

'Holiness In A Bathrobe'



Pastor Dave Spate

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Summer is a time when many of us get away for short periods of time to catch our breath and take time with our family to recharge and renew relationships. Kathy and I had a great time away. Hiking, canoeing, reading by the fire and I even had a chance to build a fence with the help of my 82 year old mother. Summer is also that time for us as Preachers, when we can play with some ideas or styles that we wouldn't normally use during the rest of the year. This morning I want to do that by playing with something I have been thinking about and then linking it with some scriptures, which I hope will encourage you.

Let me begin this morning by telling you about what happened to me a couple weeks ago. While on vacation one of my life long dreams came true, I finally got Kathy to ride my quad. On her first trip she traveled about 5 km over uneven ground, through mud holes, even driving down a long muddy hill that wound through the forest. Everything was going well until I had to open a barbwire fence that hung over a mud hole. I was wearing my new plastic slippery soled shoes. As I was reaching down across the mud hole to grab the fence post, suddenly my feet went out from under me. Instantly I was down on my back, hearing a voice in my head say "oh no, it is down hill toward the mud and the water below". I hit the ground, slid down the hill through the mud and then felt the muddy water washing up over me as I came to a glorious stop in the middle of the mud puddle. As I slipped and slid back up the hill my loving wife was doubled over in laughter. So it only made sense to jump on the quad and give her a great big hug so she could share in my misery. I wanted to begin by placing that image of me, standing there dripping with water and covered in mud in your mind. Because if we are honest there are times when as we look at some things we have done or after the comments or actions of others which shatter our confidence, some times that picture describes how we view ourselves. We see our selves as a mess with not a lot of potential. And even more concerning is the fact that sometimes that is how we feel God must view us as individuals.

Now that you have that picture in your mind, let me tell you that a while ago I was reading something from Max Lacado that sparked an idea that I thought might give us a fresh glimpse of what we really look like in the eyes of Jesus. It has to do with those times when our world touches God's world, and it results in what I would call a holy moment. For most of us can think of a time when we have felt God's gentle care touch us in the middle of a hurtful time or our heart, and it is as if that moment becomes holy. That moment might happen on a Sunday during Communion or on hike over looking a majestic lake or water fall. It might occur in a Cathedral or as you see a little baby or child on the C-train, in a small way it is like your burning bush or your road to Damascus. It doesn't matter where those moments occur, it only matters that they do occur. This morning I want to talk about one of those holy moments in your life which may have happened without you even knowing that it had happened.

I am not talking about your birthday or wedding, I'm not even talking about when you held your first child. Those are special moments. And while they may be life changing they may not be as profound as the one I am about to describe.

I'm talking about a sacred time. Not your baptism or your Christening, not your first communion or even your first time you felt like you experienced God. I know they are precious times, because you felt something undesirable stirring within you, but I've a different moment in mind.

What I am talking about happened this morning. Right after you awoke. Right there in your house. Maybe, you missed it? So let me recreate the scene for you. The alarm rang. Your wife poked you (or husband nudged you) (or your mom or dad shook you). And you began to wake up.

You had already hit the snooze button three times and you knew that if you hit it again you would be late. You've already asked for 5 more minutes, five different times, and if you live in our house you know that unless you get up soon you will hear me singing "you've got to get up, you've got to get up in the morning' again. Morning has definitely broken and as we say at Easter Christ is risen and so should you" so with a groan and a grunt you kick your foot out from under the warmth of the covers into the cold world and reluctantly the other foot follows.

You pull yourself upwards until you are sitting on the edge of the bed and there you stare at the back of your eye lids. Commanding them to open, but they refuse. You pry them apart with your palms and peek into the blackness of the room. (You are getting close your holy moment).

You summon all your courage and stand. At that moment, everything that will hurt during the course of the day hurts. It's as if the little person in your brain that's in charge of pain needs to test the circuits before you make it to the bathroom. Back pain? Check, Stiff Neck? Check, Old High School football knee injury? Check, Flaky scalp? Still itchy

And so with the grace of a pregnant hippo you stagger toward the bathroom. You wish there is some way to turn the lights on slowly but there is not, so you slap on the spotlight, blink as your eyes adjust to the light, and step up to the bathroom sink. (You are approaching the sacred, you might not know it, but you are standing on holy tile, you are within inches of your own burning bush experience). One of those holy moments in your life is about to occur. If you listen very closely you will almost be able to hear the fluttering of angel's wings, trumpets are poised on heavenly lips, clouds of majesty are beginning to circle your bare feet. And heaven's hosts are beginning to cease their motion and look toward you, and then as you step up to the mirror, far away (unheard by your ears, cymbals crash. Trumpets begin to echo in the halls of heaven, stars dance and the universe applauds, God himself rises from his throne and smiles with delight. NOW don't miss this, it has happened because a child of the King of the Universe has awakened. If you are a believer you stand as a holy, perfect child of the God of Eternity and God himself smiles as he looks at your face in the bathroom mirror.

Now, I know what you are thinking, "Dave if you call that image in the mirror holy or Perfect? You definitely don't know what I look like at 6:30 in the morning"

No, but I can guess. Your hair is matted; sleep lines stand out on your face, your Pajamas or night gown is all wrinkled chunks of sleep sticks in the corners of your eyes. Lips are dry, eyes puffy, breath that would peel wallpaper and a face that would scare the neighbor's dog.

"Anything but holy" and you want to say "Give me an hour and I'll look holier. Give me some coffee, some makeup. Give me a toothbrush and a hairbrush, and I'll make this body presentable. A little perfume a splash of cologne. Then take me into the Holy of Holies of God, but not yet. Then I'll make heaven smile."

But that is where you are wrong. You see, what makes the morning moment so holy is its honesty. What makes the morning mirror so hallowed is that you are seeing exactly who God sees and Who God loves. No makeup, no pressed shirts, no layers of jewelry or image. Just you, and let's be honest, if someone loves you at 6:30 in the morning, 1 thing is for certain, they really Love You. They don't just love your title or your accomplishments... 'They love you'.

So here is the picture I want to place in your mind for the next time you stand in front of your mirror, first thing in the morning. For while you may just see a sleepy eyed person who needs a shower and a shave (if you have met God through his son Jesus in a real way) there is a reality that is greater and more wondrous than the one you can see with your naked eye, for if you look a little closer the reality is that standing right behind you (with His hands resting on your shoulders) is God your father smiling with love, care and pride. Giving you another day of life and promising to walk with you in everything you are about to walk into in the day.

Why do I say this? Well grab your bibles and let me show you a few verses that back up what I am saying: The BIBLE says that as you are looking in the mirror 'LOOKING RIGHT BACK AT YOU is 2 IMAGES'

1. Is the image of a son or a daughter of God himself (2 Corinthians 6:18)

"I will be a Father to you, and you will become my son and daughter". Paul picks up on an Old Testament promise that God made to Samuel (2 Samuel 7:14) where God make's this unbelievable statement, that it is possible for us as individuals to have a relationship with the God of the Universe. In the New Testament, it explains that as we invite Jesus to become a part of our lives something supernatural happens. For what that verse is saying is that as you meet Jesus (the living God) in a personal way you become His precious child, and a relationship is established between you and God himself that almost goes beyond what we can grasp. You become His child and are adopted into his family. (Ephesians 1:5) puts it this way 'He predestined us for adoption to son ship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. The Message says that *"God took great pleasure in planning this"*.

I am sure you have seen this in action among one of your friends. For years a couple has tried to have a baby, they saw Doctors, took their temperature, went to clinics, prayed, sought out connections and then somehow a miracle happened and they were able to adopt a child. And even if the kid doesn't sleep at night there is still this smile that won't leave their face, because while it seemed impossible to have a child, right now, in their arms they are holding a

child. Their child and the warmth of that child against their chest give them a joy they can't describe. That is the kind of picture this passage is trying to paint. That He loves you. So the first image in the mirror is 'YOU' a loved child of God himself.

2. The second image reflecting back at you is that of a Person clothed by God's splendor, clothed with the Holiness and Perfection of God himself: (Gal. 3:26-27)

"For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ" What does that mean? Let's be honest, this morning we put on clothes that we shopped hours for that have been bought to make us look as good as possible. The other day I was in a store waiting for Kathy to come out of a change room, and I watched as another man's wife came out wearing a new dress and heard her ask 'Does this make my butt look big'. He said 'You look beautiful'. After she walked back into the change room I simply said 'Well said' to which he replied 'I haven't lived this long by being stupid'. We buy clothes that have stripes running one way and are gathered in specific places so they will hide our imperfections from other. What this verse is saying is that as Jesus Christ becomes apart of mine and your life, it is as if we put on another set of clothing on us, or a new image slides right over top of us.

It is as if the very image of Jesus is super-imposed over us. So that, as God looks at you, what He sees is only the goodness of Jesus, the holiness and gentleness of Jesus overshadowing those things which are and have been a apart of our lives which are less than perfect. So, as He sees you, he sees you wrapped in the goodness of Jesus. Now, let me take this one step even farther, listen to what (*Hebrews 10:14*) says '*For by one sacrifice He (Jesus) has made us perfect forever those who are being made holy*'. And (*2 Corinthians 5:21*) says "*God made those who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*". So when we asked Jesus to become a part of our lives in that transaction (because he died for our sin) not only are our sins paid for, not only does Jesus become so much a part of our lives that when God looks our way he sees the very essence of Jesus on us. But because Jesus is holy, God sees us as holy, perfect forever and having the very righteousness of God (perfection of God himself) as part of our lives.

I tell you this because that means that as God looks at you first thing in the morning, while you see all your warts and wrinkles, He sees you as a son or daughter whom He loves very much (enough to have sent his son to die on the cross so He could know you in a more intimate manner). And He sees you, wrapped in the majesty, holiness and wonder of Jesus himself. That means that as you look in the mirror first thing in the morning is a holy moment, if you look very closely you will see your heavenly Father standing there with pride right behind you with his hand on your shoulder ready to meet you in a sacred embrace that will continue throughout the day.

That is why I said that as You force yourself to look into the mirror first thing in the morning, if you could hear and see beyond the temporal you would see the smile of your Father God lovingly welcoming you to the day and hear the gasp of the angles as they whisper "look there is the child of God awakening"

So while first thing in the morning you may feel like groaning, eternity gasps. As you stumble, angles are star struck. What you see in the mirror as a morning disaster, in reality, is a morning miracle, 'Holiness in a bathrobe'.

Go ahead and get dressed. Go ahead and put on the rings, shave the whiskers, comb the hair, and cover the blemishes. But know that you are doing it for yourself, doing it for the sake of your image or the sake of your job, doing it for the benefit of those who have to sit beside you. But don't do it for God, for He has already seen you as you really are. And still, He loves you as his precious perfect child.

So, let's go back to how we began this morning. We began by painting a picture of me rising out of the mud hole, water dripping off of me, mud caked to my clothes. And we admitted that often if we are honest, that in the quietness of our thoughts, especially after being disappointed with something we have done or because we have heard the loud voices of those we work with or live with that we often see ourselves as less than beautiful. Less than holy, less than talented, more a mud hog than a holy adopted child who is desperately loved by God. That is why I wanted to take you to the mirror and scripture again and remind you of what is truth. For God so loved the world that he came for you and I, that we are the sons and daughters of God, that we are wrapped in the very holiness of God and that 'we are perfect' in God's eyes.

Why is that so important? Two days ago Dr. Marvin Dewey came into my office. He was the former President of Taylor College and Seminary. A few years ago after attempting to change the direction of Taylor in which some things worked well, while others did not work as well he stepped down from his job there. At age 56 he wasn't sure what would happen next, what happened next was that his wife's cancer came back and within a year she passed away. As we sat there talking about what he had been through, the journey with his wife's death, being alone now after so many years of a wonderful marriage, he simply said in a gentle voice 'It has made heaven a more precious thought for me and when you boil it all down the bottom line is (God and you) God and your relationship with Him'. Those words didn't come cheap, but they are powerful. They came only after walking through deep hard places. And they reminded me of the wonder, the privilege and the great gift it is to start each day with my Jesus, listening to what He says about me and knowing that He will be there to meet me each morning.

So, tomorrow morning as you pry yourself out of Bed, turn on the washroom light and look into the Mirror, remember that if you will let Jesus be a part of your life, what you are looking at in the mirror will be 'HOLINESS IN A BATHROBE'. That just beyond what you can see with your physical eyes is God (himself) waiting to be a part of your life and the life of those you love. So place a sticky note on your mirror that will help remind you of what is happening first thing in the morning as you look at your half asleep mug in the mirror. Then squint your eyes and look beyond what you can physically see and know Jesus is there ready to walk with you into your day. Remember you are standing on holy tile.