**Sunday 16th April 2017 Message**

**THE END – of shame, fear and control**

**Royal robes you don’t deserve**

***Scripture - John 19:17-24***

***The King on a Cross***

***(Matt 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49)***

***And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:***

***JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.***

***Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews."'" Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:***

***"They divided My garments among them,***

***And for My clothing they cast lots." (Ps 22:18)***

***Therefore, the soldiers did these things.***

**Introduction**

He has risen. Hallelujah. The King was on the cross, now He is on the throne. Hallelujah.

Death is defeated. Hallelujah. Sin has no power over us. Hallelujah. We no longer have any need to walk in shame. Hallelujah. We no longer need to live in fear. Hallelujah. Our relationship with Father has been restored. Hallelujah.

The consequences of the resurrection of Jesus as King are immense and eternal. Last week I began an exploration of what it means for us to have a King and for us now to be citizens of His kingdom, and live with His delegated authority to bring His kingdom realities onto the earth. We must SEEK (work at understanding) what that means. We have to realize that being saved is more than a ticket to heaven as our eternal home, it is actually more about bringing His kingdom to earth.

In the Garden of Eden God gave Adam and Eve, dominion/kingdom to rule over the earth with delegated authority from the owner and creator of that earth. It all went wrong but God knew it would, and He had a plan in Jesus Christ. He had ALL the positions and consequences COVERED.

God was not in panic when man first messed up, and He is still never going to panic when we mess up. To think He would be is like being a farmer with a field full of cows and panicing about the consequences of them pooping all over the nice green grass. Cows are cows they mess, humans are humans they mess, babies are babies they mess, He was prepared.

Can you imagine the cows living under a law that the anxious farmer writes on a notice board and puts at the end of the field saying “No pooping”. Just to make sure they get the message he comes out each day with his loud hailer and says “You cows the law is no pooping”. The cows understand, they grab their tails and pull them between their legs. Purse their lips, concentrate real hard, clench their buttocks and hope for the best. Then it happens, something slips out and they wave one hoof, and say “Sorry, I am a cow.” The cow then has to live in shame, amongst all the other cows because he messed up his keepers nice green grass, and all the other cows who have not yet broken the rules remind him that that bit of lush grass you messed up, was the bit they were going to eat, and that he has spoiled it for everybody. They usher the pooing cow to a corner of the field so they don’t ruin it for everyone else, he lives in fear of them and under their control, and eventually starves and dies because there is no clean grass for him to eat.

OK. So it’s a crazy example, but how we respond to our own sin and the sin of others can be so crazy. If we really believe in the atoning work of the cross the power of sin has no hold over us.

**Jesus was crucified naked.**

Contrary to all the icons and imagery we have of Jesus wearing a loin cloth as He hung on the cross, historians are clear that crucifixion was the ultimate form of humiliation as well as death used by the Roman Empire, and the accused were exposed naked to the glare of everyone.

Nakedness throughout the Bible was a symbol of the shame that sin brings upon mankind. Nobody likes to be stared at as if somethings wrong, particularly if there is something wrong. When it is God who might see us when we know we have done something wrong, we feel exposed and ashamed. We can never hide from God, He always knows where we are and what we are doing, even though He called to Adam and Eve “Where are you?”. We can try to hide our shame from others but for fear of judgmentalism and rejection, particularly so in religious circles. In Jesus’ death, our King who should have been in royal robes, bears ALL our shame for ALL our sins. He left on that cross every reason why we would ever need to hide from a HOLY God.

In fact He provides us with garments of righteousness and royal robes that we do not deserve.

In Johns account we read the soldiers distributed Jesus’ clothes between themselves, but cast lots for the seamless garment He had worn a few hours earlier. That garment a royal robe, a purple seamless cloak was not torn up into four pieces, but remained in tact. I think that is symbolic and was arranged by God as recorded in the Psalms. The garment that Jesus was going to leave us was not torn in grief and disappear at the loss of power and control bought about sin. Remember, Caiaphas the high priest tearing his garment, the symbol of righteousness of the priesthood, when Jesus agreed that He was the Son of God. Why did he do that? Well the tearing of the outer garment was a very traditional sign of grief and mourning for the loss of something. I actually, believe that Caiaphas realized that righteousness would no longer come through a religious priesthood, that was about to be torn up, and a new righteousness was to come through faith and relationship. In fact it was the loss of control over the Hebrews for Caiaphas and the priesthood.

**God covers our shame**

The first thing that Adam and Eve realised after they had eaten the fruit, was that they were naked, not that they had disobeyed God, but that they were vulnerable.

***Gen 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.***

***Gen 3:6-7 She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves covering.***

Notice that the covering they made for themselves was insufficient, and God was about to replace it.

***Gen 3:21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.***

Here we have a shadow of what Jesus was to do by His death on a cross. God was going to provide through Jesus the perfect sacrifice and sufficient covering. The purpose of the tunics God made Adam and Eve was to enable them to approach God without fear, and to be seen by others without shame or fear. They were covered in animal skin, a sacrifice had been made to provide a garment of righteousness.

Such is the mercy of God and His love for a relationship with mankind, that from the beginning He made provision.

**Do not look on the shame of another.**

The next story of nakedness and shame was an event in the life of the most righteousness man following the great flood. That of course was Noah, who got stone drunk, and lost all sense of decorum, and fell flat naked. Why would the Spirit who inspired all scripture for our teaching include this story of a righteous persons fall from grace? I think there is a very simple lesson in the way two of Noah’s sons covered their fathers nakedness.

***Gen 9:23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.***

God honoured Shem and Japheth’s actions preserving relationship and respect for their father by covering his shame. They had learnt a lesson from God on the importance of maintaining relationship and covering other’s sins.

**Passover covering**

There was a need for covering from Gods righteous judgement against all sin, when God needed to show Pharoah was really the sovereign power. The covering is that which we know as the Passover covering another foreshadow of what Jesus would achieve on the cross. The final judgement against Egypt for their sin of rebellion against Gods, command to let His people go, that all families with any element of rebellion in it would lose their first born.

Gods release of the angel of death would have to be righteous, there would need to be legal protection for His people by a covering of blood. The blood of the Passover lamb in each Hebrew house was painted on the doorposts and lintels so that Gods judgement would Passover them. ***Romans 12:13***

Jesus is our Passover lamb which results in Gods judgement passing over us. We are guilty but our acceptance of the Passover Lamb spares us from so much that the enemy could legally inflict upon us because of our sin. The wages of sin is death, not just eternal death, death of parts of our body, death of dreams, death of the wealth available to us, death in relationships etc. We could be experiencing more of hell on earth than we are, but because of the blood of the Passover lamb we can extend heaven on earth as Gods righteous ambassadors.

God has got you covered.

**Priestly Garments**

The tabernacle priesthood had anointed garments to represent their righteousness before God on behalf of the people. As mentioned earlier the pure white linen garment was woven from one piece and put on from above, symbolizing a heaven sent righteousness.

Likewise, the High Priest had a one piece blue garment, the garment of salvation that was put on over the head, from above, and was fringed with bells and pomegranites. Blue being the colour of heaven, bells representing gifts of the Spirit, and pomegranate representing the fruit. One without the other would make the movement of Gods priest and their ministry without a merciful pleasing sound.

The Levites and High Priest could not minister in the Presence on Gods behalf without garments of righteousness.

They also had underwear, linen shorts, representing holiness. These were stepped into, and pulled up – symbolizing our needs to step into holiness and this is a daily act, because the areas they cover get soiled readily and need repeated cleansing.

The priests were symbolically covered from exposure of the shame that was in them.

***1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.***

God in His mercy has dressed us as priests so that we do not approach Him in shame, He has clothed us, He has covered us, He has spared us from judgement. We can stand before Him and mankind knowing we are undeserving of His mercy because of our own actions, but because His righteousness is imputed to us through faith.

***Romans 3:21-26 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

Do you know that makes me awestruck and tremble at the goodness and mercy of God. And here is another statement that is awesome.

***Romans 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.***

**Luther :- If we understand justification we are in the clearest light, if we do not know it, we dwell in the densest darkness.**

Isn’t it amazing that Paul describes in Romans the righteousness reckoned ***(Gen 15:6)*** to Abram was because he believed God. He had counted the stars ***(Gen 15:5)*** and believed God could make his descendants as many. What amazes me even more is that Abram’s righteousness was not cancelled when he tried to make it happen by going into Hagar ***(Gen 16:4)*** his wife’s maid. Neither did Abram lose all the blessings God had promised him. That was a lesser reckoning of righteousness that we have in Christ.

***Romans 10:10-11 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."***

People full of shame, made to feel ashamed, do not get to reign in life, to be the head and not the tail, because they feel robbed of the grace that God has extended to them. The most disempowered kingdom builders are those have been disengaged from the family God has placed them in.

***Isaiah 61:10 I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.***

Hallelujah, my defence attorney has often said I have got you covered.

**Mercy triumphs over judgement. Love is stronger than sin.**

***James 2:12-13 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom (ie free from external constraint), because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!***

Jesus has demonstrated to us these two amazing truths. He annoyed the religious leaders by eating with sinners.

He probably surprised the disciples by keeping a known thief, Judas, in their number***. John 12:6***, not only that Jesus put him in charge of the money. He had no fear that a spirit of robbery would be released in His team because of the failings of one.

He confounded Peter and the rest of the team by keeping a man who repeatedly denied Him as a key figure in the apostleship (***Luke 22:34***).

He annoyed them by not condemning the woman caught in adultery. The most scathing words He said to the woman in ***John 8:11*** were “Go and sin no more”, note He said that to her privately, all her religious accusers had departed. She will forever remember this Man as one who did not punish or condemn her.

The religious people were right, she deserved death by stoning. They prioritized rules and Jesus prioritized relationships providing an opportunity for the woman to grow closer to God.

The religious people probably walked away saying something like “Oh dear, He has released a spirit of adultery in the house of Israel” further spreading the fear that was in them. Let us remember these words

I truly believe that the gospel of the kingdom is ALL about love, and not about the rules. My Father has returned to me the freedom to make choices on what I do on the basis of my love for Him and His love for me.

Kingdom people are here to set people free from all that binds them, including religion, so that they can act out of love. This was the state in the garden and Jesus has made it available to us again through His work on the cross.

**Conclusion**

It is vitally important we grasp these foundational truths because it will result in spiritual awakening.

What are the priorities in your life – rules or relationships?