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You Are What You Wear

I used to work part time as a sales associate at a thrift store. I had a shirt with my name written on it that I had to wear when I was on the clock, sometimes I would wear a tie and jacket to the job before replacing it with the company given t-shirt. I love putting on my Sunday best— even on other days of the week. There is something about looking in the mirror and giving yourself that nod of approval after assembling a coordinated and confident outfit. When I was in elementary school I asked for a suit for Christmas. I enjoy dressing up for church. Nowadays, I don't really have to spend much time thinking of what I should wear on Sundays. I just grab some black pants, my black clergy-shirt, maybe a jacket that can be colors other than black, but don't forget my black belt and shoes, and then I'm good to go. Vestments are for another sermon.

We would learn a lot about each other by looking through our closets. You are what you wear. Or at least you tell part of the story of who you are, by what you wear. Your wardrobe and your clothing choices tell others a lot about who you are. In mine you'd find the suit I wore at my wedding, ties I inherited from my grandpa, that cardinal's jersey I'm pretty sure I wore when I went to the 2006 World Series, and other things. After giving a written tour through her wardrobe, author and preacher Lauren Winner, in her book *Wearing God* says, "clothing doesn't just shape identity. It also communicates something about your identity to the people we meet, we are not just trying to convince ourselves we are a certain person by what we wear, we want others to see us a certain way too. Clothing can make a statement.

It's true, at least for most of us, that what we wear and how we choose to present ourselves is one of the only tangible things we have control over in our day to day lives. There may be things going on inside of us and many things swirling around outside of us: but we can choose how we are going to present ourselves and enter into each day. We can even help ourselves feel certain ways, by how we dress.

It gives us just a modicum of control in a world where we long to be in control of something, anything, but if we've lived long enough we know that is only an illusion. Most assuredly, we want to be in control of ourselves, our lives, our destinies, our future, our little corner of the world. We yearn for control because that will make us feel safe, secure, and ok.

Lutheran pastor David Lose sums it up, “Whatever our technological advances over the millennia, whatever our intellectual prowess or cultural achievement, each of us and the human race as a whole remain contingent, vulnerable, fragile beings. Human life for this reason is fraught with uncertainty and insecurity, and perhaps for this very reason we are tempted to strive for a measure of security and control over the vagaries of life through our own efforts or accomplishments.”

He then speaks of our parable, reminding us that the person is named a fool not because of his things, but because he sought ultimate safety and security and control over his life from those things.

We shouldn't stay focused on the rich fool too much, because after all, he is all of us. As only Robert Capon could say it, “In the eyes of Christ all of us - rich and poor - are “nothing but unreconstructed rich people.” “avarice” - is the driving force behind the systems that lure us to want more and more and more. We clutch to our lives and our purposes for them...”

Like the farmer we get caught up in the endless pursuit of *things*. Dizzily we get bound up in accumulating. Whether it's portfolios or likes on social media. Or zingers in the “won the argument” column or promotions at work at the expense of ourselves or other people. We store up pride in ourselves and acclaim of others. Our barns or closets are full of stories we tell ourselves about our own self-sufficiency. Until suddenly our soul is demanded of us and all the superficial saviors we have stored up just sell us out. Like the philosopher of Ecclesiastes at the end of the day we just echo, “vanity.”

There's something else for our closets though. Well, it never makes it in there, because we wear it over all the other outfits this world gives to us. It never wears out or needs alterations. We never outgrow it, we simply grow into it each morning with the rising sun as we get ready for another day. Paul says to clothe yourself in Christ. In baptism, we already have. Hence the white albs up here. Each of you are clothed with him, and your life is hidden with Christ, in God.

Wrapped in the redeeming garment that is the body of our crucified and risen savior this *shirt* of sorts says something different about us. Our safety comes from him. The one who has forgiven us and guaranteed us life forever. The one in whom we live and move and the one in whom our soul is held secure. The one with whom we have already died and risen again. The one we can trust no matter what comes our way. Covered in him we are dressed for any weather. We will be accompanied through every torrent and storm that we cannot control with the knowledge that another day is promised and eventually with all the ones dressed like us we will be gathered around the lamb who is the risen son.

On the other side of our death and the foolishness of the cross, clutching onto the faux narrative of control, our own sense of entitlement, our things is the foolish thing to do. Our clothes make another statement. We live by another wisdom. Our fashion is cruciform. Our possessions no longer have power over us. We know joy is found in finding our identity in Christ and in holding our things with an open hand. We/they are not our own anyway. We belong to the crucified one and so: to our neighbors.

I like to think about being clothed in Christ like being clothed with these all the time: running clothes. Fit for the marathon of life and more. We run to one another for community and mutual care, to the word that reads us, and raises from death again, to this table like beggars for food, energy for the race, and out these doors to be the hands and feet of the one we wear.

We are what, no, we are who we wear. That treasure, he is priceless.