

**LENT 4 - HE CHOSE THE NAILS**  
**“I WILL GIVE YOU MY ROBE AND INVITE YOU INTO MY PRESENCE”**  
**JOHN 19:23-24; 1 PETER 2:24, 5:5-7; GALATIAN’S 3:27;**  
**HEBREWS 10:19-20; MATTHEW 27:50-51**  
**2025-04-06**

This is the fourth week working through Max Lucado’s book, *He Chose the Nails*. The emphasis is “You did this for me?” We discovered anew that Jesus will and has borne our dark side, loving us enough to become one of us—in fact, exchanging places with us. We gave Him our sin—which He willingly accepted; in exchange, He gave us His righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

We considered why God gives so much. We could exist on much less. But He didn’t give us less: Every gift reveals God’s love, but none more than the gifts of the cross—wrapped in passion, not covered with ribbons, but sprinkled with blood. Of course, there is the gift of the cross. But what about the nails, the crown of thorns, Jesus’ garments and the burial garments, the wine-soaked sponge, a sign, two crosses beside Christ—divine gifts. Each week of Lent we’re taking time to open them. We’re bound to utter: “You did this for me? He answers: “I did it just for you.”

Our moral clothing is in disarray. Though the standard for sitting at God’s table is high, His love for His children is higher. So, He offers us a gift—a seamless robe—a robe worn by His Son, Jesus. Scripture says little about the clothes Jesus wore. 1 reference to His garments is: “They divided His clothes among the four of them. They also took His robe, but it was seamless, woven in 1 piece from the top. So, they said, ‘Let’s not tear it but throw dice to see who gets it.’” (John 19:23-24)

It may have been Jesus’ finest possession. Jewish tradition called for a mother to make such a robe and present it to her son as a departure gift when he left home. We don’t know for sure whether or not Mary did this for Jesus. But we do know that the tunic had no seam. Why is that significant?

Scripture often describes our behaviour as the clothes we wear. Peter urges us to be “clothed with humility (1Peter 5:5). Garments can symbolize character; like His garment, Jesus’ character was seamless. Like His robe, He was uninterrupted perfection. “Woven...from the top.” Jesus was led from the top by the mind of His Father: “The Son can do nothing on His own, but only doing what He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise (John 5:19).” The character of Jesus was a seamless fabric woven from heaven to earth—from

God's thoughts to Jesus' actions. From God's tears to Jesus' compassion. From God's word to Jesus' response. All one piece. All a picture of the character of Jesus.

But when Christ was nailed to the cross, He took off His robe of seamless perfection and took on a different wardrobe—the wardrobe of indignity. There was the indignity of nakedness as He was publicly stripped and shamed. There was the indignity of failure. For a few pain filled hours the religious leaders appeared the winner and Christ appeared the loser—shamed before His accusers. Worst, He wore the indignity of sin—“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness (1 Peter 2:24)”. So, what's the clothing of Christ on the cross? Sin—yours and mine—the sins of all humanity.

Every aspect of the crucifixion was intended not only to hurt the victim but to shame him and disgrace him. Crucifixion was usually reserved for the most vile offenders. The condemned person was marched through the city streets, shouldering his crossbar and wearing a placard around his neck naming his crime. At the execution he was stripped and mocked. Jesus was not only shamed before people, He was shamed before heaven. Since he bore the sins of us all, He felt the shame of the murderer and adulterer. Though He never lied, He bore the disgrace of a liar. Though He never cheated, He felt the embarrassment of a cheater. Since He bore the sin of the world, He felt the collective shame of the world. Hebrews 13:13 speaks of the disgrace He bore. “Let us, then, go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore.”

While on the cross, Jesus felt the indignity and disgrace of a criminal. No, of course He wasn't guilty, nor had He committed a sin, nor did He deserve to be sentenced. But you and I were (guilty), had (committed sin) and did (deserve sentencing). We had/have nothing to offer but a prayer. He took off His robe and offered it to us—a robe of seamless purity, while taking our coat of pride, greed and selfishness. He wore our sins so we could wear His righteousness (Galatians 3:13).

Though we come to the cross dressed in sin, we leave the cross dressed in the “coat of His strong love” (Isaiah 59:17), girded with a “belt of goodness and fairness” (Isaiah 11:5), and clothed in “garments of salvation” (Isaiah 61:10). It's more complete to say, we leave dressed in Christ Himself. “You have all put on Christ as a garment” (Galatians 3:27).

You remember a few weeks ago when we spoke about God preparing a feast for you and then reserving you a seat— and covered the cost and provided transportation to the banquet. Way more than that, He let you wear His clothes so you would be properly dressed. He did that...just for you.

Now think about trying to get to see someone really important like the Prime Minister or the King. You can make fresh-baked cookies and walk up to Rideau Hall or Buckingham Palace and say you're here to see the Prime Minister or King and they're going to let you in, right? Hmm. Well, do you have an appointment? No. The only way it's going to happen is if you get an invitation from the King or the Prime Minister—then you could get in. But, when it comes to the most important One ever, when it comes to God, pick up your cookies and walk in because He's already extended the invite. He has spotted you; He has heard you and He has invited you. What once separated you has been removed: "Now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away from God are brought near" (Ephesians 2:13). Nothing remains between you and God but an open door.

So how's that possible? If you can't get in to see the Prime Minister, how can you be granted an audience with God? What happened? In a word, someone opened the curtain. Someone tore down the veil. Something happened in the death of Christ that opened the door for you and me. "So, brothers & sisters, we are completely free to enter the Most Holy Place without fear because of the blood of Jesus' death. We can enter through a new & living way that Jesus opened for us. It leads through the curtain—Christ's body. (Hebrews 10:19-20)

According to the author of Hebrews, the curtain equals Jesus. So, whatever happened to the flesh of Jesus happened to the curtain. What happened to His flesh? It was torn—by the whips and by the thorns and by the weight of the cross and by the point of the nails. But in this horror of His torn flesh is the wonder of the open door. But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice and died. Then the curtain in the Temple was torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:50-51).

The Holy of Holies was the part of the Temple no one could enter—Jewish worshipers could enter the outer court, but only the priests could enter the Holy Place and no one except the high priest on one day a year could enter the Holy of Holies, because the 'shekinah'—the glory of God was present there. So, imagine, imagine the disbelief a Jew would experience if told he/she could enter the Holy of Holies. To enter meant death. Two of Aaron's sons died when they entered to offer sacrifices to the Lord (Leviticus 16:1-2)

So, what did 1,500 years of a curtain-draped Holy of Holies communicate? God is holy—separate from us and unapproachable. Even Moses was told "You cannot see My face, because no one can see Me and live (Exodus 33:20). God is holy and we are sinners and there's a distance between us: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you..." (Isaiah 59:2)

We know God is good. We know we are not and we feel far from God. Job nailed it: “If only there were a mediator who could bring us together” (Job 9:33 NLT).

But there is! Jesus hasn't left us with an unapproachable God. For sure, God is holy and we are sinful. But, astoundingly, Jesus is our mediator: “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). The go-between. Jesus was the curtain between us and God—and His flesh was torn.

So, here's our wrestling match. What appeared to be the cruelty of man turns out to be the sovereignty of God:

“And when Jesus cried out again in a loud voice. He gave up His spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in 2 from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:50-51).

It's as if the hands of heaven had been gripping the veil, waiting for this moment. The curtain—60' tall & 30' wide—instantly from whole to ripped. I've heard it said that two teams of horses wouldn't have been able to pull it apart.

The meaning is awesome! For Jews, no more barrier between them and the Holy of Holies and no more priests to go between them and God and no more animal sacrifices to atone for their sins. And for us? We are welcome to enter into God's presence—any day, any time. God has removed the barrier that separates us from Him. The barrier of sin? Down. He has removed the curtain.

But we have a tendency to keep putting the barrier back up. Though there's not a curtain in the temple, there's a curtain in the heart. Sometimes we allow our mistakes to keep us from God. A guilty conscience becomes a curtain that separates us from God and we end up hiding from our Master. We're like a dog who slinks away, tail tucked between his legs thinking his keeper is angry with him; but God isn't angry with you. He has already dealt with your mistake. Somewhere, somehow you got tangled up in garbage and you've been avoiding God, allowing a veil of guilt to come between you and your Father. Maybe you even wonder if you can ever feel close to God again. The message of the torn flesh is *you can*. God welcomes you. He's not avoiding you. The curtain is down, the door is open and God invites you in. You can trust the cross. The blood has been spilt and the veil has been split. You're welcome in God's presence. Share that with someone this week.