, **I think my own clothing is good enough.**”*

As we replace God with the host in this parable, I believe we gain insight into what Jesus was saying.

In both the Genesis account and the parable God is the one who provides the clothes.

The man who comes in his own clothing, saying: “I think my covering is good enough”, is refusing to take God's covering for his sin. He thinks he can enter God's presence with his own covering. When we come to God thinking that we are good enough, that we don't need His covering for our sin, we offend Him. God has offered to provide the covering for our sin that we need.

Isaiah 64:6 says: *“... our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”*

Brace yourself.

Do you know that the filthy rags referred to are women's used sanitary towels?

That's disgusting! (Please keep reading, I promise to move through this bit pretty quickly). Isaiah is trying to make the point and he does in a pretty graphic and memorable way.

What he is saying is the fabric of our own righteous acts are **disgusting**, not just a little bit disgusting, **actually, they're putrid.**

Isaiah is saying:

“Our best efforts miss the mark by miles.”

The only way to have our sins covered is by putting on the righteousness that God provides through Christ.

So, let's go back to the cross.

On Good Friday then, Jesus didn't just lose his clothing, he lost his covering.

**The Genesis story happened in reverse.**

Instead of Jesus being covered he became uncovered.

Instead of finding protection under the covering from the punishment of sin, he had **no barrier** between Himself and the punishment for sin.

ALL of the sin of ALL of the world was heaped on Jesus.

ALL of the sin of ALL of the people,

through ALL of history, in the past, in the present, and in the future,

ALL of it, heaped on Jesus.

Because there was no covering for sin, Jesus was exposed to the wrath of a holy and perfect God who could not look on sin. The one who had never sinned, took on all the sin of the world and its consequences.

When God made the coverings for Adam and Eve it was from skin. Through the DEATH of an animal the covering was made.

In Egypt, at the original Passover, it was the blood of the lamb covering the door frame which enabled the angel to pass over.

DEATH made the covering possible.

When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year to cover the sins of the people, he sprinkled the blood of a lamb on the Ark of the Covenant. DEATH made the covering possible.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, he said: "Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

His uncovered DEATH made our covering possible.

**Do we accept the covering he offers us, or do we clothe ourselves?**

Carla Lindsey, *the long weekend: reflections on the crucifixion of Christ*, Hamilton: Maruki Books, 2011.

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