

WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT? NO. 2024

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 20, 1888,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
Matthew 22:11-13.

TWO Sabbath mornings ago I preached from this parable, and I trust many were encouraged by it, but I noticed among inquirers who came to see me afterwards, a desire to know about the wedding garment, for they feared lest, in coming to join the church, they should come like the man of whom I shall now speak. Many true hearts are extremely sensitive to the impression of fear, and they seem to be on the watch for reasons for anxiety. I do not condemn them, on the contrary, I wish there were more of such holy tremblers. It is much better to be afraid of being wrong than to be indifferent as to what you are.

I perceive among the very best of the saints a considerable number who are deeply anxious as to their state before God. Those who will one day be cast out of the wedding feast are feeding themselves without fear, while those who have the most right to enjoy the banquet are full of gracious anxiety. Solomon says, “Happy is the man that feareth always,” he will cling closely to his God, and that will make him happy, he will not run risks like the presumptuous, and so he will be happy. Holy fear spreads few banquets, but it takes care that when there is a feast we go to it in a wedding garment.

My chief object this morning will be to allay the fears of gracious ones. If they understand what the wedding garment really is, they will probably discover that they are wearing it, and if not, they will know in whose wardrobe that garment of joy is to be found, and they will gladly ask to be arrayed therein. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, give a wedding joy this morning to each wedding guest, by causing him to see for certain that he is clothed in the wedding robe.

Immediately after our text, we find these solemn words, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” This is a conclusion drawn from the whole parable, in which we see processes at work, which separate the chosen few from the many who are called. A distinction was made by the summoning of the invited guests. The simple delivery of the invitation set a difference between the loyal and the rebellious—a distinction most marked and decisive.

So it is in the preaching of the Gospel, we preach it to every creature within our reach. Lovingly, tenderly, earnestly, not as well as we would, but still with all our heart we call men to the royal feast of grace, and straightway the very invitation begins to gather out the precious from the vile. Pure Gospel preaching is very discriminating. You can tell Cain from Abel as soon as the sacrifice is the subject. Preach salvation by grace, and you find that some will not have it at any price, others postpone all consideration of it, and a third party raises questions without end.

Still do men make light of it, and go their way to their farms and to their merchandise. Thus, dear friends, every Sabbath day, without our attempting to sit in judgment on men, the Gospel is in itself a refining fire. In the Gospel the Son of David has a throne of judgment as well as of mercy. When men will not have Christ and His grace, the Word preached by His humble servant drives them away, and they go with the chaff. But the work of discrimination is not finished after the Gospel has been heard

and men have been brought into the church. Alas! even in the church division has to be made, indeed, it is there that this is most fully carried out. “His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor.” If He uses a scourge nowhere else, He will be sure to use it in His own temple.

Among the sheep there are goats, among the virgins there are foolish ones, and among the guests at the wedding feast there are those who have not on the wedding garment. Until we come to heaven itself we shall always discover necessity for the work of self-examination. Even in the apostolic college, Judas carried on his knavery, as if to warn us that no rank in service, no honor among brethren, no length of experience can screen us from the necessity of saying, “Lord, is it I?” when His warning voice says, “One of you shall betray me.”

In our text we see a man who has hearkened to the invitation and has come into the feast, and thus has passed the first test, and yet he is unable to abide the second, he has been received by the servants, but he cannot deceive their Master. The King detects him as a spot in the feast, and he is cast out from the palace of mercy into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. May none of us be of this sort.

I shall endeavor to answer four questions naturally arising out of the parable. First, *what is meant by the king’s coming in?*—“when the king came in to see the guests,” secondly, *what is the wedding garment?* Thirdly, *who is he that has it not,* and fourthly, *why did he stand speechless* when he was asked, “How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?”

I. May the Holy Spirit help us while we consider, first, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE KING IS COMING IN.

“The king came in to see the guests.” They were all reclining at the tables, for “the wedding was furnished with guests.” They gathered while the sun was up, but darkness covered the world outside when “the king came in to see the guests.” They had feasted, and now the king came to honor the assembly.

It was the crown and the culmination of the feast. No matter how dainty the viands, nor how bright the hall, the feast has not reached its height till His majesty appears in gracious condescension. It is so with us, beloved, in reference to our greater King. When we are gathered in this house, which has often proved to us a palace of delights, we never reach the height of our desire till the Lord manifests Himself to us. You delight to hear the preacher, and to join in the song, and to say Amen to the prayer, but these are not all. Your heart and your flesh cry out for God, for the living God, you look to behold the King in His beauty.

When the glorious Father reveals Himself in Christ Jesus, then the Sabbath is a high day, for our prayer is answered, “Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.” Our glorious King is not always equally manifest in our solemn assemblies. Doubtless because of our sins He hides Himself. In truth He is always with us, for the feast is His, and the hall is His, and every guest is brought in by His grace, and every dish on the table is placed there by His love, but yet there are times when He is specially seen among His people. Then our communion with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ, is sweet indeed.

These are seasons of gracious visitation, times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When the King comes into the assembly, the preaching of the Word is in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power. Then the day of Pentecost has fully come, the Spirit is abundantly outpoured, souls are saved, saints are edified, and Christ is glorified. The spiritual soon detect the divine presence, and the shout of a King is heard in the camp. When I think of it, my heart cries out with Isaiah, “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence!” The presence of our God brings with it heavenly happiness, solemn content, and overflowing joy. Well does Dr. Watts sing—

*“The King Himself comes near,
And feasts His saints today;
Here we may sit and see Him here,*

And love, and praise, and pray.”

*“One day amidst the place
Where my dear God hath been
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin.”*

Beloved friends, you know better than I can tell you when the King is near, and you know sorrowfully when He is not in the assembly. Alas, from how many congregations is He absent, and that absence unmourned! When the Lord is gone we spread our sails, but there is no wind, we bring the sacrifice, but there is no fire. The wedding would have been a failure without guests, but what would the feast have been if the host had refused to come in and see the guests? But the King came in in due time. Ay, came in among that crowd of wayfarers gathered from the highways at a moment's notice, and His presence crowned the festival with honor and rapture.

This coming in to see the guests indicates *a glorious revelation of Himself*. When the King saw the guests, the guests saw *Him*, but inasmuch as His sight of them was the more important sight of the two, the chief thing is mentioned while the minor matter is implied. Do we know what it is to see God? This is the special privilege of the pure in heart. When the Lord's way is in the sanctuary, then His sanctified ones behold Him. Spiritual eyes have looked to Jesus by faith, and He says, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

Have you never been like John in Patmos, ready to swoon away because of the revelation of the Father in Christ? When Jesus has been set forth evidently crucified among us, we have in Him beheld the face of the great King, and our hearts have leaped for joy, so that we have been ready to leap into heaven itself if the word had been given. When Augustine read those words, “Thou canst not see my face and live,” he was bold enough to answer, “Let me die to see thy face.”

Blessed vision!

*“Lord, let me see Thy beauteous face!
It yields a heaven below;
And angels round the throne will say,
'Tis all the heaven they know.”*

The King delights to see His guests, and His guests delight to see Him. Then is our worship full of bliss, and no place out of heaven is so like to heaven as the place of our assemblies. We read in the Gospel of John, “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord,” and well they might be. Then are we glad also when we distinctly discern Him as our Lord and our God. My own soul knows this joy unspeakable, but because it is unspeakable, I say no more.

For the King to come in and see the guests includes *a manifestation of special favor*. He comes in, not to judge the guests, but to look upon them. You that were here last Thursday night will remember my text, “Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.” The Lord is accustomed to look with favor upon those who love His name, for He is pleased with them.

O brothers and sisters, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, when the Father lifts upon us the light of His countenance, then our summer weather is come. Can anything be compared with the favor of God? The smiles of kings, the friendships of emperors—do not mention them in the same day. Some of you know that the Lord loves you, yea, that He loved you from before the foundation of the world, and He will love you when the world has ceased to be.

Oh that the King would come here this morning in that sense, and look into all your faces, and give you all the full assurance that you are in His heart, and shall be there to all eternity! Oh that this whole church may be a living temple in which the Lord shall delight to dwell, may every stone of it be brilliant with the reflected light of His favor, may all our testimonies and labors be acceptable unto Him, and

may He be very gracious at the voice of our cry! O JEHOVAH, manifest Yourself here as You did between the cherubim! For Your sake we have borne reproach, Lord be our glory! We have held fast Your truth, we beseech You, let the light of Your countenance encourage us!

But here is the solemn point to which I call your attention; this visitation brings with it *a time of discovery and searching of heart*. When the King comes in to see the guests, the light grows stronger, and hidden things are revealed, for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. When the Lord visits His church, His fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem, then the man without a wedding garment is winked at no longer.

You can go on sleeping as a church when God is away, and no members will fall off, for those who know not the Lord will come in and go out among you as aforetime. The dead will remain quiet till the Lord sounds the trumpet of resurrection, mere professors will not know that they are making a false profession, but will remain at ease in our solemn feasts. But when the King comes in all things are changed. “Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.”

You cannot receive abundant spiritual life into the church without the discernment of the unworthy, and the expulsion of the spiritually dead. One goes away because he is offended at the doctrine, another is grieved at the heart-searching experience, and a third feels himself too sternly rebuked as to his life. Thus the Lord’s visitation of grace becomes an assize of judgment, and the finger of the Lord writes upon the wall, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” If the Lord our God were to come into His church today there would be an awful shrinkage among the number of His guests, a panic would seize the assembly, and the door would be blocked with men hastening to escape His eye.

Look how the king’s discernment is recorded in the text. One man only had refused to put on a wedding garment, but the king at once fixed His eye upon him. The Savior, by a kind of heavenly charity, mentions only one intruder, but I fear we must regard the one as the type of many. If the King should come in at the time of our communion, I am afraid He would detect more than one. Still, if there were but one, he would concentrate His gaze upon that one, and speak to him by himself.

If you are the only person who has dared to enter the church knowing that you are not converted, the King will spy you out. If you make a profession of religion out of bravado, and keep it up by sheer deceit, you may hide yourself away among your family connections, or think that your respectability will screen you, but you are mistaken. You have to deal with one whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and He will so unmask you that you will not have a word to say in your own defense.

This is a solemn matter. It will not make the true-hearted wish the King to stay away, but those who are willful deceivers may well tremble. The King does come to this church. He is especially present in the midst of this people, and the consequence is that His judgment is strict with us. I have seen the rod of His discipline here in a very striking manner. I have seen the fair professor wither in the heat of love, and the rootless Christian dried up in the noontide of grace. He might have gone on very well in any other church, but he has not been able to abide the brandished sword of the Spirit, and its dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow. He has not been able to sit it out, but has been obliged to go away and find an easier rest.

Just in proportion as we really have the King in the midst of us making glad the saints, we shall have the King in the midst of us discerning the false and casting them out, first into the outer darkness of the world, which lies in the wicked one, and at last into the outer darkness of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Still, be the result what it may, our prayer this morning is, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us.”

II. Now I would answer the second question, WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT?

You are probably aware that this has been a point greatly disputed among theologians. Is the wedding garment justification, or sanctification, or what? I am not going to be theological and bring doctrinal matters to the text, but I shall read the parable as it stands, and interpret its details by its general run. It is called a “*wedding garment*”—a garment suitable for a marriage feast. Let us translate

the figure, rather than attempt to rivet a doctrine to it. What does a wedding garment mean? What is that which we must have in connection with our Lord's marriage or be cast out forever?

I think I may say plainly that it must signify *a distinguishing mark of grace*. Everybody does not wear a wedding garment, he who wears it has put it on because he is a wedding guest. You know the wedding guest at once by his attire. He dresses in a way which would be considered singular if he were so arrayed every day. Your steady citizen indulges in a white waistcoat on the nuptial occasion, but he never dreams of going down to his office in the city in such gear.

True members of the church of God wear a distinguishing mark. If you are not different from other people, you have no right in the church of God. If a servant can live with you for years and never discover your love to God, I should think there is none to discover. If you are just the same as those you lived with in your former days, if you have undergone no change, and are like the rest of men, you have not the distinguishing mark which sets forth your right to be in the church of God. There ought to be a something about us which sets us apart—a something which can be seen and understood by common people, even as a wedding garment could be seen, and its meaning at once perceived. Your religion must not require a microscope to perceive it, nor should it be so indistinct that few can discover any meaning in it. It should be as visible as the white garment which was worn by Easterns at a marriage. Is it so?

I may boldly add here that the wedding garment was a distinguishing mark of grace, for as these people were fetched in from the highways they could not have provided themselves with wedding garments. It is the custom in the East for a king to provide robes for his guests, therefore this wedding garment was a mark of grace, freely given and received. Is there, then, a something about you which the Lord in love has given you? Do you differ from others, not in natural attainments, but in spiritual grace? Does the difference mainly lie in what God Himself has done for you? That is the question involved in the symbol of the wedding garment.

Do you differ from what you used to be? Do you differ from what you were years ago? Do you differ from those with whom you used to associate, so that you seek other company and turn aside from those who once were charming fellows to you? If so, you have on the wedding garment. It is a distinguishing mark. I do not mean to put this in a way that would grieve anybody here unless they ought to be grieved, but if they ought to be grieved, then we would have them cry to God for renewal by His grace. May the Lord make you to wear His livery! May He give you the spot of His children, and cause you no longer to be of the world! A distinguishing mark is plainly the first meaning of the wedding garment.

In the next place, it was *a symbol of respect for the king*. To be fit for His company, the dress must be special. The absence of such a dress was, in the case before us, the badge of irreverence and disloyalty. This man said to himself, "I will feed at the feast without acknowledging its intent. Whoever stops me, I will push my way in, and I shall sit there in my everyday garments, to let the king know that I do not respect Him in the least, and will not wear the robes He provides." It is as if you had lost a son, and some wretched man should say, "I will attend the funeral in a wedding suit. I shall thus wound the feelings of the mourners, and show my contempt for the whole affair." What an insult it would be!

To turn the picture. Suppose you were being married, and somebody forced his way into the wedding dressed in mourning, with crape upon his hat, and black kid gloves upon his hands? What a wanton insult! If such impudence were met with a horse-whip, who would be surprised? Now, this man acted in that fashion, he had no respect for the king, he showed his traitorous nature in the worst possible manner, spiting the king in his own halls upon a tender occasion.

Dear friends, I trust that you can truly say, "I have on the wedding garment of reverence for the King. I do not despise the Lord God, but I bow before Him in true worship. I would come into His church, not to dishonor Him, but to give glory to His name." The wedding garment was a token of respect to Him who had provided the feast and presided over it, judge you this day whether you have on the wedding garment, by inquiring whether you honor and reverence the Lord God, and labor to be obedient to Him in all things.

The wedding garment was, moreover, *a token of honor for the Prince*. Those who put on the wedding garment did as good as say, “We join in the joy of the Prince, and come hither today to show our attachment to Him, and to wish Him joy of His bride.”

My hearers, do you feel a love to the Lord Jesus Christ? Many do not. I grieve to say we have a race of men sprung up nowadays who call themselves Christians, who pour contempt upon His precious blood, and ridicule the substitutionary sacrifice. Dreadful assertion! but it is a matter of fact. The name of Jesus, why, it is to our lives what the sun is to the skies, what the rivers are to the plains. Nothing makes us so glad as thoughts of Jesus. I am sure when I hear a sermon about Christ, my Master, my very heart grows warm within me. Is it so with you? Well, then, you have on the wedding garment, that is to say, you do truly, though it be but in a simple way, pay homage to the Prince of Peace, you love the name and person of Jesus, and you come into His church because you do so.

The wedding garment also signified *a confession of sympathy with the great occasion*. Every man who ate of the fatlings, every man who drank of the wines, every man who gave his presence, was a helper in the honors of that wedding feast, save only this one intruder, who would not even pretend to join in the joy, for he refused the simple act of putting on a robe fit for the feast.

Dear friend, do you feel sympathy with the Lord’s purposes of grace? Do you rejoice that Jesus finds a bride among our race? Do you bless God for the covenant of grace, which includes incarnation, redemption, and sanctification? Do you bless the name of the incarnate God for taking into everlasting union with Himself a people prepared of the Lord? Well, then, you are in sympathy with the marriage of the Lamb, and you have a right to be present at the feast. You evidently wear the wedding garment which denotes your joy in Christ, your interest in His church, your part and lot in the joyous work of His salvation.

The wedding garment means, in a word, *conformity to the requirements of the occasion*. It was a wedding, and the guests must put on a suitable dress. This man refused to put it on. He was proud, and would not wear the gift of grace, he was self-willed, and must needs be singular, and show his independence of mind. The regulation was by no means irksome, and to the rest of the guests the commandment was not grievous, but this man would have his own way in defiance of the Lord of the feast. What could come of such folly?

Now, beloved, one of the requirements of the feast is, that you with your heart believe on the Lord Jesus, and that you take His righteousness to be your righteousness. Do you refuse this? If you will not accept the Lord Jesus as your substitute, bearing your sins in His own body on the tree, you have not the wedding garment. Another requirement is that you should repent of sin and forsake it, and that you should follow after holiness, and endeavor to copy the example of the Lord Jesus. You are to possess, as the work of divine grace, a godly and upright character. Have you such a character? Even though you are not perfect, inasmuch as you follow after righteousness, you have the wedding garment. You say that you are a Christian, do you live like a Christian? Are you in a position and condition which agree with the Gospel feast? If so, you have on the wedding garment.

Those who came unto the feast were, when they came, both bad and good, so that the wedding garment does not relate to their past character, but relates to something with which they were invested when they came to the banquet. The putting on of a wedding robe cannot refer to an elaborate ceremony, or a feat of the intellect, or to a deep experience of the heart, and yet it involved joining in the wedding, or not joining in it. It involved reverence for the King, and homage to the Prince, and sympathy with the whole matter. Look well to yourselves, and see whether you truly yield yourselves to the Lord, and agree with Him in the whole matter.

III. Thirdly, WHO IS THE MAN THAT HAS NOT ON THE WEDDING GARMENT?

I should say, first, *he is the man who rejects God’s revealed Gospel that he may follow his own thought and his own wisdom*. He says that he is loyal to Christ, and he expects all his fellow guests to be firm friends with him, for is he not in the banquet as much as they are? But he does not mean by loyalty what they mean by it. He is among believers, but he is not truly of them. He talks about atonement, he

does not mean substitution. He talks about the divinity of Christ, he does not mean the Godhead of Christ. He talks about justification by faith, but he does not mean the old-fashioned doctrine. He speaks of regeneration, but means evolution. He girds himself with the garment of philosophy, but he refuses the robe of revelation, for the cut of it is too old-fashioned for him.

He is no more a wedding guest than he is a merry-andrew, perhaps, not so much so. He wears raiment in which the robe of righteousness and the garments of gladness are not to be seen. The looms of free grace and dying love have never woven him a wedding dress. His robe is not of God's provision, it is from his own wardrobe. He glories in his own culture, and not in the revelation of God, nor yet in the work of divine grace upon the heart. He is in the church, but he is not in Christ. He has a name to live, but he is dead.

The next person who has not on the wedding garment is *the man who refuses the righteousness of God* because he has a righteousness of his own. He thinks his work-day dress good enough for Christ's own wedding. What does he want with imputed righteousness? He mocks it as immoral. He who is himself immoral! What does he want with the precious blood of Jesus? He does not need to be washed from crimson stains. He writes a paper against the sensuousness of those persons who sing—

*“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.”*

His own righteousness, though it be of the law, and such as Paul rejected, he esteems so highly that he counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing! Ah me, the insolence of self-righteousness! Its pride is the very chief of sins, for it slights the righteousness of God. Practically, the self-righteous man does not see any wedding in the Gospel system, he does not see anything in the Gospel to make him glad, nothing for him to sing about, nothing to make him shout for joy of heart. He will not praise the Prince. Not he! He is under the law, and he is content to be a slave, he is trying to save himself by his own works, and law knows no holidays. He is not a wedding guest but a mere drudge.

Another sort of person *has profession without feeling*. If he were outside of the church his conscience might trouble him, he has come inside of it, and now he says to himself, “It is all right.” He does not care to watch his feelings, he never had any, he would rather not have any. To the power of the Word he is a stranger, though he knows the letter of it. As to repentance, and the burden of sin, he never knew them, and does not want to know them. He thinks Mr. Bunyan must have been superstitious or morbid when he wrote “Grace Abounding.”

Joy in the Lord is equally a thing unknown to him, for he hates all excitement. He has no solemn depressions and no raptures, for he has no spiritual life. As he has no holy feeling, so he has no holy action, he is a Christian, he says, but having put up the sign-board, he drives no trade. His religion operates far more upon his boots and his hat than it does upon his heart, that is to say he comes out respectably dressed on a Sunday, but his religion never affects his conduct. Nobody can find much fault with him except that he is as dead as a door nail. He commits no gross sin, he certainly performs no brilliant deeds of piety. Spiritually he is a very well washed corpse—that is all.

We have others who are in the church, *who think that what they have done themselves, or what nature has done for them, is quite enough*. They do not seek anything supernatural. They do not want any wedding garment more than their everyday coats. They are quite reputable in appearance even now, and with a little touching up they will be good enough without the new birth, and without the Holy Spirit.

Alas, my hearers! all that nature can ever do for you will leave you on the wrong side of heaven. You may cultivate nature to its utmost, it will never bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. “Ye must be born again.” If you have not come into living contact with a living Savior by the work of the Holy Ghost you may be in the church, but you are not in Christ, and have not on the wedding garment.

Why, some dare to come into the church who *have not even common morality*. It is shocking we should have to say it, but nowadays, we meet with those who call themselves Christians who can drink upon the sly, who can commit uncleanness with their bodies, who can be dishonest in their trading, who can be liars, who can hate their own flesh and blood and be at enmity with their brethren, and yet dare to come to the communion table.

In the highlands of Scotland it was at one time difficult to get Christian people to come to the Lord's table, for they so trembled under a sense of their unworthiness. We do not want to push this too far, but that is a great deal better than that unholy daring, which is to be found in the minds of so many who serve Christ and Belial. God save His church from degradation! Unholy professors have not on a wedding garment, their outward robes by no means befit the King's feast, but they are a dishonor to Him.

I do not see how that man can be said to have on a wedding garment *who takes no interest in the work of the church*. You see when a man puts on the wedding garment, he did as good as say, "I am interested in the wedding. I wish God's blessing to the bride and bridegroom." But many come in now to the King's feast who do not care a snap of the finger for the church of God, nor for Christ either. They come in because a sort of selfishness makes them anxious to be saved, but as to the bride, the Lamb's wife, they do not care whether she starves or flourishes. Sad and wretched business this! If members of the church only can distribute tracts or attend meetings for prayer—if they are doing this, and show an interest thus in the wedding—they have on the wedding garment. But if all they do is simply to hear, either to criticize or to enjoy, but never work for Christ, nor pray for Christ, they have no sympathy in the wedding feast, and therefore they have not on a wedding garment.

IV. To close, WHY WAS THIS MAN SPEECHLESS?

We do not often meet with people who have no excuse. Excuse-making is the easiest trade out. A man can make an excuse out of nothing at all, or out of what is less than nothing, out of a direct lie. But here was a man who could not speak? Why was that?

Well, I think, first, *the affront was too bare-faced*. "How camest thou in hither?" If he did not like the king he should have kept outside. There was no need why he should come in at all, and there display his malice. If any of you are resolved to be lost, you need not add to your eternal ruin by making a profession of religion, for hypocrisy is a superfluity of naughtiness. But this man willfully refused the wedding garment. Now those dear souls I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon do not willfully refuse the Lord's grace, I am sure they do not. Oh no, they are afraid they are not right, but they do not wish to be wrong. Such are not among those whom this parable condemns.

Next, *the affront was so audacious*. "How camest thou in hither?" said the king. He must have pushed by the deacons at the door. The fellow would come in. When the king said, "Bind him hand and foot," I think it was because he had used hand and foot to get in. He would get in, he said, "I will get in. I will defy the king to His face, and sit in among his guests without a wedding garment." You, dear friend, do not wish to do that, I am sure it is the last thing you would do. Why, we have to persuade you to come in at all, for you are so tenderly jealous lest you should be mistaken. Do not let this parable condemn you.

But why was the man speechless? I answer once more, *because it was the King Himself who spoke to him*. Ah! If I speak to you, what am I but flesh and blood? You do not mind me! But if the King Himself were here today, and He said to any one of you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" the tone of His voice, the glory of His presence, would flash in upon your hearts, you would be obliged to feel it, and you could not invent an answer. If you do not love Him, if you have no reverence for Him, no sympathy with His Son, you will be speechless before His bar.

Lastly, the reason why he was speechless was because, even if he could have spoken and been free from terror, *there was nothing to be said*. He could not cry, "Lord, I did not know it." He saw all the rest with wedding garments on. He could not say, "Lord, I could not get a wedding garment," each one had received a garment gratis, and he might have received the same. He could not say, "Lord, I was pushed

in here by somebody else.” No, he had willingly chosen to come, and to defy the rule. The guests had all looked at him, some had edged a little way off from him. Some had tenderly said, “Brother, will you not put on the wedding garment?” He answered, “No.” “Will you not go out before the King comes in?” “Why,” he said, “I came on purpose to defy Him. I mean to keep my place.” I do not wonder that the king said, “Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ says very strong things about the future of the wicked. I have been accused of representing the state of the lost in too horrible a manner. I have never gone beyond the dreadful descriptions given by our Lord Himself. Do not risk your eternal future. Come to the church of God and join it, but do not join it unless you love the Lord. Do not come to the Gospel feast unless you reverence the King, unless you love the Prince, unless you are in sympathy with the great work of grace which is pictured as a wedding feast. If you have sympathy with the wedding, love to the Bridegroom, and delight in the bride, then come and welcome, for you have the wedding garment.

I am thinking just now of all those other hundreds of people at the wedding, all of them clothed with the wedding garment. What joy they felt! Many had been bad, and all had been poor, but they all had the wedding garment, and not one of them was cast out. If you will but put your trust in Jesus, and so honor the Son, and rest in the love of the Father, and so honor the King, it is written, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” God bless you for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 121, 122

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—122 (SONG 1), 721, 873

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