**WE SHALL NOT BE FOUND NAKED**

***Lessons From The Emperor’s New Clothes***

When my children were young I loved to tell them “Imagination Stories.” These were tales that I invented from my fertile mind of fantasy. In grade school I was forever losing focus with the present subject at hand and staring off into the wild blue yonder, imagining adventures of greatness and daring-do. I always wanted to be “out there,” not “in here.” I wanted to explore, discover, travel the world. My imagination took me places and allowed me to do great things (if only in my mind). True, my grades shriveled (badly), but my world grew. Wanting to be that knight in shining armor, dreaming of the age of chivalry, desiring to be a modern-day Robin Hood, was not all bad, for I lived an adventurous childhood.

Where did I get my ideas? I was fascinated by the writings of Grimm’s Fairy Tales. I also loved the stories by Hans Christian Andersen. Obviously, Walt Disney liked his stories too. If you’ve ever seen the Disney movies *Thumbelina*, *The Little Mermaid*, and the recent hit *Frozen* (taken from Andersen’s fairy tale of *The Snow Queen*), then you will know a little of the work of the famous Swedish story teller. If you have heard or read *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Red Shoes*, *The Nightingale* or *The Princess and The Pea*, then you have heard of Hans Christian Andersen. But if those don’t ring a bell then I’ll wager a dime to a donut that you have heard the story of *The Emperor’s New Clothes*.

Long ago and far away there lived an Emperor who was an egomaniac about the way he looked and dressed. He loved new, expensive clothes so much that he spent his fortune on tailors and the latest fabrics to weave bright new garments for everyday in the year. He put on a new coat every hour of the day.

One day two swindlers came to town who professed to be the finest garment weavers in the land. They claimed to be able to weave the greatest clothes if they only had the gold and silk to do so. In fact, they said their fabrics were so fine that they had a way of becoming invisible to anyone who was unfit for his office in the kingdom. If you could not see the clothes then you must be a fool or stupid.

The Emperor’s vanity could not resist the urge to have such beautiful clothes, so he hired these two “weavers” to make him the very best. He also desired to learn which servants in his realm were so stupid because they could not see his clothes. He paid a large sum of gold and brought them beautiful silk to weave. Of course, they just put it in their carpet bags, then sat at their looms and pretended like they were weaving all day and all night long, shouting out for all to hear how beautiful their clothes were.

The Emperor sent his most trusted servant, the minister, to see how the project was coming. He didn’t see any clothes. But, not wanting to be thought stupid, he bragged how gorgeous they were. The same happened to his next most trusted servant too. Finally, the Emperor came to be fitted. When shown the “clothes,” and hearing the swindlers brag how beautiful they were, his pride couldn’t admit he couldn’t see them either, for that would make him unworthy to be king!

He was then escorted – naked – throughout the city. No one wanted to be thought a fool and so praised how beautiful his clothes were. But, just as the Bible says, “out of the mouth of babes” a little boy shouted, “the emperor has no clothes!” Soon the whole town admitted what their eyes were seeing (or not seeing). “The emperor is naked!” Even the emperor knew they were right, but his pride would not let him stop the parade.

Andersen’s imaginary story has far more truth then we first realize. First, and foremost, we read in the Proverbs:
*“When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom”* (11:2) *“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall*” (16:18)
*“A proud and haughty man—“Scoffer” is his name; He acts with arrogant pride”* (21:24)

But there is a greater lesson I wish to learn. The world thinks Christians wear no clothes, at least in a figurative sense. They say our imagination runs wild as we believe in another world where we will be immortally dressed in garments of brilliant white. They say Jesus’ words to the believers at Sardis and Laodicea were all lies when He promised them beautiful new garments to wear for eternity:
 *“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.* (Rev. 3:4-5)

 *“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed …* (Rev. 3:18)

Paul, like Jesus, was no swindler either. By inspiration he promised us beautiful new clothes to wear in heaven. He said to the Corinthians, and to us:

“*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed,* ***we shall not be found naked****. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life*.” (2 Cor. 5:1-4)

Let the world laugh at us now. They say we have no clothes on as we try to tell them of the wonderful world to come. While the ego-driven Emperor was deceived because he refused to examine the real evidence, we have not been deceived because we do examine the evidence. “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1). Yes, we now “*walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Cor. 5:7). We are not blind, but in faith we see 20/20. There is a resurrection day where we will be immortally arrayed (I Cor. 15:51-58). We shall not be found naked.

Come Lord Jesus. - Rick