

Sermon for January 4, 2026 - 2nd Sunday after Christmas/Epiphany

Isaiah 61:10–62:3 EHV

Theme: God gave you new clothes for Christmas!

- 1) They completely change your look.
- 2) They completely change your purpose.

¹⁰I will rejoice greatly in the LORD. My soul will celebrate because of my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation. With a robe of righteousness he covered me, like a bridegroom who wears a beautiful headdress like a priest, and like a bride who adorns herself with her jewelry.

¹¹For as the earth produces its growth, and as a garden causes what has been sown to sprout up, so God the LORD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up in the presence of all the nations.

For the sake of Zion I will not be silent. For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth shining brightly, and her salvation burns like a torch.

²Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings will see your glory. You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will assign to you.

³Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD's hand, and a royal diadem in the palm of your God.

My daughters love getting new, stylish clothes for Christmas. Why? I think it's because new clothes make them feel beautiful and different, giving them fresh confidence.

My daughters aren't the only ones who feel that way about clothes. Many people have embraced the old saying, "Clothes make the man."

But is that really true? Can new clothes actually change a person?

The spiritual clothes God gives you most certainly do. They not only change how you look—they change who you are. Let us consider these truths under the theme: **God gave you new clothes for Christmas!** 1) They completely change your look. 2) They completely change your purpose.

Part One: They completely change your look.

With a giddiness that far surpasses that of a teenage girl telling all her friends about the clothes she got for Christmas, the prophet Isaiah writes:

¹⁰I will rejoice greatly in the LORD. My soul will celebrate because of my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation. With a robe of righteousness he covered me, like a

bridegroom who wears a beautiful headdress like a priest, and like a bride who adorns herself with her jewelry.

You have every reason to joyfully tell everyone about the spiritual clothes God got you at Christmas! Why? Because they are far more beautiful, exclusive, and costly than anything Chanel, Gucci, or Louis Vuitton could ever produce. Let me explain why.

The Bible often uses the imagery of clothing to describe how God views our thoughts, words and deeds. Are they beautiful in His sight—or ugly?

Outside of Christ, He sees you as naked and filthy. None of your thoughts, words, or deeds impress Him. Why? Because your sins have separated you from the glory God created you to have. He made you to live in perfect unity with Him—in love, goodness, and will. Instead, you turned your back on Him – pursuing the sinful desires of your heart and loving the world more than Him. Sin has separated you from God to such a degree that even your righteous acts are like filthy rags in His sight.¹ Your sins have made you worthy of nothing but hell.

But the LORD did not want you lost to hell. No, He loved you – so much so that He took it upon Himself to save you. How? By sending His Son into the world to tailor a spiritual robe that would cover your sins and make you beautiful in His sight. He lived the perfect life of loving obedience to God that we all failed to live. Then He took all your sins upon Himself and suffered the punishment they had earned. He died and rose again so that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Jesus was born at Christmas to be your righteousness and salvation. He covers your sins and makes you beautiful before God.

But beautiful, ornate clothing—like a wedding gown—can be difficult to put on. So how do we “put on” Christ?

Let me switch gears for a moment and talk about my dad. His Alzheimer’s has progressed to where he can no longer dress himself. Lay out the simplest clothing in front of him, and no matter how hard he tries, he cannot put it on.

What Alzheimer’s has done to my dad’s mind, sin has done to your soul! None of us has the understanding or ability to clothe ourselves with Christ’s righteousness. Someone else must do it for us.

Now, listen carefully to what Isaiah writes about why he rejoices over God. “*For he has clothed me in garments of salvation. With a robe of righteousness he covered me.*” God has done all the work!

Imagine a famous master tailor visiting my dad not only to present him with stunning formal wear but to dress him in it so that he could look more put together than King Charles himself!

This is what God the Father did for us. He not only sent Jesus to pay for your sins, but He also sent the Holy Spirit to work repentance in your heart. Why? To clothe you with His righteousness by faith! From beginning to end, you have done nothing. God has done everything.

Now, when He looks at you, He can see His Son and have the same loving joy in you He has in Him.

Yes, the spiritual clothes God provides for you in Christ do more than change how you look before God. They change your very being, making you spiritually alive and different.

Again, I picture my dad, not only clothed in formal wear, but watching the clothes transform him back into the handsome young man of his wedding pictures. They miraculously restore his mind and health to such a degree that he jumps out of his chair completely healed. Why? To dedicate his life to the one he loves the most: his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Spiritually speaking, this is what God did for us. Jesus won our righteousness, clothed us with Himself, and awakened a new spirit in us that is alive, fresh, and eager to love Him as He loved us.

Sadly, we still live in a sinful world and have a sinful nature that prevents us from showing God the perfect love we want to express. That, however, will not prevent the forgiving, loving glory God worked in our hearts from being revealed on the last day, as Isaiah writes:

¹¹For as the earth produces its growth, and as a garden causes what has been sown to sprout up, so God the LORD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up in the presence of all the nations.

Gardens don’t look like much when they are first planted. But as summer progresses, a gardener’s talent goes on full display for all to see. The same is true regarding God and His church.

To the world, we Christians don’t look like much. We struggle with sin and aren’t very glorious to the world. But when God’s chosen time arrives, His transforming power will be on full display for the whole world to see. Christmas itself pointed forward to this, as God drew Gentile Magi to

worship Christ. After Jesus' ascension, God spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth—so that on the last day, the glory of His kingdom would be revealed to all.

And that leads us to this sermon's second point: the clothing of Christ God gave you at Christmas not only transforms your look before God. It gives you a new purpose in life.

Part Two: They completely change your purpose.

Listen to what the LORD says:

For the sake of Zion I will not be silent. For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth shining brightly, and her salvation burns like a torch.

Zion and Jerusalem represent the Holy Christian Church – believers from every nation who cling to Christ in genuine repentance and faith. For their sake, God refuses to be silent. He promises to keep speaking through His Word and Sacraments until every single one of His chosen children is safely in His kingdom – regardless of where they live on this earth.

Yes, through His Church, God shines His forgiving love into a dark world for all to see. Think about how it transformed people throughout history, like Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle, or greedy Zacchaeus into a man who gave away his wealth. The glory of Christ's forgiving, self-sacrificing love lives on through Christians like you and me, who, in the peace of Christ's forgiveness, keep Jesus' command to love one another as He has loved us.

Isaiah continues:

²Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings will see your glory. You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will assign to you.

With a new name comes a new identity. God no longer sees you as a sinful, selfish son of Adam. Clothed in Christ, He sees Jesus—and calls you by His name.

The apostle Paul once wrote:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Indeed, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.ⁱⁱ

In Baptism, God adopted you into His family, placed His name on you, clothed you with Christ, gave you a new spirit, and secured your future in heaven. He did all of this for a purpose, as the apostle Peter once wrote:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.ⁱⁱⁱ

God saved, blessed, and clothed you with Christ so that His love might shine through you—to draw others to His Son. And as we fulfil that purpose, Isaiah’s last words in our text today come true.

³Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD’s hand, and a royal diadem in the palm of your God.

Can you picture it: God holding a jewel-encrusted crown He made? This crown’s beauty is beyond comparison; it evokes awe and wonder in all who see it. Imagine God holding this crown – marvelling at His craftsmanship, ready to put it on His Son’s head for all the world to see. Look closely at that crown. Do you see who it is? That crown is you, His redeemed child in Christ!

May this truth lead you to rejoice with the apostle John, who wrote:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ... Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.^{iv}

Brothers and sisters in Christ: God gave you new clothes for Christmas. Not only do they completely change your look, they completely change you – giving your life new purpose and meaning.

Therefore, rejoice in what God accomplished for you at Christmas. Rejoice also in what He continues to accomplish through you now as you reflect His saving love to the world.

Whenever Satan tries to make you feel guilty and ashamed over past sins, look in the mirror of God’s Gospel to see how beautifully God clothed you in Christ. Then, in the peace of forgiveness, live as the child of God and heir of heaven He declared you to be at your baptism, all to the glory of His name. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Isaiah 64:6

ⁱⁱ Galatians 3:36-27 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Peter 2:9

^{iv} 1 John 3:1,2