

“The Emperor’s New Clothes”
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Many of you are familiar with Hans Christian Anderson’s classic children’s book, The Emperor’s New Clothes.

It is a clever story about a proud king who loved his royal clothes. He would more often be found in his dressing room than even on his throne.

One day two rouses appeared before the king and convinced him they could make for him garments more beautiful than anything he currently possessed.

And more importantly the new clothes would be invisible to anyone who was impossibly stupid and any not worthy of the king’s presence.

The king vainly consented to pay the tricksters a great sum of money for these beautiful new magic clothes.

When the Emperor left the rouses proceeded to set up a loom and pretended to be making cloth from which they would pretend to make clothes.

Days later, curious as to their progress, the emperor sent his Prime Minister to check on the weavers.

The Prime Minister unwilling to admit what he saw, lest he be considered stupid and unfit for the king’s presence, reported to the emperor that the cloth was indeed beautiful to behold.

Later another trusted official was sent on the same mission with the same result.

Finally the Emperor himself wished to see.

With his officials at his side, he went and saw the weavers weaving furiously at the loom.

But like the others he saw no cloth.

And also like the others he did not dare to admit that he saw nothing.

And so he joined in praising the weavers for the beauty of the cloth.

Finally the day came when the Emperor was fitted and attired with his beautiful new magic clothes.

All the imperial ministers "oohed" and "aahed" and some stooped over and appeared to pick up the train of this marvelous new garment.

And into the city they went, on a royal procession, with the emperor naked as a jaybird.

All went as planned until a child cried out, "But the Emperor has no clothes on!"

One after another those in the crowd finally admitted the truth but the Emperor, throwing back his shoulders and refusing the truth, marched on.

And his ministers followed closely behind, still holding the imaginary train.

Lest they be thought fools, no one wanted to admit the truth.

Or maybe more accurately, blinded by their own pride, the emperor and his attendants **refused the truth**.

Americans have lived for years in a false sense of security.

That security has been deeply shaken in this past week.

We see pictures of the once proud and solid World Trade Center – the pride of Gotham City - and like our lives it falls to nothing but rubble in six seconds.

But will anyone admit we have no clothes on?

The truth is we stand naked in front of pending disaster.

We have no protection.

Yes, we are sorry for those who have suffered such loss, but most of all we are frightened and then we are angry – angry with those who expose how naked we really are and always are.

We yell out to our government to make us safe again, to bomb whoever, including the killing of more civilians if that is what it takes, so that we can pretend we have our clothes of security on.

We build retirement plans, we make certain we have the right kind and amount of insurance, we get our homes paid off as soon as possible, we carefully watch our 401k – all calculated to keep us to keep us secure.

These things are not wrong in and of themselves, and in fact are rather prudent things to do – but they will not give us security!

Our security is not in the American military, it is not in the American stock market, and it is not in our best laid plans for physical and financial well-being.

We are in a church on a Sunday morning so it is likely that many would say, “You are right, preacher.

“Our security is in the Lord.

“We who are Christians have a security which others don’t.

What do we mean when we say that?

Do we mean that in the last few months the 401k of non-Christians took a harder hit on the NASDAQ than those of Christians?

Do we mean that in comparable proportions, more non-Christians died in the World Trade Center than Christians?

Will we hear stories of how God spared someone on the 92nd floor because he prayed while the less devout next to him died?

Do we mean that God spared Christians in the Pentagon in greater percentages than non-Christians?

Is Christianity our “rabbit’s foot”, our Christopher medal, to keep us from the harm that befalls others?

This issue sounds a little like an exchange Jesus had with some people:

Luke 13:1-5 “Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were

worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Jesus had been preaching about the coming day of judgment when He returns to this earth.

Some of those present were obviously listening to what Jesus was saying but were having difficulty hearing the point he was making.

They brought up an incident in which some people were in worship in the very act of making sacrifices when apparently Pilate's men broke in and slaughtered them.

From Jesus' response we learn that these people were saying in essence, "God wouldn't let that happen to us, because we aren't like those people."

Jesus said, do you think the suffering of those who were killed by Pilate was because they were worse sinners than you and that the reason why such things don't happen to you is because you aren't as bad? Well you're wrong!

Jesus then gave them another illustration.

The illustration they had given was of man's inhumanity to man.

The illustration Jesus gives is of what we call a "natural disaster".

Like the famine that killed 34 million in China 60+ years ago.

The cyclone that killed over 300,000 in Bangladesh in 1970.

In this case it was 18 who died when a tower fell on them.

And Jesus said do you think their deaths were a result of something they had done?

More importantly, do you think that doesn't happen to you because you are a little better or because you have the right religion?

I think that among other things, Jesus was pointing out that, contrary to their thinking, their lives were not in their own hands – they were not the source of their own security.

They were as exposed to the tragedies of evil and nature as everyone else.

These people believed two very common errors:

One, that physical death is the ultimate tragedy.

Two, that if they did the right things they could avoid that tragedy or at least stall it.

Americans have seen their own mortality and they are not prepared to face it.

Jesus says that we miss the point if our mortality is what frightens us most.

Twice he said, “Unless you repent, you will all perish.”

When Jesus spoke of perishing, he had something very specific in mind.

Listen to him just seconds before when he said:

Luke 12:4-5 "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him."

God said it this way in Hebrews 9:27 “(All people are) destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...”

Security is not found in avoiding death – it is still true that the mortality rate is 100%

Security is found in facing God with confidence not fear.

Security is in knowing that God is your heavenly father and that he will be with you through death and beyond.

Security is knowing that nothing enters your life without God’s permission and that your eternal welfare is his promise.

Security is knowing that this life is **not all there is** and that in the life to come you will be with God.

And according to Jesus that security comes through “repentance”.

Repentance means to turn.

To turn away from something to something else.

The people talking to Jesus, and Americans today, need to turn from seeking ultimate security in this life and from seeking that security in themselves and their facades of power.

They need to turn to **God alone** as their security and seeking that security through his mercy and grace alone.

Jesus said in John 14:6 “I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me.”

The gospel, the good news, is very simply this:

God is holy and just

He cannot allow any sin to go unpunished.

Every man, woman and child is a sinner.

And we are deserving of God’s punishment.

But God is also mercy and love.

He sent his only son to pay the punishment for our sin through his death on the cross.

And he promises that if we will turn from going our own way, seeking our own limited salvation, to trusting in Jesus alone to save us from the eternal consequences of our sin, God will forgive us, call us his own, and grant us his life and presence for eternity.

The Bible says it this way in John 1:12: “To all who received him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Americans continue to try to convince themselves that they are clothed – that they are secure - by their own ingenuity and power.

But the emperor's new clothes left him naked.

Our only true security is in God alone.

It is not in safety from financial hardship.

It is not in the absence of physical pain.

It is not in the avoidance of death.

Our only true security is God – through life, through death, through eternity.

Do you trust him?

If you don't trust him, will you?

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.