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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, October 16, 2024 - Clothing and God's Mercy

OCTOBER 16TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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When Jesus healed the demoniac in Mark 5:1–20, the man's condition was completely reversed. While possessed, the man had acted chaotically, cutting himself with stones and running around naked. After Jesus cast out the demons, however, the man behaved calmly and reasonably, sitting clothed and in his right mind at Jesus' feet. Later he testified publicly "how much Jesus had done for him."

Literally and figuratively, clothing in Scripture is used to symbolize a person's inner spiritual condition. Today's reading is the fourth vision of Zechariah. In it he saw the high priest, Joshua. The prophet was in exile in Babylon, while Joshua had returned from exile and was in Jerusalem. Joshua stood accused by Satan, the adversary, but the Lord Himself advocated for Joshua and rebuked Satan (vv. 1–2).

As the high priest, Joshua should have been wearing special priestly garments (see October 18), but in the vision he was wearing filthy clothing, covered with excrement and thus defiled (vv. 3–5; see Isa. 64:6). "The angel of the LORD"—likely the preincarnate Christ—re clothed him with fine garments and a clean turban. This symbolized forgiveness of sin (v. 4) and restored him to fitness for His priestly duties.

Righteousness that was not his was imputed to him by God.

Joshua was then charged with obedience or covenant faithfulness (vv. 6–7) and given a promise of Messiah’s coming. Messiah is here pictured as a “Branch” (v. 8), as in Isaiah 11. He’s also pictured as a stone with seven eyes (v. 9), indicating omniscience and wisdom. He will remove the nation’s sin in a single day, just as He did for Joshua, who could do nothing for himself. God did it all. Messiah’s coming will also bring *shalom*—peace and well-being (v. 10).

What did the clean clothing in Zechariah 3 symbolize? Why does changing from filthy clothes to clean clothes provide a powerful picture of salvation?

Teach us, Lord, what it means to wear your “fine garments,” as today key verse says. Thank You that You give us new life in Christ, with “the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair” (Isa. 61:3).

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