**18 Pentecost, Oct. 12,2014,Exod 32:1-14; Ps 106; Phil 4:1-9; Matt 22:1-4; Rev Mary Trainor**

Does what we choose to wear really matter? Mark Twain said, "**Clothes make the man.**" A very popular reality TV series is called "Say Yes to the Dress," which follows brides-to-be in their complex selection of a wedding dress. A 2013 research study reported in the International Journal of Linguistics that, "**clothing has a great impact on social interaction and impression management**." Why, and there is a bowling alley in Southern California that has a strict dress code: "**No sweatshirts or sports jerseys, no jogging pants or jumpsuits, no hats or headgear, no baggy clothing, all clothing must be neat and clean, no long shorts, no boots, no long or baggy T-shirts, no sleeveless shirts, and no solid color T-shirts**." Wow! All that just for bowling! But the truth is that in our culture what we wear can matter, but mostly there are very specific requirements about the formality of what we wear. So, what does it matter - really - what we wear? Today's Gospel is a parable about a wedding banquet, the clothing choice of a guy, and the consequences of his clothing choice. Is this really about his clothing? What does this have to do with us today?

Our Gospel is an allegory: not a true story but rather a parable in which everything stands for something. The King is God, the Son is Jesus, and the wedding banquet is the great marriage feast of the Lamb of God at the end of time. In the parable, people were invited to the King's wedding banquet for his son--but there was a problem. We are told that many "***made light of it and went away***" and others even mistreated those who worked for the king. The king was not happy about this, so he issued an open invitation; this time he invited everyone, and people came. So, in other words, God invites us **all** to spend eternity with Him. God doesn't care about our pasts, where we live, how much money we have, what kind of job or family we have, what our bodies or our checkbooks are like; we are all invited. **This is really good news!** God's will is for you and me and everyone else to be His special guests at the party of eternal life of joy in heaven.

The parable continues, telling us that finally the wedding hall became filled with guests enjoying themselves. But then the king "***noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe"*** and confronted him.What does this mean? Was this only about what this guy was wearing? No. His choice indicated his soul.Back then, you were not to wear your everyday work clothes to a wedding!! If you on your work clothes, they gave you a wedding garment at the door. But here was this one guy who chose not to accept the wedding garment. The wedding garment symbolizes putting on the Lord. This guy clothed himself in pride, seeing himself as better than the King. He was snubbing the King. We are told what happened to this guy -- and it was not a pretty sight: he was "***thrown into the outer darkness***." British Anglican bishop and author N.T. Wright wrote: “**We want to hear a nice story about God’s throwing the party open to everyone....We don’t want to know about judgment on the wicked, or about demanding standards of holiness, or about weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** But this is what we heard this morning in Matt 22.

Here, Jesus teaches us that being a Christian must make a difference in who we are and how we live. Back then and today, people refuse Jesus' offer of salvation or want to come to God on their own terms. This won't work. We are invited into a relationship with Christ, and if we say yes our lives are to show it. The wedding clothing in the parable is a symbol of our response. Being a Christian is not a passive spectator sport; it comes with the expectation to be transformed by His love. If we call ourselves Christian, then we need to live as Christians. We are the recipients of amazing grace, and we need to live accordingly: transformed lives for Christ. We have been warned. "***For many are called, but few are chosen***." We are all invited, but our response matters -- not every response is acceptable; we need to live out our faith. God's Grace is free, but it is not cheap; it involves change. So, today we are to ask ourselves, "**Am I really living as a Christian?"** Others should know that we are Christians by our love. This is a "come-as-you-are-but-don't-stay-that-way" party! When we are given this wedding garment of new life in Baptism and receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist,we are changed and a new self emerges!  Being a Christian means that our lives change from the inside out.

Paul describes life of a believer in today's Philippians reading, "***Let your gentleness by known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything , but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*** And if we live by this, no matter what happens, we will: "***Rejoice in the Lord always***." This is the transformed life of a Christian, possible by relying on God's grace, strength, power. None of us are perfect, so we aren't going to get this right all the time -- but we have His love, forgiveness.God does expect us to live according to His teachings!

We began this sermon time talking about clothing choices. The Bible says in 1st Samuel 16:7" "***People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart***." Indeed, "***the LORD looks at the heart***" and how we live out our faith. If we call ourselves Christian, people should be able to tell that we are Christian by how we share His love. God invited you into this life at your baptism, and gives you the grace and strength to do this. The decision is up to you -- every day. Will others know you are Christian by how you treat them, by your peace and gentleness and kindness, but your generosity and hospitality? The choice is yours.

Let us pray:  **Lord help us to have our outside match our insides. Remove barriers we face in following you faithfully. Help us, by our deeds, to actively reach out and share your love. Thank you, Jesus, for your peace.** Amen.