Isaiah 61:10

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[0:00] It's important to be suitably dressed for an occasion or for a given task.

Just to give you an example of that, yesterday was the Sunday School Christmas party here in Bon Accord, and there was, as tradition dictates, a special visitor.
I don't think I need to give you more detail than that. Now imagine if the special visitor had not been suitably dressed as he appeared at the party.
Well, it would have been a disaster. It was necessary that he be suitably dressed. Suitable clothing identifies the wearer of the clothing.
Indeed, suitable clothing can also, depending on what it is, equip the one wearing the clothing for a particular task. Again, let me give you an example. After the service this morning, we have a congregational lunch, and if at the close of the service you head downstairs to the hall, you will probably spot a couple of folks who are wearing aprons.
[1:14] And when you see folk wearing aprons, you won't think, oh, that's a strange thing to wear to church on a Sunday. You'll immediately know that they are equipped for a task. They are wearing that clothing in order to prepare the food that you're going to be enjoying.

So the apron will identify who they are, and it will also serve, or also serves to equip them for the job that they're doing. And we're grateful to them for that.
Now, in the passage that we want to look at this morning, and particularly the final two verses of Isaiah 61, we are confronted with a character who delights in their clothing.
Notice what is said there in verse 10 of Isaiah 61. I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation, and it goes on.
So here you have this character, as yet unidentified, who is rejoicing in the clothing that he has been given and that he is able to wear.
[2:23] And what we'll discover in the course of the sermon this morning, I hope, is that the clothing that is referenced in this verse will help us to both identify who it is, but also the clothing is intended to equip the one so clothed for a task that he has been given.

But who is this character who is speaking here in the chapter? Who is the I of I delight greatly in the Lord?
It's a key task for us to identify who it is, who this joyful character is. I don't know if you have any thoughts, even now, any initial thoughts or ideas as to who it is that is speaking here.
Let me just read again the verse to maybe get you thinking and coming up to some thoughts as to who it might be. I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation.
Does that give us a clue as to who it might be that is speaking in these terms? Well, I leave that with you. In due course, I hope we will identify who it is, but it may not be who you are thinking.
[3:39] I don't know. What I want to do this morning is I want to explore three occasions, three connected occasions when the Bible uses this picture of clothing.

This is a picture that's being employed. It's a metaphor. It's a picture to get across truth. And I want to look at three occasions when that happens. Now, two of the occasions are immediately connected, and we can see that by their very proximity.
So we have our own text there in Isaiah 61, where you have this individual acknowledging that he has been clothed with garments of salvation, arrayed in a robe of righteousness.
That's one of the occasions. The other occasion is just a couple of chapters before, in Isaiah chapter 59, and in verse 17 of that chapter there, we also have a reference to one being clothed.
It says, he put on righteousness as his breastplate and the helmet of salvation on his head, and it goes on. So that's another occasion before our text where the same picture is being employed of

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somebody being clothed in a particular manner.
[4:57] There are two of the occasions. The third occasion will involve us fast-forwarding from Isaiah some 700 years to the coming of Jesus and the ministry of Jesus.

And indeed, not only 700 years, but then we'll fast-forward another couple of thousand years into the present to consider another way in which the Bible speaks of those who are being clothed.
And hopefully we see the connections between these three occasions. Now, at the moment that may all seem a little bit confusing, but bear with me, and I hope all will be revealed.
So, let's begin then, in chronological order, with the passage in Isaiah 59, and consider briefly this first occasion that we want to note.
Now, in Isaiah 59, the reference to clothing is in verses 15 to 17. But in order to have a sense of what is being said, we do need to have some idea of what the whole chapter is about.
[6:07] And obviously, we don't have time to look into the chapter in any detail, but I think we can capture the big picture of the chapter. So, this is Isaiah 59. The big picture of the chapter by noticing how in the chapter, a bleak panorama results in a divine resolve.

If you just have those two statements in your mind, I think that will help you capture the whole chapter. A bleak panorama leading to a divine resolve. Let's just notice quickly the bleak, the very bleak panorama.
We can get a flavor of this by reading just two or three of the verses in the chapter. We start in verse 2 of chapter 59. But your iniquities have separated you from God.
Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt, your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.
No one calls for justice. No one pleads His case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies. They conceive trouble and give birth to evil.
[7:16] And it goes on. The panorama that has been painted is a very bleak one. We move on to verse 9. So, justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us.

We look for light, but all is darkness. For brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. And then in verse 15, moving on to the resolve that we're going to notice.
Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. And the whole of the chapter up to that point is in those terms.
You have this very bleak panorama that is being painted. And this isn't fiction. This is a description of an actual reality.
This is a description of Israel in Isaiah's day. But I think we can also, if we're honest, say that it is a description of humanity in every age.
[8:13] And it's not a pretty picture. But the bleak panorama leads to this second element, this divine resolve. Then in verse 15, in the second half of the verse, the Lord looked.

So, you have this panorama. And the picture being painted is of God looking out on this panorama.
The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one.
He was appalled that there was no one to intervene. So, and here you see the divine resolve. So, His own arm worked salvation for Him.
And His own righteousness sustained Him. And then the language of clothing. He put on righteousness as His blessed plate. And the helmet of salvation on His head.
And it goes on. So, in the midst of or provoked by this very bleak panorama, it is clear that God determines to do something about it.
[9:12] He resolves to act. He's grieved by what He sees. He's appalled by what He sees. He's angered by what He sees. But He resolves. I am going to do something to save these people.

I am going to do something to bring light into the darkness. There is resolution. And it is His resolution to act that explains the picture of the clothing employed.
God clothes Himself to both identify His character and mission, and in a sense to equip Himself for the task at hand. We read there that He puts on righteousness as His breastplate.
This serves to identify the righteous and just character of God. In stark contrast to the men and women that He is looking on. This righteousness as His breastplate also establishes the grounds upon which He will act in favor of a fallen and broken humanity.
Whatever He does to save will be marked by, will be consistent with His righteousness. His saving work will be just. It will be righteousness. And He puts on this breastplate to make that clear to all who would see.

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[10:29] But then we read also that God puts on the helmet of salvation. And this item of clothing identifies His mission to save His people.

The helmet also, in a sense, equips Him for the task. Not that God is ill-equipped or ever ill-equipped, but in this figurative way, He is demonstrating that He is equipping Himself for the task to hand.
And this helmet of salvation, and this is important, very evidently is not intended to identify the waiter as in need of salvation, but as the Savior.
You can see that distinction. You know, the fact that He is putting on a helmet of salvation is not to get across the idea that whoever it is needs to be saved. No, He doesn't need to be saved. The helmet identifies Him as the Savior, which is a very different thing, and we'll see in a moment how important that detail is.
So that's the first occasion. Then in Isaiah 59, God Himself clothes Himself in righteousness and salvation. But moving to chapter 61, which is really, properly speaking, our text, and verse 10 of Isaiah 61.
[11:40] And again, the picture is of being clothed. And I want you to notice that the striking similarity in the clothing employed. The items of clothing are different, but they represent the same.

So one item there represents salvation. Verse 10 of Isaiah 61, For He has clothed me with garments of salvation. Remember, God had clothed Himself with a helmet of salvation.
Well, the one who is rejoicing here is clothed with garments of salvation. And then the other item of clothing represents righteousness.
He has been arrayed in a robe of righteousness. And this now brings us to the question that we had thrown out at the beginning, but didn't give an answer to.
This key question concerning the identity of the one so clothed. Who is this character? Father clothed with garments of salvation and arrayed in a robe of righteousness.
[12:44] Who could it be? Is it the prophet Isaiah? Has he been pondering on the amazing things that the chapter has been revealing about the Messiah and about His saving work? And Isaiah delights in this.

As one in need of a Savior. Is that the one who is speaking? Is this Zion or the people of God personified in one individual? In which case, their delight would be very similar to the delight of Isaiah.
He, after all, would be a representative of this one people. Or is the one singing? Is the one delighting? Is the one describing the clothing he has been given?
The Messiah Himself. I think if we look at the whole chapter, and that's why it's helpful to make our way through the whole of a chapter, and not simply jump in on a verse because it sounds really nice and promising for perhaps consideration.
But when we think of, in this case, these two verses at the end of the chapter, in the light of the whole chapter, indeed, if we had done what we haven't done, and thought about all that Isaiah says about the servant of the Lord, we would be even better equipped.
[13:46] But even having thought about the whole of chapter 61, I think it does become clear that the character delighting greatly, there in verse 10, is the same character who speaks of how the Spirit of the Lord is upon him.

At the beginning of the chapter. Notice there at the very beginning, the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. And we remember when we thought about the beginning of the chapter, how we were able to see how Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth was able to declare, today this passage has been fulfilled in your hearing.
There in Nazareth, Jesus said, I am the man. I am the anointed one. I am the promised Messiah.
And so the one who speaks at the beginning of the chapter, it seems to me we can only come to the conclusion that it is the same one who is speaking at the end of the chapter.
I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation. It is the Messiah speaking. He is the one who is voicing this song of praise.
So what has happened? Or what is happening? What I think we need to understand is how in Isaiah, in this prophecy, we are being given a gradual and growing revelation of this servant figure, this servant of the Lord.
[15:17] We are being given a growing understanding of who he is and what his mission involves.
And in this sequence of portrayals, of which chapter 61 is one, in this sequence of portrayals, the

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promised saving acts of the Lord God Almighty become the acts of the anointed one, or the servant of the Lord.

So the acts that are attributed to the Lord are, as the revelation progresses, attributed to the servant of the Lord. And in the clothing of the anointed one, there at the end of chapter 61, a decisive point is reached in this transfer or delegation of activity.
The Lord Almighty, who in chapter 59 is portrayed as clothing himself, we just noticed it a moment ago, God clothes himself in righteousness and salvation, is now occupied in clothing his servant. You see the progression. So God, in the light of this bleak panorama of a world gone horribly wrong, a God who resolves to fix it, now we find this same God who had clothed himself in righteousness and salvation, he is clothing his servant.
The servant of the Lord, the promised Messiah, the anointed one, the anointed one is now being clothed in order to perform this saving work. The same vestments that God had placed on himself, of righteousness and salvation, now being placed on the servant of the Lord.
[17:01] He is clothed with garments of salvation, not as the object of salvation, not because he needs to be saved. You know, if this was Isaiah saying these words, or if it was us singing these words, then we might say, yes, you know, these garments of salvation speak of my need to be saved, but it's the Messiah.

He doesn't need to be saved. The garments identify him as the Savior, not the one being saved. Garments of salvation, identifying him as the appointed Savior.
He's clothed with a robe of righteousness, not because he lacks righteousness, but because the robe serves to identify his righteous character and the righteous manner in which he will carry out his saving mission.
This clothing identifies the anointed one as the Savior. It reveals his righteous character. It equips him for the saving mission he is appointed to perform by the Lord Almighty.
Now, in the light of our understanding of God as a triune God, a God in three persons, an understanding that is gleaned from the full revelation of God in the Bible, we can identify the one clothing the anointed one as God the Father, and the one being clothed as God the Son, or Messiah Jesus.
[18:21] But let's pause and reflect on this beautiful moment in the story of salvation as the Father clothes the Son for his saving mission.

And this is all in these two verses in Isaiah 61. And there are three aspects in particular that I want you to notice and enjoy. The care with which the Father clothes his Son, the delight of the Son in the clothing he is given, and the purpose to be secured by the Son in the mission that he will undertake.
So what we're doing is we're looking at this picture, this picture of the Father clothing his Son, and we're drawing out some aspects of it. First of all, then, the care with which the Father clothes his Son.
And I think this is particularly vivid and evident in the comparison made with the manner in which a bride and groom are clothed for their wedding day. There in the second half of verse 10, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
In that way, the Father is clothing his Son. That is what is being said. That is the picture being painted. The clothing is carefully selected. It is strikingly beautiful.
[19:39] It is singularly appropriate. And essentially, and especially, the clothing is provided with love on the part of the Father.

You can almost picture him stepping back once all the garments have been placed on his Son and admiring the scene with deep satisfaction. And so there's the care with which the Father clothes his Son, the Messiah, for the task that he has been given.
But then also, and much more explicitly in the text, you have the delight of the Son in the clothing he has given. And this is the aspect that is most prominent.
It's stated so clearly there in verse 10. I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God. Why is the Messiah rejoicing? Why is he delighting in his Father?
Well, he tells us, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness. That's why he is delighting. The delight of the Son is not principally in the clothing, but in the giver, in the one that he has loved eternally, providing him with this clothing.

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[20:53] He delights in his Father. He delights in his Father as the Father delights in him. The joy of the Messiah is in the Father, but it is also, I think, joy in the prospect of securing the salvation of his people.

I'm reminded of the words that we read in Hebrews chapter 12 at the beginning of the chapter that speak of how Messiah Jesus, for the joy set before him, endured the cross.
Even at the prospect of securing salvation for his people, there is joy in the heart of the Messiah, and he delights greatly in the Lord.
The anointed one delights and rejoices as he knows that he is both supported and equipped and clothed for the task given him by his Father.
Indeed, it is a task that the Godhead will perform together, though the Son has a particular task assigned to him. And so as we consider this picture of the Father clothing the Son, we see the care with which he is clothed, we see the delight of the Son in being so clothed, but we see also something of the purpose to be secured by the Son in the mission he will undertake.
[22:12] This is a mission that will result in both a marriage and a harvest. The language of the bride and groom, though principally to illustrate the manner in which the Son is being clothed, does also, I think, point towards the manner in which the Messiah will lead his people into the romance of eternal salvation, an eternal, loving relationship with God.

But then, more explicitly in verse 11, we have the picture of a harvest that will result from the mission of Messiah, a harvest of righteousness and praise that will spring up before the nations.
The work of Messiah will be fruitful. He who sows in tears will return rejoicing with his sheaves.
The day will come when the Messiah will see the travail or the anguish of his soul and be satisfied because his work has proved to be fruitful.
There is a great harvest. And we are that harvest. So we've identified and considered two occasions when the language of clothing is employed.
[23:27] Then in chapter 59, where it is God who clothes himself to save his people. And then in chapter 61, where the Father clothes his Son that he might undertake this saving mission.

What about the third occasion that follows on from this text? And this will involve, as I hinted at at the beginning, this will involve traveling through time from the 7th century B.C., the day of Isaiah, to the coming of Jesus.
And we come to the New Testament. Now on this third occasion, there is not a single text that I want to focus on, but rather explore a third picture of clothing or being clothed that emerges or that emerges through the coming and saving mission of Jesus.
He himself, suitably clothed for his mission. And let me explain. The Messiah comes as a babe in Bethlehem. In the fullness of time, he comes.
And as an integral and central element of his saving mission, he lives a life of perfect obedience, of perfect righteousness. His life displays the reality that he is arrayed in a robe of righteousness.
[24:42] So the picture that we have in Isaiah is then displayed in the life of Jesus. Here is one arrayed in a robe of righteousness. Here is one who lives a life of perfect obedience to God.

And the life that he lives, he lives in our place. He lives a righteous life for us. And then, of course, we know he then dies on the cross in our place.
He bears the punishment for sin that we deserve and dies for us. What is very important for us to be very clear on is that when Jesus came into the world, he didn't come just to die for us.
Important though that is, he also came to live for us. He lived a perfect life for us, and he died a sinner's death in our place. In these two grand ways, he came for us.
Now, what has that got to do with clothing or being clothed? Well, the Apostle Paul speaks of how, as believers, we are to be clothed with Christ. He urges us, clothe yourselves with Christ Jesus.
[25:54] Now, the meaning of this reality is broad, but it includes one beautiful element, namely that we are to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

And let me hone in as we draw things to a close on one verse in particular, in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21, and let's just read that verse.
It's a very short verse at the very end of the chapter. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21, listen to what Paul says. God made him, and Paul is speaking about Jesus, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him, in Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God.
This verse deals with what we call the doctrine of imputation, or to use a much more beautiful expression, first coined by an unidentified church father and then adopted by John Colvin.

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Let's call it the sweet exchange. The sweet exchange, and the sweet exchange consists of our sin, of your sin, being laid upon Jesus.
[27:11] He is, if you wish, clothed with your sin, and in exchange, we are imputed with, or clothed with, his righteousness.

We are justified. And that is what this verse is speaking about. God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us. He loaded himself with our sin.
That's what we gave him in this sweet exchange. We gave him our sin. And what did we receive in return in this sweet exchange? We received his righteousness.
We are clothed with his righteousness. In the language of that unnamed church father, oh, sweet exchange, oh, unsearchable operation.
A sweet exchange, indeed. Or in the words of the 18th century hymn writer, Count Zinzendorf, Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are my glorious dress.
[28:14] And so I would ask you, as we've thought of these three occasions, can you see, can you see the footsteps of grace on the trail that we have traced?

The father, the father, the father, in love, determines to save a lost humanity, and he clothes himself in righteousness and salvation as a demonstration of this divine resolve to act in our favor.
But then we've seen how the Godhead, in their eternal counsel, determined that the son is to be entrusted with the mission of salvation and the father tenderly, gloriously, and suitably clothes his son for his saving mission.
And in the fullness of time, the son comes into this sin-sick world and lives a life of perfect righteousness for us, and on the cross, a cures for us this sweet exchange, bearing our sin and gifting us his righteousness.
The robe of righteousness, if we want to use the picture that is being employed, the robe of righteousness passes from the father to the son, and then it is gifted to you and me.
[29:33] And it could be no other way because we do not have the skills or the capacity to create a robe of righteousness of our own. All we have are dirty rags, but Jesus gives us the robe of his righteousness, and he wraps it around us that we might be acceptable before God.

How can you be so clothed? Well, by faith. The doctrine of imputation is an element of the biblical doctrine of justification.
And as the Bible teaches, we are justified by faith. When Paul urges you to clothe yourself with Christ Jesus, the only way that you can do that is by faith, trusting in Jesus as your Savior, and resting on his finished work on your behalf.
You need to be suitably dressed to fellowship with God. And God in Jesus gives you the robe of righteousness that you require.
Receive the gift and wear it with joyful gratitude as your life becomes part of that harvest of righteousness and praise springing up before all nations.
[30:53] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the way in which beautiful truths are expressed in beautiful language.

And we pray that your spirit would be the one who would be impressing upon us the truthfulness of what the Bible declares, but also impressing upon us our great need of being clothed in that robe of righteousness not our own, but the righteousness of Jesus granted and given to us.
Help us then, by your spirit, to be ever trusting in Jesus as our Savior and Lord and ever seeking to live lives that are pleasing to him and a blessing to others.
And we pray these things in his name. Amen.

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