

Burlap Believer-A Wardrobe Change!

John 20:1-9

April 1, 2018

Resurrection Sunday

Resurrection Sunday falling on April 1st, April Fool's Day! If you remember, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lent Season, started on Valentine's day this year. The last time the Valentine's day...April Fool's day combo happened was in 1945...the year the Detroit Tigers won the World Series. I don't think it will help them this year.

The last time Easter fell on April Fool's day was 1956, 62 years ago. The next time it will happen will be 2029...11 years from now.

April Fool's day is one of my favorite days. Over the years I have enjoyed pranking our children and my wife.

But when you put Resurrection Sunday on April Fool's Day it is just not the same.

That is until I read some great April fool pranks to play on the kids. For example, unwrap the tootsie roll candies, take the chocolate chewy roll out and wrap a small carrot. Instead of jelly beans in the plastic eggs, put frozen peas! Instead of the solid chocolate rabbit, make a chocolate solid rice cake rabbit.

But the reality of this day is not an April Fool's day prank. It is a day of a wardrobe change! Oh, that brings us to another Easter tradition...a new Easter outfit. How many of you remember growing up having to wear some new Easter outfit to church? Now for the girls I don't think it was as big of a deal as for us guys. Girls got the pretty new dress and shoes and maybe even an Easter bonnet.

Guys, I don't know about you but I still get this choking feeling of buttoning the top button of some dress shirt just so the clip on tie would stay! And definitely the new penny loafers were no where near the comfort level of my daily "Chucks." That's old school for the black high top Converse basketball shoes.

Easter...a day of candy and clothes or a new wardrobe!

This burlap, sackcloth, is not an April Fool's prank! It is not my new daily wardrobe. We began our "Burlap believer" journey thru Lent wearing strips of burlap. They were reminders of what are we covering up in our lives that we need to turn over to Jesus. We sought to bring the fullness of God's goodness in the emptiest places of people's lives. We were challenged to be someone others can lean on for prayer and presence. We sought humility over pride and ego. We realized the beauty in brokenness when we allow God to bring the healing.

We come to the Resurrection reality! It's time for a wardrobe change. The wearing of the sackcloth of mourning is not to be a daily wardrobe. It is only for a time and then comes the day for a wardrobe change. The resurrection of Jesus is that day.

The Psalmist recognized a new day for a wardrobe change when he wrote:

"You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy!" (Psalm 30:11 NIV)

Now let's don't get ahead of ourselves and make the quick Easter wardrobe change before we have a chance to see what it involves for us.

In a 2016 telephone survey conducted by the Rasmussens Report, it was discovered that three quarters of Americans believe that Jesus was the Son of God who died for our sins and rose from the dead. Fourteen percent did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

Could this be the biggest April Fool's prank this year? Seventy-seven percent of Americans wearing the Easter wardrobe but not living the wardrobe change of the resurrection. What's the big difference?

It makes all the difference in the world whether someone is dead or alive. That's why, according to New Testament scholar, Luke Timothy Johnson, the most important question about Jesus is whether he is dead or alive. If he is dead, the memory of his life and accomplishments may still exert a significant influence, but his words and actions have ended. His life is over. Finished. Complete. The dead lie still.

But if he is alive, then everything is radically different...including our wardrobe for living. He can show up on our doorstep. Do new things. Surprise, confront, encourage, instruct us. He can turn our mourning, our sackcloth wardrobe into a new wardrobe... a resurrection wardrobe.

There is not middle ground between the sackcloth wardrobe and the resurrection wardrobe. He is either dead or he is resurrected from the tomb. We heard the account of when the disciples went and looked into the tomb and saw the evidence of the wardrobe change. Jesus was no longer in his sackcloth, dead man linens. His resurrection linens were evidence he was no longer there! April Fools unbelievers! He is risen from the dead! He put on a new wardrobe...a resurrection wardrobe.

People who hear about the resurrection for the first time may need some time before they are willing to make the wardrobe change. Like Mary and the disciples they may have to go through some stages of belief. At first they may think the resurrection of Jesus is a fabricated story, impossible to believe. (vs. 2) Like Peter, they may check out the facts and still are puzzled by it all. (vs. 6)

Only when they encounter the resurrected Jesus personally are they able to make the wardrobe change. (v.16) Then as they commit themselves daily to Jesus they realize the reality of the wardrobe change. They make the proclamation, like doubting Thomas did, **"My Lord! My God!"** (vs. 28) They make the wardrobe change and put on the resurrection wardrobe!

The Apostle Paul was one who resisted the truth about a resurrected Messiah. He put those who wore the resurrection wardrobe in jail. He witnessed and gave his approval of the first death of a Christian, Stephen. (Acts 7:54-60)

However, he one day met Jesus face to face. He put on the new resurrection wardrobe. He would later write:

"Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe---Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise." (Galatians 5:26 Message bible)

Anyone who believes in Jesus as the resurrected son of God is not simply putting their old wardrobe through the wash...they are putting on a new wardrobe...a wardrobe change.

What is this new wardrobe look like? What kind of wardrobe change are we talking about? It is a wardrobe that is to be worn daily and not just one special day a year. It is a wardrobe that is practical in day to day life.

The Apostle Paul tested this resurrection wardrobe and gave this review of the new wardrobe:

"You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it...."

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. (Colossians 3:9,10,12-14 Message bible)

Victoria may have a secret about her wardrobe...but it is obvious there is no secret with our Victory wardrobe in Christ Jesus, our resurrected Savior. Our Victory wardrobe in our resurrected Savior is a daily victory...a daily reality.

We must become careful and not fall into the cultural understanding that the resurrection wardrobe is merely a timeless proclamation we celebrate once a year in the triumph Jesus has over sin and death.

The resurrection wardrobe of Jesus assures us that God will win in the end.

Last weekend four NCAA men's basketball teams: Villanova, Kansas, Michigan and Sister Jean's team Loyola-Chicago, put on their final four hats and t-shirts after winning their elite 8 game. Today, there are only two teams who will meet tomorrow for the final championship game. Only one will be able to put on the NATIONAL CHAMPIONS wardrobe. They will have that bragging right for one year.

The resurrection wardrobe is daily and will last forever. It overcomes catastrophes. Events do happen that we cannot explain. Irrational tragedies and horrible outrages do occur. But because God raised Jesus from the dead, because He won the victory once and for all times over sin and death, we can be sure that there will come the day when God will overcome all catastrophes.

The resurrection is proof that no matter how bad things get in life, we can trust in God who has won the victory. We can put on the resurrection wardrobe of victory.

The resurrection wardrobe is available for anyone who believes Jesus died and rose from the dead.

The disciples made the wardrobe change from burlap to Christ's resurrection reality.

They lived out what they believed. They gave their lives for the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.

What wardrobe are you wearing today?

Have you made the wardrobe change and put on the resurrection wardrobe of Jesus' love?

Are you wearing the all-purpose resurrection wardrobe of Christ's love?

Are you wearing it daily or are you playing an April fool's prank on your family and friends?

They see you wearing the resurrection wardrobe today, but when you get back to daily living they don't see the compassion, patience, humility, forgiveness and love being lived out.

Don't let your wardrobe be an April fool's prank.

Put on the resurrection wardrobe of Christ's love daily!

Easter is a day of candy and clothes. The candy and new wardrobes are reminders of the day.

We are given a "remember me" label for our resurrected love in Jesus.

It is not a fancy piece of chocolate. It is not wrapped up in bright foil wrappers or tucked in plastic eggs.

It is a simple reminder of a piece of bread and a cup of juice.

Jesus offered this reminder to all who go through the wardrobe change. He invites us to remember his love by celebrating this holy meal. In fact, he instructed his followers that as often as we eat of the bread and drink from the cup to remember his love for you.

The resurrection of Jesus is not an April Fool's prank by God our Father to his children.

The resurrection of Jesus is a daily reality in the hearts and lives of those who are clothed in Jesus.

It is time for a wardrobe change! Take off the sackcloth of the burlap and put on the resurrection, victorious wardrobe of Jesus. (Take off the sackcloth/burlap and place it on the altar)

Have you made the wardrobe change in your life?

How are you doing daily living the reality of His love in your life!

Do others see the label of the Creator being lived out in your day to day living?

As you come to celebrate this sacrament of love, this reminder of love, leave your burlap wardrobe at the altar and put on the new wardrobe of resurrection!

