

## **Second-Hand Clothes**

I love second hand clothes shops.

They are such a wonderful mix of colour, texture, and styles.

Where else could you find couture labels alongside vintage and retro items, and others which could only be labelled as downright bizarre?

I always walk into them with the hope that I will unearth a treasure which everyone else has conveniently overlooked.

I can browse the aisles, amassing a veritable mountain of clothes, which pays no mind to the number of items I'm permitted to take into the changing rooms.

And it's in the changing rooms that the dream begins to unravel.

Those killer jeans which beckoned me from the rack do look fabulous – up to my knees, which is as far as they will go!

Discard!

The dress has obviously had the wrong size label sewn into it.

Discard!

The blouse is missing buttons, the zipper on the skirt sticks, and how come I didn't notice the stain right on the front of that jacket?

Discard!

And so the dream becomes a disappointment, as the pile of things at my feet grows and grows.

After all, there is a good reason why all those clothes have ended up in this shop.

They were the right size, colour, shape – for somebody else!

We humans are such peculiar creatures.

Why do we try so hard to fit into someone else's discarded things?

They could be someone else's goals, hopes, dreams, beliefs or expectations.

They may be noble or inspiring, but if we've adopted them second hand, they will never fit us perfectly.

How often do we take on a role which is chosen for us by someone else?

Why do we choose behaviours which may go against everything we value, so that we will fit in and be accepted?

There is one other thing about second hand clothes which is worth noting – they have a unique smell.

There is nothing else quite like that distinctive odour.

If you are lucky enough to find items that you end up taking home, then the very first thing you do is wash them really thoroughly - maybe even more than once - before you wear them.

When we try to squeeze ourselves into lives designed for others, we stink!

The Bible refers to all our self effort as being like filthy rags.

If we are compromising, or selling ourselves short, then we will be stalked by the stench of our failings.

Our Heavenly Father who made us is well aware of all our quirks and odd behaviours, but He also knows that our rummaging through other peoples cast offs is really a quest to find a life which is exactly tailored for us: a life that will draw out the best in us, challenge our weaknesses, and build on our strengths.

In other words, just the sort of life that God has wanted for us all along.

He called it “abundant life” and He sent His son, Jesus Christ, to earth to see that we had a chance to get it.

The price of such a life is extravagant.

God paid for it with the life of His only son.

He knew that no other price would ever be sufficient to purchase such a perfect gift.

He even promises that He will give us clothes perfectly matched to our new life – robes of righteousness – white as snow, without stains or blemishes.

And on top of all that, He promises to deal with the little problem of our odour!

When we choose to put on the life that God has chosen for us, we become a sweet fragrance to Him.

But this is all only possible because of Jesus’ obedience.

He already had abundant life in the presence of the Father, but He chose to put it side so that it could be made available for us.

That’s what we’re remembering as we take communion.

The cup reminds us of His blood shed for us.

The bread reminds us that He allowed His body to be broken for us.

Let’s take time right now to give Him thanks and honour for the abundant, sweet smelling life we enjoy, because of Him.

Thank you Jesus.