

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk.

The Old Lamp

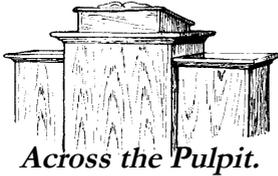
A lamp once hung in an ancient town
At the corner of a street,
Where the wind was keen, and the way was dark,
And the rain would often beat;
And all night long, its light would shine
To guide the travelers' feet.

The lamp was rough and plain and old,
And the storm had beaten it sore;
'Twas not a thing one would care to show,
Whate'er it had been before,
But no one thought what the lantern was,
'Twas the light that, within, it bore.

The lamp is a text for young and old,
Who seek in a world of pride
To shine for their Lord and to show Him forth,
And never their light to hide;
You are the lantern, a thing of naught,
But Christ is the light inside.

- Anonymous

*Ye are the light of the world
Let your light so shine before men
That they may see your good works
and
Glorify your Father which is in heaven*



The Missing Wedding Garment

*Brother Stanley Heisey
Danskin Mennonite Church 2010*

I invite your attention to the gospel of Matthew for a message this evening.

Jesus said one time: the words that I speak unto you are spirit; they are life, John 6:63, Jesus spoke with a spiritual emphasis, and His gracious words offered life to the hearers. In fact we could say the entire message of the Bible has the potential to impart life, it is a living message, it is alive, and as people respond to that it can begat life within our hearts. It is a miracle!

What seems to be physical pages of print has the power to change lives. Indeed we could say they are wonderful words of life.

Tonight we would like to look at some thoughts that Jesus expressed, words of instruction and words of inspiration, Matthew's gospel chapter 22. Verse one suggests that Jesus was continuing a parabolic discourse, and He was.

In chapter 21 Jesus was confronted by the chief priests and elders after He had cleansed the temple and cursed the fruitless fig tree, they wondered who gave Him the authority to do this thing and Jesus responded with that question regarding the baptism of John and then proceeded to relate two kingdom parables that addressed needs in the lives of these religious people.

He gave the parable of the two sons, the one son was called to go and he said: I will not! but later he went, the second son: I will go but did not. And then we have the story of the wicked husbandmen and in both of these accounts Jesus was trying to convey a convicting message to the scribes and elders that He was speaking to and they understood that, verse 45, And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. *Matthew 21:45.*

And once again He shared a parable that focused attention on them.

*Matthew 22:1-14*¹ And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, ²The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, ³And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. ⁴Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my fatlings are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage. ⁵But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: ⁶And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*. ⁷But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. ⁸Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. ⁹Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. ¹⁰So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. ¹¹And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: ¹²And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. ¹³Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

Jesus was addressing the audience that had gathered before him on this occasion. Tonight we are the audience that Jesus' words are addressing. The Lord has some things to say to us tonight.

The story reflects no doubt some customary practices of Jesus day, however what is more important than the customary practices are the spiritual thoughts that Jesus wants us to understand from this account.

There were three invitations if you noticed them, Verse three, He sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden.

This could well be the Old Testament Prophets that were sent to His people, those who were His chosen ones, those that were bidden but they would not come, they were a wicked and rebellious generation. Remember the words of Isaiah, Who hath believed our report? *Isaiah 53:1*. They didn't

believe, they did not accept God's message, many of them rejected God and finally there was no remedy. That is the Bible record. And so time went on.

Then in verse four, Again, he set forth other servants saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed.

This could well be the apostolic era when again the Lord's message went forth and was often rejected

Now I believe verse six describes the treatment that Stephen received and others like him, the remnant took his servants and treated them spitefully, and slew them.

I think verse seven could well relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, When the King heard thereof he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then in verse eight, the Jewish people who rendered themselves unworthy for an exclusive invitation, then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready but they which were bidden were not worthy. Then the servants were directed in verse nine, Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

The gospel message went not only to the Jews now but to the Gentile world also.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: regardless of ethnic background, regardless of lifestyle, bad and good were brought in to the marriage and the wedding was furnished with guests, in verse 10.

The next three verses eleven to thirteen describe for us the situation that existed at the wedding feast. One came to the marriage without a wedding garment.

I have entitled the message tonight "The Missing Wedding Garment"

It seems like a kind of a mystery book and in many ways it is a mystery, in many ways it is hard to explain why anyone would come without a wedding garment.

To help us to understand the burden of Jesus heart as He told the story I would like to raise a number of questions the first one being:

1] What is the wedding garment?

There came a man who had not on a wedding garment.

What was he missing?

What was the spiritual truth Jesus was trying to convey?

What was lacking in this man's life, what did he not have?

Among the people of that day a wedding garment was required, a long white robe, for those that were present at the wedding. What it did was to identify them with the rest of the wedding guests, they were part of the activity, part of the celebration and Jesus used this custom to typify a requirement for those that were gathered together, a requirement for those who find acceptance with Him, a requirement of identity for those who are the people of God.

What is the wedding garment?

I am impressed with the scriptures, the songwriter put it well when he said; "God is His own interpreter and He will make it plain."

There are so many things that God helps us to understand as we compare Scripture with Scripture and are able to come to some conclusions logically based on parallel truths that we can look at in one passage and look at it somewhere else.

I would like to take us back to Isaiah 61 and notice how the Prophet uses this expression to describe a condition. *Isaiah 61:10* he said: ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

Just like a bridegroom and bride equip themselves for the occasion likewise the guests that had gathered together need to be properly garbed and he says he hath clothed me with the garments, the wedding garments we could say, of salvation.

Let's notice a few other scriptures that link these thoughts together.

Let's go back to Job.

Job 29:14: Job said: I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:

He uses this terminology as an expression of attiring himself, putting something on that he called righteousness, something that he considered a garment, something that clothed him.

Psalm 45, just noticing a few of these parallel thoughts, in this Psalm we have the Lord's kingdom illustrated, its majestic qualities and we, as subjects of the King, I believe are described in verse 13 where he says: The King's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold.

Psalm 45:13.

He is describing something special about the garment, the attire, the quality of the character of his people. That is very significant.

Revelation 19:7-8 again conveys the same idea: Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

So we see this parallel structure of thought that relates to what we are putting on, the wedding garment. The strong implication is that it is indeed that which we receive by way of salvation is holiness of life, it is uprightness of character. And I think it is important for us to understand this truth tonight that everyone of us needs to have a wedding garment, it is required. We need salvation, we need what salvation provides and that is a righteous life, holiness of character, qualities that reflect the very image of Jesus Christ.

I think it is important for us to understand that because one of the challenges that we face as a people that believe in practical expressions of holiness we believe in attire that is conformed to Bible standards, it is possible that we may think because we have met a standard that we have satisfied God.

We appreciate the standard, we appreciate the state of attire, it is right but the thing of attire is not salvation, we need to be clothed with the garments of salvation, our lives need to be saturated with a holy expression of the will of God.

That is the kind of garment that God gives us when we are truly born again, there is a quality of holiness that now identifies us among the wedding guests as God's people, there is no mistake about it.

I think Titus chapter 2 picks up this same thought; notice some practical areas of holiness of life.

Titus 2:7-10 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, ⁸ Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. ⁹ *Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to please *them* well in all *things*; not answering again; ¹⁰ Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Notice that "adorn" in verse 10, the attire that we may put on, that we may express, that we may demonstrate. Our clothing is of such a distinctive manner that people have no question, or should not have, about the righteous character that we represent, because a righteous character is demonstrated by a righteous conduct that Paul talks about here in this passage, in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works.

And that will always be the case when we adorn the doctrine of God, that will always be the case when we put on the robes of righteousness, we put on the garment of salvation.

Holiness, uprightness of life, a chaste character, salvation does that for us through Jesus Christ.

We need to have that wedding garment.

The second question is:

2]. Why is it needed? Why is it so important?

Why was it required in this story that Jesus gave?

Again I would take us back to the Old Testament to help us understand by looking at this graphic portrait that the Prophet brings to our attention in Ezekiel 16.

In Ezekiel 16 I would like to notice first verse six. In the preceding verses he describes a child that was abandoned, a child that was left in a very hopeless and helpless state: ⁶ And when I passed by thee, and saw thee pol-

luted in thine own blood, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live. *Ezekiel 16:6* Verse eight, ⁸ Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. ⁹ Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. ¹⁰ I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. *Ezekiel 16:8-10.*

It is a picture in this setting of God's people and God's interest in them, God poured out His love on His people, they were helpless, He brought them out of bondage, He provided so abundantly for them, yea He clothed them, in every way possible He made it possible for them to survive. But the chapter goes on how that they despised God's goodness, God brought judgement on them because of it.

But this passage also helps us to understand our own sinful nature before God, our own unrighteousness, our unworthiness, our own helplessness outside of God's favour by nature, God passed by us at the time of love, God so loved us, God so cared about us He covered us, He provided a covering, He provided salvation for every single person. He was asking us to be clothed thereby with the garment of salvation.

Let's turn back now to a more familiar passage in Isaiah 64 where it says it this way.

By nature we are all as an unclean thing and all our own righteousneses - plural -all the things we can do to try and measure up to God's standards are worthless, are as filthy rags. *Isaiah 64:6.*

That is our nature, there is nothing good in us, there is nothing where we can claim righteousness, we are filthy in God's sight, we are unacceptable to Him, we need to exchange our rags for true righteousness, for the garment of salvation.

That is why we need it, because we are filthy, our rags are tattered, they are not fit to be worn, we are not acceptable to God with these natural rags that we have, we are born with rags, but the Lord wants us to be born again with righteousness. He wants to clothe us with the garment of salvation!

Revelation 3:18: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear;

We are all so much like Adam and Eve aren't we by nature, shamefully unclothed, shamefully unacceptable to God but He wants to clothe us, He wants to give us the fine linen of righteousness, He wants to offer every one of us tonight the garment, the wedding garment of salvation.

What a blessing it is, we are so needy and everyone of us needs to have that because of that natural condition that we call sin.

People don't always see it, they smugly feel that everything is fine but God looks at every life, every accountable life and He sees the filthy rags and He longs to provide a garment of salvation, He clothes them that the shame of one's nakedness does not appear, just like He wanted to clothe in love Adam and Eve, He is doing the same thing for people today, the same thing for you and me because we need it so badly.

The third question I would like to ask tonight:

3]. Where is this wedding garment obtained?

I find this very interesting as it relates to Oriental customs.

Did you notice what we read there in *Revelation 19:8*, there was a significant thought that we shared that I think sheds some light on this question, God wants to clothe us, He desires to give us the garment of salvation, He says it this way, To her was granted, to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen.

When wedding guests came to a wedding at the door the host would offer every single person that came a wedding garment, it was offered to them freely, it was only to be found at the wedding occasion and only offered by the host.

I think is a beautiful picture of God offering to every single person that gift of salvation.

He wants every single person to have it, every person in the world can find at the door entrance a wedding garment, they can be clothed thereby, they can enter in and identify with the rest of the guests, they can identify with the host, they now have it, they have the gift, they experienced it personally and all it requires is a willingness to receive it. Just a willingness to receive it!

We cannot get it from our parents, we can't get it from our friends, we can't get it from our church leaders, this garment is not home spun, it is of heavenly design and only God offers this wedding garment, it comes from God's wardrobe and so we again need to consider those familiar verses in Ephesians chapter 2 where he says: For by grace are ye saved through faith. *Ephesians 2:8*. It is grace, it is God's gift, not of yourselves, it is not a piece of clothing that we can somehow stitch together because if we try to do that we will wind up with filthy rags again, it doesn't work, it is God's gift, it is not something that we can do or boast about, God knows that, it is really a gift and freely we must receive it (*1 Corinthians 2:12*). And just like every guest could receive this wedding garment at the door of the occasion so it is as we come to Jesus Christ, the door, we receive the gift of salvation.

What a blessing!

Tonight that can be obtained, every single person who wants it can have it, everyone who desires the gift can receive it, it is available to everybody. Just like our brother mentioned tonight, Come, whosoever will may come. I praise the Lord for that this evening. Yes there is nothing we can do to merit salvation but we can receive it as a gift and walk worthy of it

I would like to ask the question now:

4]. When is this wedding garment required?

When?

From the story that Jesus gave obviously a strong indication was that it was required right then. This man that entered in didn't have that, he should have had it but he did not. It was expected for him to be clothed with the wedding garment.

As it relates to where we are tonight I believe we can simply share this truth; That the wedding garment is required when we understand how filthy and tattered our natural clothing is.

When we come to understand that we are dirty, this doesn't look right, this doesn't feel right on me, I don't feel comfortable in this. We call it the time of enlightenment, we call it accountability, there comes a point in every person's life where they understand in a fresh way that something is

wrong, these clothes don't seem to fit me right any more, for a while they seemed okay, I didn't think about how dirty they were but now all of a sudden they are filthy, all of a sudden I don't feel right wearing these clothes!

At that point in time I believe God in His graciousness reminds us that there is another set to wear, there is another garment to put on, there is something better to adorn ourselves with than our own filthy rags. He offers the garment of salvation and at that point He expects us to take it.

Many of us remember the time when we struggled with the filthy rags and we felt uncomfortable and we wished for something better and Praise the Lord there was something better to put on, there was a salvation robe that clothes the dust and made us accepted of God. Praise the Lord for that!

I marvel at God's fairness for the innocent child that doesn't understand that truth, God doesn't require the wedding garment for them, but there does come a point in the experience of every individual some time when God requires that.

When we recognize God's claim on our life, when we comprehend enough that we can understand God's offer He holds out the wedding garment and says, It is free for you, you may take it, it is for you to put on, wont you please take it?

When we understand that offer I believe God requires us to wear it, to put it on. It is required for us as a necessity for us to identify with Christ's kingdom.

One thing that our church life requires of us, and that is one of the things that is so important and that is that everyone, we want to believe, and I want to emphasize that, that we want to believe that everyone that is a member in our churches has on a wedding garment. We require that our membership is made up of penitent believing obedient people, those are the ones who put on the wedding garment, those are the ones who are clothed with righteousness, whose conduct and due order is after the will of God. God requires it and we need to require it

As this story that Jesus gave implies it is going to be required when we face the Judge of all the earth, He will require a wedding garment.

I would like to move on now to another question that really makes this whole story so mysterious:

5]. Why was the wedding garment missing?

Why did this man come in the door, why did he bypass the host and find himself in the activity of the wedding feast and didn't have on a wedding garment?

I take us back to our text Matthew 22 and I would like to look at a couple of verses here closely, verses 11 and 12

Considered with me the use of the word "not" in verse 11, And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had *not* on a wedding garment: *Matthew 22:11*

And that expression "had not on a wedding garment" he was simply stating a fact, he did not have it on, he was invited like everyone else was but he was without the wedding garment.

In verse 12: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither *not* having a wedding garment? *Matthew 22:12*

He raises a question. In verse 12 that thought of not having a wedding garment implies a definite choice, an act of the will. This man chose not to receive the wedding garment when it was offered to him, he chose to come into the wedding activity without wearing it, he refused to take it, it was a choice.

And that is the simple reason why he didn't have it on, he chose not to get one.

It sounds so familiar.

And I have to say tonight that it is something I find hard to understand when I consider the blessings of having a wedding garment, the satisfaction of identifying with others who are sharing the joy of the occasion of being a child of God, understanding the freedom of sins forgiven, the glorious relationship that salvation offers I don't understand why anyone would refuse the gift. Why anyone would say No, when the wedding garment is offered.

But it is a personal choice. It is a decision that everyone has the option to make -Accept it or Reject it.

Then I would like to think about another question briefly from this story:
6] How does one feel that doesn't have a wedding garment on?

I think the language of Jesus here helps us to understand, we get a mood that is created in this man's heart when he was asked the question, Friend, why, how, came thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And the man knew, he had no defence, it says he was speechless, he had nothing to say.

The man was ashamed.

There is a real sense in which people on this occasion and on that occasion will relive the experience of Adam and Eve, they felt so guilty, they went to hide, the only difference is when the Lord asks this question to people on judgment day, Where is your wedding garment, why didn't you accept salvation? There will be no alternative, there will be no more robes to put on, there will be no fig leaves, there will be no animal skins, there will be no more sacrifice for sins, there will just be the speechless haunting realization that I missed my opportunity, I don't have the wedding garment and I will never have one, I don't have salvation and I will never experience it, I am not saved and never will be!

There will be nothing more dreadful than to understand there is no more hope.

The last question:

7] What will happen to the person who is missing the wedding garment?

Jesus tells us here, it is not hard to understand, Bind him hand and foot and take him away, cast him into outer darkness and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. *Matthew 22:13.*

Somehow it doesn't seem fair, somehow it seems the consequence is too stiff, but remember there was opportunity given, the gift was offered. In effect he was saying, Please take it, it is yours, just receive it! But he refused, he deliberately refused to take the wedding garment.

And so people that don't take it, people that reject the offer will one day be rejected of God.

Those who don't put on that wedding garment of salvation will not make it to heaven.

To every accountable person I believe God in some way communicates the offer of the wedding garment, God in His mercy and in His great love and compassion has made it possible that everybody has an opportunity somehow, some way, I don't understand how all that works, I'm not big enough to grasp the heart of God but I am satisfied that He is fair and I believe it is at times like this that God again offers that wedding garment. He again makes it available for anyone to receive it, if you've never had one before.

There is a spotless a robe of Christ's own weaving
Will you not wrap it around your sin stained soul?
 Poor wandering child I passed by
 Grieving Christ makes thee whole.
There is a hope, a harp and Crown in heaven,
 And alas should any Thy gift refuse,
 The awful choice of life and death is given,
Which wilt thou choose? Which wilt thou choose?

It is a choice of life or death.

We are going to give opportunity again this evening for you to accept the wedding garment and as we give opportunity it is as though our gracious heavenly Father is again holding out the wedding garment and saying: Here it is, won't you please take it? I want you to identify with the rest of the guests, I want you to identify with Me, I require it, but it is your choice.

These are sacred and solemn moments as all heaven focuses on a gathering like this and eagerly awaits for those who know and understand the need to receive the wedding garment to open their hearts to accept the wedding garment and allow entrance to the blessed Saviour and experience the salvation that He comes to provide.

And so the invitation is, Come to the Saviour now.



*Stronger Weaker Vessels.**Edited extracts from a Mothers Day message by Brother Lamar Garman*

Happy to extend a greeting of love in the Master's worthy name this morning, the author and finisher of our faith,
Well let's go to the book of first Peter and read a few verses from chapter 3 and then notice some character strengths of the Christian woman that I believe our sisters must be striving for and we would say this morning that the message isn't just for the sisters, it is for all of us too, it is God's word, we all need it, but the focus perhaps especially is on our sisters this morning.

1 Peter 3:1-7 ¹Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; ² While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear. ³ Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorn- ing* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; ⁴ But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. ⁵ For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: ⁶ Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. ⁷ Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Now noticing some character traits for Christian women.

The first one I would like to lift out is the necessity for Holiness of life. Did you notice that there in verse five where it speaks of the holy women of old time, holy women also who trusted in God, it speaks of Holiness. Sisters, if God were writing a commentary on your life this morning would He call you a holy woman? I hope He would.

The word holy as used here is derived from the Greek *hagios* which simply means morally blameless or without reproach, a holy person. What makes holiness possible?

Notice verse two where it says that they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

That is what I believe produces holiness, *Proverbs 31:30* says: Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

The fear of the Lord and a right response to that is what produces a holy walk of life.

A Christian woman, as all Christians, loves the Lord Jesus and covets His approval on their lives.

I thought of the great contrast between holy women and women of the world and then I thought of a particular movie actress, I looked the name up in the encyclopaedia and sure enough there was a nice a long column about this woman, a well-known person, a famous person. A holy person? Hardly by God's standard.

The encyclopaedia told me that she was married eight times and I believe many of those former husbands are still living.

But the point is can God call you, can God call me a holy person this morning? I hope He can and that I believe is one thing that we must strive for as Christians and our sisters too strive to be called holy people.

Another character strength of the Christian woman is that she shuns outward adorning.

You notice in first Peter three, whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.

And also we should notice *1 Timothy 2:9* where the Apostle says it like this: In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. But which become as women professing godliness with good works.

That is what God expects of Christian women.

True beauty is found in the heart, a Christian woman will have a keen desire to avoid any displays of vanity or pride and I believe our sisters as they make their own clothes, we appreciate that they do that, but sisters as you

sit at your sewing machine and if you are tempted to add this little extra or that small deviation I want you to think of verses like this in the Scriptures so that you will not be tempted to add those features to your clothes or to your hair or your hair arrangement that would tend to draw attention to yourself.

But no, think of how God expects Christian women to appear.

And it seems like the biggest test for some others comes in the dressing of small children, maybe especially small girls' dresses, we know that frills and ruffles and lace have absolutely no place on the clothes of our children. We believe that don't we?

In our discipline booklet it says it so well where it says:

"Parents should dress their children according to gospel simplicity and teach them the serious results of following worldly practices and vanities today."

And I believe that is so well said and may we be following that and practicing that.

Also let's remember that Jesus said about little children as we heard in the devotional reading this morning, that of such are the kingdom of heaven. [Matthew 19:14](#). And let's not try to make them look like they are of the kingdom of the world but let's realize that Jesus loves little children and they are of the kingdom of heaven, pure innocent little children and let's not try to make them look like they belong to the kingdom of the world.

Another character strength of the Christian woman is that she is of a meek and quiet spirit.

1 Peter 3:4 it speaks of the meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price.

God values that in Christian women that they are the meek and they are quiet and they are not noisy, not brawling and not boisterous like women tend to be without the Lord Jesus in their hearts.

Notice the phrase in this verse which says; Let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible.

What does it mean?

Well one translation terms it like this it says; the un-fading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

I am impressed many times how the Lord helps our sisters to display this kind of inner beauty of quietness and meekness. I believe it might be more difficult for some of our sisters than others, we know that our sisters too have various personalities, it might be more difficult for a sister who has a can-do nature and has many capabilities, to display the quiet and meek spirit but we believe that with God all things are possible and it is of great price in His sight, beyond monetary value we would say.

Another character strength of the Christian woman is that she understands her role in the church.

I believe it is important that we have entrenched in our minds God's standard for our sisters in church life and why don't we just turn to the book of first Corinthians chapter 14 and be refreshed in our memory again exactly what God does say about women in the church.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35.: ³⁴ Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. ³⁵ And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Then also in *1 Timothy 2:11-13* we have much the same thought given, ¹¹ Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. ¹² But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

It is God's standard even though so many churches today are trying to avoid this commandment and they are allowing women in the pulpits, we know it is happening even in some Mennonite churches, let's be convinced that God's standard is, for the man, for the brethren to be in charge of the church and that in no way means that the sisters don't have a great influence in church life - they do.

We would never, never deny that fact but let's understand what the Bible teaches the sisters' proper role is in church life.

Another character strength of the Christian woman - mother this time, she is a keeper at home.

Notice those verses there in *Titus 2:3-5* God's standard: The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; ⁴ That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

You see what can happen when women do not take their place properly according to scriptural standards the word of God we believe is blasphemed, that's what it says right here, Christian women are to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home good obedient to their own husbands, why? So that the word of God be not blasphemed.

We would agree I'm sure that almost in every case a mother should not have a job outside the home, we know that there are times that there might be exceptions but I believe that those times would be very few and far in between.

The feeling of security that all children need so much can only be realized when the mother is in the home and providing the seemingly endless needs.

Mothers I'm sure you've noticed already that perhaps you are keeping your children at home and maybe you were in one room sewing and your little children are in another room playing but every now and then a child or the children comes to check up on you to see if you are still there, right? Well it is their need for security, the feeling of security and you provide that by being the primary caregiver of your little children.

And I remember some years ago we had a little foster girl living with us for a while and when we would put her to bed at night one of the questions she would ask was: Where are you going, where will you be?

You see she was used that when she went to bed her mother went away at night but we tried to assure her that no, we don't do that, we don't go away leave our children alone at home, we will be right here.

Well it is all related to a need for a feeling of security which our children so much need.

Maybe you have heard of the six-year-old boy talking to his grandmother on the telephone and the boy said to his grandmother: "Mother is in the hospital, the twins and Roxy, and Sally and Billy and the dog and me and dad are all home alone."

Here it was seven people at home with the little boy but mother wasn't so he said we are home alone.

Well such is the need for security in our children and our sisters provide that security and care for your children faithfully from day to day.

The day-care centres of our day can never provide that love and the teaching and the care like a Christian mother can.

Sisters never say, I'm just a housewife.

I much prefer the term a homemaker because really that is what you are, you are making a home for your family and for your little ones and you are in God's framework of a Christian woman.

The next consideration, A Christian mother makes the home a place of love.

And in Titus 2:4, the verse I just read, did you notice the emphasis on love, to love their husbands, to love the children. That is what a Christian mother does for her family, her home, she makes it a place of love.

Many people down through the ages have given testimony to the effectiveness of a mother's love and how that was a guiding beacon to them through life as they thought back on a Christian mother's love and how that helped them through life in many ways to go right, and I'm sure everyone this morning here that experiences having a Christian mother knows what that is all about and we appreciate that.

A Christian mother can to provide a relaxed, happy, pleasant atmosphere in the home at all times even in the midst of various frustrations and we know that home life can be frustrating especially when there are little children in the home but the mother sets the tone for the atmosphere in the home.

I believe father has a responsibility in that too sure, but mother really sets the tone.

Recently I saw an article for mothers in a secular parenting magazine, I don't receive any myself but I happened to pick up one of these magazines up somewhere, and there was an article in this magazine for mothers and the title of the article was "What to Do When You Feel like Screaming." The psychologist who wrote the article said some time ago he conducted a seminar for teenage girls about ages 12 to 14 I believe, and in this seminar he handed out questionnaires for these girls and two of the questions on the questionnaire were;

1]. What do you like most about your mother?

2]. The other question was: What do you most dislike about your mother?

And the answer that came back to the second questions from almost everyone was; I hate it when she screams!

Well a Christian mother will not scream when she is frustrated but she will use the Bible strength, strength from heaven above, like is given in second Timothy one: seven, God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind. [2 Timothy 1:7](#).

That is a verse that we can use when we feel like letting our emotions get the better of us, we think of the fact that God gives us what we need in every circumstance of life even when frustrations threaten to overcome our better judgment.

Right with that, Christian mothers, try to keep the home well ordered, we appreciate when our sisters do that and our wives and mothers that keep the home well ordered and neat and clean, it all fits into the framework of a godly home.

Another consideration: A Christian mother uses many opportunities to instruct her children.

According to the Ephesians 6:4 this is the father's primary responsibility where it says that we are to bring them up in the nurture in the admonition of the Lord, but as mothers throughout the day relating to your own children you have so many splendid opportunities to teach your children Bible truths, perhaps in ways that you would not have thought of but as circumstances present themselves and the children ask this question or that question then you have an excellent opportunity to make indelible impressions upon the minds of your small children as related to great moral issues,

which perhaps they cannot understand now but as they grow they understand and comprehend more.

Today many people in society agree that something is not going right in the lives of the boys and girls of the nation and more and more it seems like even the experts are becoming alarmed when we see so many recent cases of violence, drastic violence being perpetrated by children, 10, 12, 13 years old, and there have been numerous, numerous cases of violence like that in the last months.

But then when you sit down and ponder on the subject, take for instance the case in Arkansas I believe it was where a 10-year-old and a 13-year-old brought guns to school and started shooting their classmates, well in a case like that both of the boys were from broken homes.

And we would say they just did not have the stability, the teaching and training that they needed to help them go right and that is what we provide for our boys and girls in the Christian home setting.

Another character trait of our Christian mothers is that they are selfless. They do not put themselves first but they think about their children in their families first, they put their families before themselves

Well that's a trait, a character trait of the Christian mother putting her children and her family first.

She is a selfless individual.

Last of all now thinking of a character strength of a Christian woman. She puts her trust in God!

We appreciate the difference and contribution our wives, our mothers are making in the church and let's do what we can to encourage them and to help them and most of all may each one of us be true and faithful to the Lord until He comes for His own.





THOUGHTS OF A BUSY MOTHER

If I can't find the time to wash the floor,
Who will remember or care?
If I don't patch the hole in their old blue jeans,
They can wear another pair.

The dust can sit right where it is—
For tomorrow there will be more.
If the day is too short to bake a cake,
I can always run to the store.

But if I forget to wipe a tear
Or kiss an injured knee,
To cheer a frown, turn it upside down'
Til they're chuckling with glee.

If I missed a chance to see the world
Through their precious eyes,
A dandelion, a crawly bug,
A rainbow in the sky.

Then I've missed a chance to share the day
With one I hold most dear;
For God was knocking at my heart,
And I was too busy to hear.

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