

Sermon, May 21, 2023
1 Samuel 16:1-13
“A New Wardrobe”
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Charlee - Most of you know Brinkley and I, or at least know one of the girls involved in this year's confirmation class and know how involved we all are in the community. But for those of you who don't know us, we are all involved with at least one sport, go to school, most of us are in clubs and just little groups here and there, plus we're involved around the church.

When we go to these activities, we see so many different types of people and different types of styles. I mean, you could walk into a school cafeteria and see ten different styles. Most of us are at the point in our lives where we're trying to find out how we like to wear our hair, our favorite genre of music, stuff like that, including our style and outward appearance.

Fashion is so relevant in our daily lives, and it can be a little tricky when it comes to figuring out what the Bible says about it. So that's what we decided to talk about today, outward appearance and what the Bible tells us about it.

Before we start, there are four points we would like to highlight today, our first point being... God looks at the heart, not our outward appearance. 1 Samuel 16:7 clearly supports this statement. The context of this passage is God's choice of David. Samuel was to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. All sons gathered together and passed before Samuel. In verse 6, Samuel looked upon Jesse's son Eliab and said, "surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But he was wrong, and the Lord rebuked him for his superficial thinking. Samuel was looking at how tall, strong, and handsome he was and assumed that because of his outward appearance, he must be the Lord's anointed. Mortals look at the outward appearance.

Then the Lord stated that he does not look at us like we look at each other. Humans look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. God is not really interested in how tall, pretty, or well-dressed a person is. God is interested in their heart, first and foremost. This is by far the most important principle when it comes to the subject of outward appearance. It is the inside that counts.

The internal always outranks the external. Our inner self, soul, spirit, mind, and heart are much more important than our outer physical self. Clothing and outward appearance are not nearly as important to God as to who we are in the inside. When compared to the heart, external things fade away. When people say that God isn't as concerned about our clothing and instead it's our heart that He's really interested in, there's an important truth in that. The heart is far more important. But let's not forget this verse also provides us with some other important information about outward appearance.

This same verse that tells us God looks at the heart also tells us that humans look at outward appearance. In fact, that's all they can see. Therefore, outward appearance plays an important role in our testimony before the world. The fact that our heart is more important to God and the fact that God looks at our heart does not mean that our outward appearance has no significance at all. Rightly or wrongly, people do look at us as believers. They observe what we wear, how we carry ourselves, and how we take care of ourselves. And people judge us on that basis, because that's all they can see. That makes outward appearance important, too, if we're concerned about our testimony before the world.

The central idea that relates to the subject at hand is that the inner spirit is way more important than the outer man. Changes can happen which can cause your outer self or the way people physically see you to change in negative ways. But nothing can separate your heart and soul from the love of Jesus. Even though your outer self is perishing, your inner self should be in the process of transformation into greater levels of Christlikeness. Even if your physical self is changing, your inner spiritual self should be looking more and more like Jesus. Above all our main concern should be trying to look as much like Jesus as we can. Our other concern should be keeping your heart with all diligence. When it comes down to it, it's the heart that matters before the Lord.

This brings us to our second point.... Wearing the right clothing does not make a person spiritual. Proverbs 11:22 says “A beautiful woman who lacks discretion is like a gold ring in a pig’s snout.” A person with a beautiful outward appearance but an ugly heart is like a pig with a gold nose-ring. Trying to dress up the outside will never change the nature of one's heart. If a person is ugly on the inside, then good looks or fancy clothes will never cover it up. What’s on the inside is far more important than the outside. A pig is still a pig and an ugly heart is still an ugly heart. Putting gold jewelry on a pig doesn't really make it any more attractive... I mean it's still gonna’ go roll in the mud. Putting modest, well-groomed clothes on a person whose heart is ugly is not going to make them any more attractive to God.

Plus, Jesus says “come as you are” If you’re the type of person to dress up for church (I know I am) then that’s great. As long as your modest outfit matches your modest heart. And if you don’t like getting all dressed up then that's great too. All God wants is a relationship with you no matter what you look like or what you’re wearing. Once again, it's the look and intention of your heart that matters before the Lord.

Brinkley - This leads us to the third point....It’s what’s inside the cup that matters. Mathew 23:25-28 states, “How terrible is it for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and plate, but inside they are full of violence and pleasure seeking. Blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup so that the outside of the cup will be clean, too.”

In these verses, Jesus criticizes the Scribes and Pharisees for being hypocrites. They appeared righteous to others. They went above and beyond to look good on the outside, but they ignored the inside. They did everything to be seen by people. Therefore, Jesus said that they already had what they were looking for, the applause of others. They did not receive praise from God for that kind of behavior because it is self centered and designed to glorify self rather than God.

Think of it like a dirty cup. The Pharisees were only focusing and cleaning the outside of the cup, the only thing people can see, instead of self-reflecting and cleaning the inside of the cup first, the part that God can see. But notice also that Jesus does not condemn them for cleaning the outside of the cup. That, too, is important. Their hypocrisy didn’t come from cleaning the outside but ignoring the inside. Jesus warned them to take care of the inside first and then they could continue to clean the outside. They were overly concerned about what people thought of them and didn’t pay enough attention to what God wanted for them.

When we maximize the importance of outward appearance and minimize the importance of the inner self, we are behaving just like the scribes and Pharisees. We, too, can be overly concerned about what people

think of us, and not too concerned about our inner life where God's eyes are constantly watching. Jesus scolded this kind of blind hypocrisy, and we should pay attention to what He said.

So when people say wearing the right clothing does not make a person spiritual, they are absolutely correct. Jesus wants us to keep our priorities straight. Clean the inside first, then the outside will take care of itself. Putting modest clothing on someone doesn't make them modest, just like cleaning the outside of the cup doesn't clean the inside. But if a person searches their heart, examines scripture, and allows the Holy Spirit to transform them from the inside out, then their inner self will become modest, and the outside will follow. A modest person will dress modestly because of their nature.

Dealing with the heart first is a much slower way of getting the outside clean, but it's the right way. When a believer is first saved, they often have so many inner issues to deal with, they don't have time to deal with externals. As God gets ahold of their heart, outward changes will slowly and gradually occur. Those whose hearts are changed on the inside will be concerned with the outside, as well.

The new creature in Christ will naturally want to put on the clean garments fitting for a new creation in Christ. It is one's inward nature and position that has a genuine and lasting effect on one's outward condition and appearance.

For our fourth and final point, we are going to highlight a scripture that backs up the point perfectly.... John 7:24 says, "Don't judge according to appearances. Judge with right judgment." People whose view is that God doesn't care about what we look like often quote this passage to support their view, and rightfully so. This scripture is 100% true. God does not judge according to appearance, and neither should we. Judging someone on their appearance often gives us a wrong reading. For example, the Lord spoke of beautiful garnished tombs, but inside were dead men's bones. Beauty on the outside does not guarantee the same on the inside. Judging a book by its cover is never a good idea. In fact, the Lord criticizes those who do, and we can see this in James 2:1-4 where it says "My brothers and sisters, when you show favoritism, you deny the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been resurrected in glory. Imagine two people coming into your meeting. One has a gold ring and fine clothes while the other is poorly dressed in filthy rags. Then suppose that you were to take special notice of the one wearing fine clothes, saying, here's an excellent place. sit here. But to the poor person you say stand over there or here, sit at my feet. Wouldn't you have shown favoritism among yourself and become evil-minded judges."

James presents a situation where two people enter a meeting. One is well dressed and the other is dressed in filthy clothing. To judge the person on the basis of their clothing is sinful. James states that when we do that, we ourselves are partial and are judges of evil thoughts. In other words, it is wrong to judge

people on the basis of their clothing. Whether they are dressed in fancy clothing or dirty clothing, it should have no effect on our treatment toward them.

To recap, God doesn't look at outward appearance, and instead He looks inward at our heart. Just because a person wears nice clothing doesn't mean their heart is the same way, so make sure if you wear a modest outfit that your heart matches or even outdoes your outfit in modesty. Keep your priorities straight, keep your heart clean, and let the outside take care of itself or clean it after you cleaned the inside. And lastly, never let the way someone looks or dresses affect your opinion of them, and never judge them either.