

Introduction

If you've been here at any point over the past year, you know that we are in the middle of a slow and methodical excavation of the Book of Ephesians.

- Over the past year, we've been unearthing and digging up truths from Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church about our identity, both as the children of the King and as a Family in the Kingdom.

This morning we are in Ephesians 4

- For context, I'm going to read starting from verse 17
- But we'll be focusing most of our attention on verses 20-24. I'll be reading from the HCSB this morning.
- The title of this sermon is "Garments of Glory"

EPHESIANS 4:17-24 (HCSB)

¹⁷ Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

²⁰ But that is not how you learned about the Messiah, ²¹ assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus. ²² You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires; ²³ you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; ²⁴ you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

PRAY

In March of 2019, a Christian cultural phenomenon happened on the social media platform Instagram.

- A millennial Christian anonymously created a profile called "Preachers 'n' Sneakers"
 - Anybody ever heard of it?
 - If you're not familiar with Preachers 'n' Sneakers, It's an account that shares photographs of well-known celebrity preachers on Sunday mornings delivering sermons.
 - And next to the photograph is a screenshot of a website showing how much their shoes are worth.
- And let me tell you it is absolutely jaw-dropping how expensive some of these shoes are.

- We're talking super-rare, ultra-exclusive, limited-edition shoes that would often fetch two, three, sometimes four thousand dollars on the open market.
- And what was fascinating was that these weren't just prosperity-gospel televangelists. These were people that many of us in this room have heard about or even listened to.

And then, shortly after that, a spinoff account emerged called "Prophets 'n' Watches"

- You can see where this is going...
- This profile was even more shocking!
- These mega-church pastors were shown wearing gold-plated, diamond-studded Rolex watches that cost upwards of \$10,000!
- One photo depicted a famous worship leader (I won't say his name) wearing a watch that literally cost more than my house!

And I know what you're all thinking right now: "Brian, you have sneakers on...how much did you pay for YOUR shoes?!"

- The answer: 45 bucks at Burlington Coat Factory on clearance. Don't trip.

And as these accounts gained a viral following, a debate began to erupt on social media about whether or not Pastors should be wearing these ultra-expensive shoes, watches, clothing, accessories, you name it.

- Some people were appalled and outraged. They said, "This is hypocrisy! How on earth can a pastor be wearing those expensive and excessive things and preach about Jesus from the pulpit!"
- But then another group of people said "They can wear whatever they want! They're preaching the gospel! Who cares if they have \$2,000 shoes on with a matching \$600 Gucci belt?" (which by the way, is a real thing)
- And so this very heated conversation began to rage back and forth on social media.
- Even celebrities and major news publications like *Esquire* and the *New York Times* started weighing into the discussion.

And all of the debate could really be distilled down to one core question.

- And that question is: As Christians, does it matter what we wear? Does what we wear have any significance to our spiritual life?

In our text this morning, the Apostle Paul is addressing a similar question.

- Except that Paul isn't talking about wearing sneakers, or watches, or accessories. He's talking about wearing an identity.
- I believe that Paul is saying in our text this morning that when it comes to the identity that we put on, what we wear matters.

Throughout Chapter 4, Paul is trying to get the Ephesian Church to understand what it means to live a life worthy of the calling God had placed on their lives.

- He lays out his purpose in v1 - "Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God."
- The word Paul uses for "called" = *Kaleo* = to be given a name.
- So what Paul is saying is "I urge you to live a life worthy of the name God has given you."
- This isn't merely an exhortation to "do better" but rather to live into the identity (the name) they had been given in Christ.
- And that's important to understand because the majority of Chapter 4 is comprised of "do" statements, or imperatives.
 - Throughout the chapter Paul is telling the church: Don't do this! / Do this! / Don't be like that! / Be like this instead! / Don't be tossed about by every kind of teaching / But rather speak the truth in love.
 - This is the rhythm and flow that Paul is communicating with in this Chapter.
- But if we've learned anything from Ephesians thus far, it's that our Christian Experience goes far deeper than a mere list of "do's" and "don't(s)". There's something much deeper at play in the life of the christian.

In order to convey this deeper meaning, Paul introduces this metaphor of the exchanging of clothing (or garments).

- These garments represent two opposing selves (other translations use "nature").
 - He's talking about the Old Self and New Self.
 - The greek word that Paul uses for "self" or "nature" is *anthropos* which is literally translated "humanity"
 - Where we get the word "anthropology".

We see a glimpse of the "old self" in verse 17, which we looked at last week.

- Here's how Paul describes the "old nature": darkened, excluded, ignorant, hard-hearted, callous, promiscuous, and impure. He's not mincing words here.
- Specifically, he's referencing the lifestyle of the Gentiles (anyone who is not a Jew), and that's important, because the Ephesian church was perhaps the most Gentilian church in ancient Rome.
 - Ephesus was a bustling port city, making it one of the most ethnically, culturally, and spiritually diverse communities in all of the Roman empire.
 - So logically, there would have been a lot of Gentiles in the Epheisan church.
- So in essence, Paul is saying "let me remind you of who you were. This is what your life used to look like. Darkness, exclusion, ignorance—all of those things used to define you. But as a Christ-follower, that's not who you are.

- ▶ He says in v20 "...that is not how you learned about the Messiah,²¹ assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus."

It's here that paul pivots from the old to the new.

- ▶ ²² You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires;
- ▶ Other versions translate it this way: "Take off your old way of life"
- ▶ The verb he uses for "take off" = *apotithēmi* - to put off from oneself.
 - ▶ What's interesting about *apotithēmi* is that it's written in what's called the Aorist tense.
 - ▶ In ancient Greek, the Aorist tense denotes something that has already happened but is still a future reality.
 - ▶ The Aorist tense is already but not yet.
- ▶ So here's what Paul is really saying in verse 22: "When you received Christ, your old corrupted identity was removed. Therefore, continue to remove it by allowing the spirit of your mind to be renewed."

I believe that those words are for us this morning.

- ▶ Because many of us struggle to live in this tension.
- ▶ Many of us go through life, experiencing the same defeats, wallowing in the same spiritual disappointment no matter how hard we try and we can't for the life of us figure out why nothing is changing.
- ▶ Paul would say that perhaps the reason is because we're wearing an old identity. We are allowing something old to define us.

Two of the most powerful letters in the English alphabet are "E" and "R".

- ▶ And the reason they are so powerful is because when "E" and "R" are used together at the end of a word, they have the power to take a verb (an action) and turn it into a noun.
 - ▶ Specifically a noun that describes a person.
- ▶ In other words, "E" and "R" have the power to take what someone does and turn it into who they are.
- ▶ Let me give you a few examples:
 - ▶ My parents devoted their careers to teaching students in the Ventura Unified School District. We would call each of them a teacher.
 - ▶ Someone who leads a group of people, or an organization, even a country, we would call that person a leader.
 - ▶ A person who fights for a living in mixed martial arts or boxing - we would call that person a fighter.
 - ▶ Someone who loves us deeply, emotionally and intimately, we would call that person a lover.
- ▶ "E" and "R" have the power to create labels over people.

Here is the power of the Gospel: When Jesus died on the cross, he removed the "E" and the "R" from your sin.

- When Jesus cried out *Te Telestai* “it is finished” on the cross, Jesus removed the power of sin to define your life.
- At Calvary, Jesus looked sin dead in the face and said “sin you no longer have the ability or the authority to tell my people who they are.”
- That is the power of the cross!
 - That we are no longer defined by our sin!
 - That we are now defined by His blood / His righteousness / His Love / His Mercy / His Grace.
- Church, this is the good news of the Gospel.
 - Not just that we are reconciled by the cross but that we are redefined by it.

Of course, this doesn't mean that sin itself is somehow magically eradicated from our lives.

- Nor should we ignore or diminish the weight of sin *in* our lives. Sin is a big deal to God.
- Sin is such a big deal to God that He sent his only son to the cross that it's power over your identity might be broken.
- Paul would describe it this way in Romans 6: **"our old self was crucified with Christ in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin,⁷ since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims."**

Christian, this is your new self. Your new nature.

- A nature no longer rooted in *sin* and *sorrow* but in righteousness and redemption.
- An identity not corrupted by deceit but conformed to the image of the living God.
- And the Apostle Paul is imploring us to put it on.
 - In verse 24 he uses the Greek word *endyō* - which literally means “to be plunged into a garment”
 - I love that picture of what God has done for us.
 - Even when we couldn't figure out how to finagle our way into a new identity, God, in His power dropped us into one.
 - Again, Paul is using the Aorist tense. He's saying, “Through the finished work of the cross, you have been plunged into a new identity. So therefore walk in it.”
 - That is the call of the Christian life.

This idea of exchanging identities is not a new one. God has a history throughout scripture of changing the nature of His people.

- Often when God changes someones nature, He also changes their name.

- In Genesis God does this with Abram
 - He changes his name to Abraham which means "Father of a Multitude"
- He does the same thing with Sarai
 - He changes her name to Sarah: "Mother of Nations"
- A few generations later God changes Jacob's name.
 - Jacob = "supplanter" or "trickster" - A reflection of his old identity.
 - He had swindled His way into obtaining the birthright of His brother Esau.
 - After wrestling with the Lord in the darkness God changes his name to Israel.
 - "Having power with God"
- In the new testament, Jesus changes the name of Simon
 - **John 1:42** Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (Which means "Peter" or "Rock")

In scripture God never changes someones name because they deserve it or because their actions somehow warrant it.

- Both Abraham and Sarah were disobedient to the Lord.
- Jacob was a serial manipulator.
- Peter denied Jesus to save his own hide.
- God changes their name based on the identity that he sees in them.
 - He saw that Abraham and Sarah would become father and mother to the nations.
 - He saw the humility that would lead Jacob to repent before his brother Esau.
 - And He saw the courage with which Peter would preach the Gospel to the multitudes.

Christian: once, your name was sinner.

- Once, your name was wretched / unworthy / separated / forgotten
- But at the Cross God said "I'm going to change your name."
- I'm going to give you a new garment.
 - And it doesn't say "sinner" on it...it says beloved.
 - It doesn't say "wretched"...it says righteous.
 - It doesn't say "hopeless"...it says holy.
 - It doesn't say "forsaken"...it says forgiven.

God doesn't name you based on what you deserve, He names you based what He has done.

- And He has done everything necessary to call you "Child."

Do you believe that today?

- The reason I ask is because there are so many Christians show up to church every Sunday wearing the same old wretched clothes.

- We wear the same old label of "sinner" like a name tag. Like "Hello, my name is sinner. Nice to meet you..."
- One of the phrases that I hear often in the Church is, "Oh, I'm just a sinner saved by grace."
 - Did you know that the phrase "sinner saved by grace" isn't in the Bible?
 - We have 450 english translations of the Bible and "sinner saved by grace" isn't in any of them.
 - We do see the phrase "saved by grace"
 - Paul says that earlier in Ephesians 2: "**even though we were (past tense) dead in our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (You have been saved by grace)**"
 - You were dead, but you are saved.
 - **You are not a sinner saved by grace. You are a child saved by grace.**
 - To say that the Christian has been saved by grace and yet is still actively and presently identified as "sinner", is to diminish the power of the finished work of the cross.

Imagine for a moment that you were walking down the street one day and encountered and old friend.

- And right away you notice that something isn't right.
- You see that their clothes are ripped and tattered, stained with dirt and sweat.
- And you said to that friend, "Guess what? Today, we're gonna go shopping"
- And you take them Nordstrom or Macy's (or wherever rich people shop) and you bought them the most beautiful and expensive outfit you could afford. The perfect clothes.
- And you said to them "I want to you to have this outfit. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to pay me back. All you have to do is take it. It's a gift."
- Can you imagine if you saw that same friend a week later and they had on the same old worn out disgusting clothes.
- You would be...heartbroken.

It seems ridiculous, but this is what we do all the time with our identity.

- We're so focused on trying to get the stains out of our old rags that we become blind to the fact that have been given robes of royalty.
- Charles Spurgeon once preached that: "the old man is not sent to the hospital to be healed, but to the cross to die."
- As long as the old self lives, the new self will never be able to be fully adorned.

I believe that the Father's heart breaks when we decide to wear anything other than the identity that he purchased for us on the Cross.

- A nature that was bought at the highest price.
- A "new self" purchased with the blood of His own son.

- ▶ To put on anything less than Christ is to be held in bondage and slavery.

I think most of us understand that we have a new nature in Christ, but often the problem lies in how we appropriate that nature in our lives.

- ▶ For many of us, our understanding looks something like this:
 - ▶ I am a sinner. And because Jesus paid my debt, I am now covered in his righteousness.
 - ▶ Underneath, I'm still a sinner. I'm still wretched. I'm still unclean and unworthy, but now when the Father looks at me all He sees is the righteousness of Christ.
- ▶ That might be well-intentioned thinking, but that isn't God's heart for his children.
- ▶ God is after much more than a transaction, He's after transformation.

Friends, we are not just sinners cloaked in righteousness. We are children clothed in redemption.

- ▶ God's plan for your sanctification is not to put a band-aid of grace over your sin.
- ▶ The Father didn't send Jesus to the cross so that you could have a "get-out-of-jail-free card" from the community chest.
- ▶ No. God's desire is to transform every part of you from the inside out.
 - ▶ Every fiber of your being transformed to look more and more like Jesus until the day he returns in Glory.
 - ▶ That's what Paul means when he says in verse 23 that we are to be "renewed in the spirit of [our] minds."

When God gets ahold of your life, He doesn't just cover you. He invades you.

- ▶ There's a lyric that we sing sometimes that says, "spirit come and fill this place, let your glory now invade."
 - ▶ And for the longest time I took that lyric to mean "Holy Spirit, come and invade this room."
 - ▶ But then I realized that **The Holy Spirit doesn't invade rooms. He invades people.**
 - ▶ Like an Army sent on a rescue mission, God invades the hearts and mind of His children, leaving no stone or sin unturned in order that we might radiate the Glorious image of God that we were destined to from the beginning.
 - ▶ That's what it means to be "renewed in the Spirit of your mind."

The question is, are we willing to let God invade our hearts?

- ▶ Are we really willing to let the spirit of our minds be renewed by the spirit of the living God?
- ▶ If the answer to that question is no, then we will always turn back to our old garments.
- ▶ But if we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, He will always point us toward our new nature.

I'm sure that many of you know that my wife Elaina and I are new parents.

- Our daughter Leona was born this past March.
- And the last time I preached, I mentioned the fact that I'm an only child.
 - And not only am I an only child, I also have very small extended family.
 - And on top of all of *that*, I'm the youngest in my family.
- Which means that before our daughter was born, I had ZERO exposure to babies.
 - I never changed a diaper or an outfit. I thought the swaddle was a like a 90's dance move.
 - Just the thought of *holding* a baby was terrifying to me. What if I drop the baby?
- My baby IQ was very low.

As you can probably imagine, the past seven months have been like baby boot camp for me.

- I've learned more about babies in the past seven months than I did in the previous thirty-one years of my life combined.
 - Foremilk, hindmilk, sleep cycles, pacifiers, swaddling techniques, travel systems, rash cream, you name it!
 - At this point I could easily write a 50-page dissertation on poop.
- It's incredible how much you learn as a new parent.

One of the things that I learned about early on was this thing called new baby smell.

- Like I said, I had barely held any babies in my life up to this point.
- I didn't know anything about new baby smell until a few weeks after our daughter was born.
 - A mom came up to me and she had this hesitant, inconspicuous look on her face.
 - She leaned in and in a soft voice she said, "Um...do you mind if I...smell your baby?"
 - She leaned in and took a huge whiff of Leona's hair.
- Ironically the same thing just happened to me at Costco yesterday.

Now, all I do all day long is smell my kid!

- It's the best thing in the world.
- Every time I hold her, I'm constantly sniffing the top of her head.
- It's not that she smells like anything in particular. She doesn't smell like flowers or the ocean or Chanel No. 5 or anything like that. She just smells like a fresh new human.

Christian, you've been given a new humanity to wear—a new *anthropos*. Your new nature is attractive. The new life you have in Christ is fragrant to this world.

Putting on the “new self” matters because your new nature doesn’t just exist for you. Your new nature exists for the Kingdom.

- And every time you make the choice to live in that nature, the kingdom of God advances a little bit further.
 - Every time a parent says, "today, I'm going to show my children what a new life looks like by being long-suffering with them," the Kingdom of God advances a little bit further.
 - When business owner says, "today, I'm going to show my employees what a new life looks like by leading from a place of humility," the Kingdom of God advances a little further.
 - When a husband says "I'm going to show my wife what a new life looks like by loving her the way the Christ loves the church" the Kingdom of God advances a little further.
 - When a person in the body of Christ says "I'm going to demonstrate what a new life looks like by teaching kids about the Gospel," His kingdom moves a little bit further.

Often we ask the Lord to bring about revival in our city.

- We're like "Lord, send revival to our city by the power of your Holy Spirit!"
 - And there's nothing wrong with praying that, by the way.
- But do you know what will bring about the biggest revival we've ever seen?
 - The greatest revival will happen when everyday christians like you and me make the decision to let our old nature die in order that we might live in the identity that Jesus died for.
 - When we allow the spirit to invade, transform, and renew us into the glorious likeness of His image.

God invades His people so that his kingdom can invade the earth.

- Until the world sees Jesus face to face in all of His glory, the world will see the glory of Jesus in all of His people.
- That's why it matters what identity you put on.
 - To wake up every morning and say:
 - "Today, I'm going to put on my new nature."
 - "Today, I'm going to let me old self be crucified so that people can see Jesus in me1. So that my spouse, my kids, my neighbors can see the Kingdom of Heaven...in me."
- God gave you a new identity so that the world could identify Jesus in you.

Do you want to know how to glorify God in this life? Live in your new identity.

Christian, He gets no glory from you being a sinner. He gets no glory from your old self. He gets He gets all the glory from you being redeemed.

- So Church, let's walk in redemption today.

Maybe today you're holding on to some old spiritual clothes...

- Some old thought patterns that have been keeping you in bondage
- Some old fear that's been paralyzing you from walking in the calling God has placed on your life.
- Some old bitterness that has kept you from being able to maintain healthy relationships
- Some old jealousy that's left you resentful of others.
- Whatever it is, as we worship this morning, come to the foot of the Cross and lay down those old garments that you might be plunged into a new one—a new nature—created in the likeness of God's image.

PRAY

I would be in error this morning if I didn't address the fact that there are some in this room today who still wear the identity of sinner because you don't have a relationship with Jesus yet.

- Paul says in verse 21 of our text "...assuming you heard about Jesus, and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus."
 - Everything that Paul says after that is only true if we really know Jesus.
 - There are some of you in this room who have never had a relationship with Jesus before.
 - And there are also some in this room who know plenty about Jesus, but there's no relationship. You don't know Him.
- Paul would say earlier in Ephesians that apart from knowing Jesus, all of us are called children of wrath.
- Apart from the finished work of the Cross, all of us deserve to be labeled by our sin.
- But here's the good news today: you don't have to be.
- There are plenty of new clothes to go around.
- God's desire is that none would perish, but that all would come to repentance and everlasting life through Jesus.

If that resonates with you this morning...

- If you want to put on a new spiritual outfit, then I want to ask something bold of you.
- During the second set of worship, come forward to the left or the right of the stage.
- There are some lovely human beings that would love to pray for you and help you step into a new identity in Jesus Christ.

Communion is available at the front of the stage this morning...

- Communion is an ancient practice, a symbol of the shed blood and the broken body of our savior.
- A reminder for us of the price that was paid for our new self.

The carpets are available to take a posture of humility and surrender

Church, let us respond to Jesus this morning.

- The one who makes all things new.
- The one who gives us beauty / praise for heaviness / Joy for mourning
- May we not leave this place today without adorning ourselves with the glorious garment of new life made available to us in Christ.