

12. More Clothing Imagery (2Q 2011—Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible)

Biblical material: Mark 5:8; 24–34; Luke 8:43–48; John 13:1–16; 19:23, 24; Matt. 26:59–68; 27:27–29.

Quotes

- Let a man think and care ever so little about God, he does not therefore exist without God. God is here with him, upholding, warming, delighting, teaching him—making life a good thing to him. God gives him himself, though the man knows it not. *George MacDonald*
- An “impersonal God”—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. But God Himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps, approaching an infinite speed, the hunter, king, husband—that is quite another matter. There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at burglars hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion (“Man’s search for God!”) suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? We never meant it to come to that! Worse still, supposing He had found us? *C. S. Lewis*
- Christ’s love to his people is not a lip-love, from the teeth outwardly, but a real love, from the heart inwardly. *W. Dyer*

Questions

Why spend time looking at examples that relate to Jesus’ clothing? What do we learn? In the story of the woman healed by touching Jesus’ cloak, how did this work—was there “power in the clothes”? In taking off his clothes to wash their feet, what was Jesus saying to his disciples? And in the mocking of Jesus, why use the kingly robe?

Bible summary

Mark 5:24-34 and Luke 8:43–48 recount the story of the woman subject to bleeding. Her desire for healing is so great, yet she does not want to ask directly. So she touches Jesus’ cloak, believing that this will be enough. Jesus asks “who touched my clothes?” and the woman tells “the whole truth.” A wonderful story of healing trust—not “magic clothing”! In John 13:1-16 Jesus sets aside his clothing, kneeling before his disciples as he washes their dirty feet. In Lev. 21:10 priests are prevented from tearing their own clothes (in a common demonstration of grief or strong emotion). Yet in Matt. 26:65 this is exactly what the high priest does. Jesus is mocked by the soldiers in John 19:2 and Matt. 27:28 as they put a kingly robe on him, and then the soldiers at the cross throw dice for Jesus’ seamless garment (John 19:23, 24) fulfilling Scripture (Ps. 22:18).

Comment

When the Word took flesh and “dwelt” among us, the word in the original is “tented.” He camped with us, clothed himself in our form, and made himself vulnerable to us. In his whole life Jesus lived for the “other,” and his ministry shows us exactly that.

Like any human being, Jesus wore clothes. He had no special heavenly robes, or a halo above his head. Because of his human home, they were ordinary clothes—not royal or priestly, not costly or ornate. Just clothes. But in the healing of the woman with the problem of bleeding even his clothes become a vehicle for his healing work.

“Wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.” (Mk. 6:56 NIV). All perfectly clear. A wonderful description of the healing emphasis in the life of Christ.

But that word “healed” in this text hides a greater truth. The verb is the Greek word *sozo*. Which is the exact same word as used to describe salvation! So Matthew’s description of Jesus noted above could be translated “Because he will heal his people from their sins.” Why? Because in this case the word used for “save” is *sozo* too.

The insight that salvation means healing is essential to a proper understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus. When blind Bartimaeus shouts out to Jesus, asking to receive his sight, Jesus replies: “Go, your faith has healed you.” (Mark 10:52). “Healed”? Well, it could as well be “saved”—for the word is *sozo* again. For through his healing he was saved; receiving God’s salvation he was healed.

As Jesus walks towards Jairus’ house, messengers come to inform him not to bother continuing his mission. The girl has died. But Jesus turns to Jairus and tells him: “Don’t be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.” (Luke 8:50 NIV). The girl was dead, and Jesus speaks of healing? Yes, says Jesus, she can be rescued from death by Jesus the Life-giver; she can be saved from death. And in order to be saved, she would have to be re-made, made well again, totally healed. Healing is salvation again, as demonstrated by the word *sozo* being used once more.

Other examples could be added. Perhaps the point is best made by the woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. In Luke’s account it is noted that “No one could heal her.” (Luke 8:43). Here the word *therapeuo* is used—from which we get “therapeutic”. She’d been to the doctors, but without getting any therapeutic benefit. The idea here is more the idea of being medically treated.

Then after the miracle she is discovered and so “In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.” (Luke 8:47). Now the word for healing becomes *iaomai*. Meaning: to be cured of an illness, to be delivered from ills. So she is specifically referred to as having received a cure for her particular health problem.

But then Jesus says to her: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” (Luke 8:48 NIV). Here at the climax of the story the word for healing is *sozo*. Not merely medically treated. Not just healed from a particular illness. No: this woman experiences the transforming power of God that brings salvation-healing. There would seem to be no reason to use these different words for healing unless the writer (Luke—a doctor!) wanted to reveal some kind of different meaning to the healing that is shown as the incident progresses.

This essential meaning of salvation as healing is further demonstrated by those words of Jesus to the healed woman: “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” Just one chapter previously Jesus is recorded as saying to the woman who anointed his feet: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” (Luke 7:50 NIV). In the Greek, Jesus’ announcement

to the two women is identical, since it uses the word *sozo* which is translated as “saved” or “healed” as the context dictates.

Consequently, that famous verse in Ephesians 2:8 which describes God’s salvation could have the word “saved” replaced by “healed”: “For it is by grace you have been healed, through faith...” Or in other words, “by the graciousness of God you have been healed by trusting God.”

That is what Jesus Christ came to do. To win our trust so that because of his gracious nature he could then heal (save) us. This nature and desire is illustrated by the many miracles of healing, restoration and cure that Jesus did during his ministry—revealing God as the one who wants to heal us, not just physically, but spiritually.

At the end of his life, the soldiers who mock Jesus actually do more than they mean to. In clothing Jesus in a royal robe so they can mock this “king of the Jews” they rightly (but unconsciously) acknowledge the kingship of Jesus. Like Pilate who asked “are you a king then?” Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, but not in this earthly sense. He is Ruler of all, God Almighty. Yet as they mockingly clothe him in kingly robes he allows it...

At the very end, Jesus has nothing left. Even his clothes are gambled over by the soldiers. He has shown us throughout his life and death the true character of God, for in his humanity “Jesus became as like us as God can be.” (Donald English). He took on our form, *clothed* himself with humanity, so that in our humanity we could see God revealed. That was his mission—and it is accomplished in all those who have eyes to see...

Ellen White Comments

Looking toward the woman, Jesus insisted on knowing who had touched Him. Finding concealment vain, she came forward tremblingly, and cast herself at His feet. With grateful tears she told the story of her suffering, and how she had found relief. Jesus gently said, “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” He gave no opportunity for superstition to claim healing virtue for the mere act of touching His garments. It was not through the outward contact with Him, but through the faith which took hold on His divine power, that the cure was wrought. {DA 344}

He who left the royal courts, who laid aside His honor as Commander of the heavenly hosts, who clothed His divinity with humanity in order to uplift the fallen race; He who for our sake became poor that we through His poverty might be rich, has spoken to men, and in His wisdom has told them His own plan for sustaining those who bear His message to the world. {RH Feb. 4, 1902}

Christ alone was able to represent the Deity. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone sufficient to accomplish this work. No verbal description could reveal God to the world. Through a life of purity, a life of perfect trust and submission to the will of God, a life of humiliation such as even the highest seraph in heaven would have shrunk from, God Himself must be revealed to humanity. In order to do this, our Saviour clothed His divinity with humanity. He employed the human faculties, for only by adopting these could He be comprehended by humanity. Only humanity could reach humanity. He lived out the character of God through the human body which God had prepared for Him. He blessed the world by living out in human flesh the life of God, thus showing that He had the power to unite humanity to divinity. {ISM 264}

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