Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Are there any children here, or perhaps I should say any teenagers, who think that their Dad’s have no fashion sense whatsoever? Well, of course, the whole discussion about fashion and style assumes that we have different clothes to choose from. And the fact is that most of us, if not all of us, will have a wardrobe or drawers with different clothes we can choose from. So we can make choices about what we wear, which is why there is so many different varieties of shirts and blouses and tee-shirts and pants and shorts and skirts and dresses here today and most of us will wear a different outfit next Sunday. But the poorer you are the fewer clothes you will own. And there can come a time when all you own is the proverbial shirt on your back; there is no wardrobe at home with different colours and styles, just what you have on.

Well, we don’t typically pay much attention to what clothes Jesus wore when He lived on earth. And this is because the Bible is more interested in what He *did* and what He *said* than in what He wore. But there are three mentions of Jesus’ clothing in the Gospels:

* The first comes from the **beginning** of His life. In Luke 2 we read, “*And [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in cloths and laid Him in a manger*.” Mrs Holtslag is in Christchurch at present and she has taken with her some newly knitted and purchased outfits for little Mikayla. And I am sure that many of you have made or purchased outfits for newborns. But there were no newly knitted or purchased outfits for baby Jesus; just strips of the plainest of cloth that were wrapped around Him. And these strips of cloth demonstrated the poverty that surrounded Him when His life began.
* And the second reference to Jesus’ clothing is **this one in our text**. And what we are told is that his garments were divided into four parts and then they cast lots for his seamless tunic, so as not to tear it. The tunic was what we would call underwear. You would wrap yourself in the tunic and then put your outer garments over the top. And all sorts of guesses and theories are made about the garments that were divided into four, which I won’t even list. And then there are other theories and guesses about the seamless tunic and what it symbolized. For example, the High Priest’s robe was a seamless robe, so maybe Jesus’ seamless tunic was a High Priestly symbol. Others say that the seamless robe represented the unity of Christ’s church or the wholeness of His teaching or even the Virgin Birth??!! But we shouldn’t give something a symbolism that the Bible does not give it. What we are told is that lots were cast for Jesus’ tunic to fulfill what was written in Psalm 22:18. And the other thing that we can note from the description of His clothing is that these items were the common clothing of those who were poor. That is what we are supposed to notice here – just as Jesus was *born* into poverty, so He *died* in poverty.
* And there is one more mention of Jesus’ clothing in the Bible but we will come back to that later on.

The major point that will occupy our attention for the rest of this sermon is that because Jesus’ clothes, including His under-garment, were divided among the soldiers, it stands to reason that the Creator King of the Universe was crucified naked. And we know from history that this was a typical part of the humiliation of crucifixion.

So as respectfully as possible, we want to consider **the Gospel Lessons of a Disrobed King**. And we do this under two headings this morning as we consider Him **Naked and Ashamed**, and **Disrobed and Powerless**. And we do this to see more about how the Lord Jesus was forsaken by the Father and how much our sin cost Him. And then we will end by briefly noting the third reference to His clothing in the Gospels, which is a message of exaltation and glory!

1. So we begin with our Lord, **Naked and Ashamed**.
	1. It will not have escaped your notice that while there are fur and feathers in the animal kingdom, it is **only us humans that wear clothes**. I know that some pet-owners think it is cute to put a tutu on their Chihuahua or a kilt on their terrier, but if their pet dogs could think and talk like we do, I am pretty sure they would say, You have got to be joking?! So while animals are naked, we humans wear clothes.
		1. And I am sure that anthropologists will have an evolutionary explanation for why we chose to wear clothes but **we know why we wear clothes from the Bible**. Way back in the Garden of Eden, we are told that God made Adam and Eve and brought them together as husband and wife and they “*were both naked and … not ashamed*.” So initially there was no sense of embarrassment or desire to cover themselves. But in ch. 3, after they had eaten the fruit that God had warned them not to eat, the very next thing we read is that “*the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths*.” And then when God came to the Garden they hid themselves from Him. And when God called out to Adam, Adam said, “*I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself*.” So the awareness of being naked and the sense of embarrassment that it brings was now a very strong reality for human beings.
		2. A few chapters on in Genesis we read the account of **Noah**. And after the flood waters had subsided and Noah and his family and the animals had left the ark, we are told that Noah planted a vineyard and drank the wine and became drunk and lay naked in his tent. And one of his sons saw naked Noah and he told his two brothers about this, most probably in the sense of, “Guys, (smirking) check Dad out!” But they took up a garment and laid it on their shoulders and walked backwards into the tent, taking care not to see him, and covered the nakedness of their father. And when Noah awoke and heard what had happened he cursed the son that had seen him and he blessed the sons that had covered him. And this story reinforces the shame of public nakedness.
		3. And even today in our ‘sexually-open’ society, even streakers are still streakers, right, not dawdlers! And those who wear the skimpiest of bathing costumes at the pool or the beach spend the whole time carefully adjusting them to keep what’s left of their nakedness covered!
	2. But returning to Adam and Eve in the Garden, what was God’s very first gift to sinful Adam and Eve? Clothes! In **Genesis 3:21** we read, “*And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them*.”
		1. And this was a **gracious** gift because it was an undeserved gift. God would have been entirely within His rights to leave Adam and Eve to suffer the consequences of their sin by remaining naked. Shame was a small part of what they and we deserve. But God, instead, gave them clothes.
		2. And this was because, like everything else in creation, our bodies and our minds were now marred by or affected by sin. There are imperfections and flaws in our bodies, we don’t have complete control of our bodily functions, and lust and shame are problems in terms of how we think. So God gave us clothing so that our nakedness could be covered.
		3. And we typically speak about this as a **common grace gift** – a gift that God gives to all human beings, whether they be believers or unbelievers. So we should thank God for the gift of clothing. Do you do that? But of course, unbelievers do not thank God for any of His gifts. And that means that on Judgment Day the gift of clothing will be a part of the long list of gifts that makes unbelievers fully deserving of the condemnation they will receive because they refused to thank God for them.
	3. But as we return now to the crucifixion, something we have paid a lot of attention to is the fact that **the** **main ‘actor’ in every aspect of the crucifixion was the Father**. **Isaiah 53:10** says, “*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief*.” John wants us to see that the Father subjected the Son to every humiliation on the cross, which is why Jesus cried out, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*?”
		1. And here too, with what we have seen about clothing as a gracious gift of God, we see that the Father removed the even gift of clothing from the Son as the soldiers removed His clothes.
		2. And there was no place for the Lord Jesus to hide as He was nailed to the cross.
		3. And brothers and sisters, I don’t want to be unnecessarily indelicate but we all know about normal bodily functions and we can only imagine the effect that crucifixion would have on them and it was all on public display.
		4. How utterly humiliating and shameful. And this was brought on the Son by the Father. This was all part of what He had to endure in His forsakenness.
	4. But it was also part of how He became our acceptable Saviour. You see, back in the Garden of Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin. And when you think about it this was **the first sacrifice in the Bible**. Animals died so that their skins could cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. And the spiritual message there was that sacrifice was needed to cover sin. So the animals skins were a visual sermon, if you like, about the need for a covering sacrifice.
		1. And here at the cross, while there was no covering for Jesus, He was becoming the covering sacrifice for the sin of Adam and Eve and you and me.
		2. Do you see it, Brothers and Sisters? Do you understand what was going on here? Your sins and mine are to blame for this and every indignity that Jesus suffered. As it says in **Isaiah 53**, “*He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds (including the emotional ones) we are healed*.” As the hymn-writer puts it, “Died He for me, who caused His pain … Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, should’st die for me?”
		3. So as Jesus was exposed He was became the sacrifice that covered our sin.
	5. And it may be the same point of application that we have heard in recent weeks but we must remember this when temptation comes. When the choice to sin is staring you in He faced, think about all of the humiliations and indignities and sufferings of your Saviour and say, No! I will not sin; I will not dishonour His sacrifice for me; I will love Him and choose to do what is right.
2. So the Lord Jesus was **Naked and Ashamed** and this too was a part of what He had to endure to become our acceptable Saviour. But in a very similar vein let us see that He was also **Disrobed and Powerless**.
	1. We learn in v23 that there were four soldiers in the crew that crucified Jesus, because they divided His garments into four parts, “*one for each soldier*.” And then they somehow cast lots so that the winner got the whole seamless tunic instead of it being torn up so that they could each have an equal share. And then we read, “*This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."*” And this is a quotation from **Psalm 22:18**, which we read earlier.
		1. And in terms of that Psalm, commentators speculate as to whether David also had his hands and feet pierced, and his clothes taken from him and divided up by the casting of lots?
		2. But we don’t need to speculate about whether that literally happened to David. Perhaps it did but what David wrote was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it had this future fulfillment in mind. The Psalm was David’s lament about feeling forsaken by God; he was crying about evildoers who had robbed him of the experience of fellowship with God. So it is more likely that he was using figurative language to describe those who had done this to him as *like* robbers who might wound their victim and steal his clothes, such that David felt wounded and exposed and humiliated.
		3. The key point is that something that David wrote **1000 years** before Jesus was born was accurately and explicitly fulfilled here at the cross. I don’t know if you much about the Bible but that book in your hand is made up of 66 books that were written and collected together over a period of about 1600 years. There is historical and bibliographical evidence or this. Psalm 22 was written around 1000 BC. And 1000 years later that verse and many others like it were explicitly fulfilled! The Bible is trustworthy and reliable. God used human authors but He gave them the words they wrote so that we would have His Word about His Son.
	2. But the **spiritual significance** of this moment is that the King by whom the universe came into being could even keep the most basic of human possessions – His clothes!
		1. When He was born, Wise men from the East brought Him three gifts. Do you remember what those gifts were, boys and girls? Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And that is how it should have been for Jesus; that is what He deserved – gifts fit or a King! But here He cannot even keep His clothes. He is a picture of utter powerlessness as the Father strips the Son of the last vestiges of dignity!
		2. And let us remember also that while David only *felt* forsaken of God, for God never forsakes His children, somehow, mysteriously, the Son was *truly* forsaken by the Father.
		3. But such is the love of Jesus that this was not just something done to Him but also something He willingly did. In **Matthew 5:40**, Jesus said, “*And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well*.” And here the Lord Jesus gave up all of His clothes to those who laid charges against Him, which, as we have seen, was you and me.
		4. May we truly weep because of our sin! We robbed Jesus of His royal dignity. As the hymn-writer beautifully puts it:

*Alas and did my Saviour bleed, and did my sovereign die?*

*Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?*

*Was it for crimes that I have done He groaned upon the tree?*

*Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree …*

*Thus might I hide my blushing face while His dear cross appears;*

*dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt mine eyes to tears.*

*But drops of grief can ne’er repay the debt of love I owe;*

*here, Lord, I give myself away, ‘tis all that I can do.*

* + 1. Is that the attitude that you will take into this coming week? Will you leave here with a heart dissolved in thankfulness, determined to love Him by obeying Him?

Well all that remains is to briefly consider the third reference to Jesus’ clothing that we find in the Gospels. And it is just a little farther on in our chapter – **verses 39-41**. For there we read that after they took His body from the cross, Joseph of Arimithea and Nicodemus brought “*a mixture of myrhh and aloes, about 75 pounds (or 34 kilograms) in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices*” and laid His body in a brand new tomb in the Garden.

* Brothers and Sisters, 34 kilograms of spices was a massive amount in keeping with the burial of a king! And tombs like the one that Jesus’ body was laid in were massively expensive tombs that were typically reserved for the high and mighty of society.
* So with His death, the time of humiliation and suffering was ended. His burial clothes were the first sign that He was now the exalted King who would rise and ascend and rule, and receive the worship and honour of the nations, now and in eternity!

So as fitting as it has been for us to consider the Gospel lessons of a disrobed King, it is fitting also that we end with this picture of Him as the exalted King! And that is because His exaltation is our hope of salvation!

* If the idea of being naked in public terrifies you now, imagine standing naked and exposed before God on Judgment Day. And there won’t be a pair of jeans and a tee-shirt anywhere or a bush to hide behind. And the worst thing will be that your unbelief and hatred of Christ will be naked and exposed to God.
* **Isaiah 61:10** says, “*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness*.” If you have trusted in Christ for your salvation, then what you will ‘wear’ when you stand before God on Judgment Day will be the ‘clothing of salvation’ that Jesus has dressed you in. So you might be naked, but you will not be ashamed! Isn’t that a glorious thought! Isn’t Jesus a wonderful Saviour!

And all God’s people said, Amen.