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This week we take a short diversion from our character study of Moses, but in keeping with its theme. It's London Fashion Week and I thought we might consider if the Bible speaks to the subject of **Fashion**. Believe me when I say, there are several magazines which publish fashions for the church-goer (2019 autumn catalogues are out for hats, suits and unique dresses, by *Donna Vinci*, *Mia by Giovanna*, *Lily and Taylor*, and others) on the one hand, to clothing for choirs, Deacons, Priests, Bishops etc, and funeral drapes, chalice covers and more!

I think something has been lost between the descriptions of "Holy Garments" in the Old Testament¹, items **never** considered as belonging to the priest, instead to be worn exclusively by the anointed High Priest when serving in the Sanctuary², and **ONLY** when approaching Holy God, who could not be contaminated by sin³, **and** Paul's advice, *women are to dress in suitable apparel, with modesty and self-control. Their adornment must not be with braided hair and gold or pearls or expensive clothing, but with good deeds, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God*⁴.

Being Fashion Week in London, let's focus on the impact of clothing on our lives. Let's leave aside discussions on the carbon-footprint of our clothes, or the child-labour involved, and related topics in the public discourse. If we can appreciate the fact, in the Bible, the mention of clothing is not always literal, rather it is a metaphor, a figure of speech, a comparison which explains our relationship with God⁵, in the context of the journey of life.

Our reading today is from the life of Joseph, made famous by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber starting in 1968 as, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Every song in this award winning musical is true in

¹ Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Judges and 1 Samuel

² Exodus 28:48; 29:30

³ For a detailed consideration of this subject, click [HERE](#)

⁴ 1 Timothy 2:8-10

⁵ Job 29:14; Psalm 132:9; Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 19:8 to list but a few.

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word and character to the story of Joseph, which invites the question, *Surely, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd-Webber not only read their Bibles and knew it well enough to represent its lines in music, but also to interpret its theology quite accurately?*

Joseph is famous for his multicoloured coat, but Joseph had three coats, each representing a stage in his journey of life, and in his faith in God.

Joseph was the elder son of Jacob and Rachel, Jacob's first love. He had to work for her father for 7 years to marry her, but was tricked into marrying her elder sister Leah (the deceiver is deceived!), then worked a further seven years to marry Rachel with whom he had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin; Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin.

Whenever Jacob saw Joseph, he was reminded of his first love who was Rachel. Joseph's favour was the cause of dislike and jealousy by all his ten half-brothers and it did not help when, on his 17th birthday, Jacob gifted Joseph a special coat of many colours: Joseph's first coat!

In those days, coats were items of practical clothing (to keep warm and to carry things), and most people having just one, it was valuable enough to give as security/pledge against a loan.

I believe there are two main reasons why Jacob gave Joseph a coat which was as much as a fashion statement, as it was a useful garment.

First, Rachel had difficulty conceiving; when she had her first child, a son, Jacob recognised his birth as a blessing from God and named him **Joseph** which means, "*may he add*".

Second, watching Joseph exercise his gift of dreaming God's plans (proven later to be 100% accurate), Jacob had God's wisdom to realise his son Joseph was fulfilling the covenant between God and Abraham (Joseph's

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great-grandfather), *"I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations!"*⁶.

Joseph's first *"coat of many colours"* was a father's gift, which represents God's symbol of favour, of being set apart to fulfil God's plan of salvation.

When we accept God's great act of salvation, we are clothed in Christ's righteousness which is our unique identity: Anyone clothed in Christ's ***Coat of Righteousness*** cannot be condemned, but saved when God destroys the author of sin, satan himself.

The Coat of Righteousness is a powerful identity which makes satan see red. He steps in to hinder God's plan of salvation. Joseph's 10 half brothers become instruments in satan's hands, to interrupt God's plan of salvation through Joseph. They stage a mock killing and inform their father he was killed by wild animals, which sent Jacob into severe depression for twenty years or so!

Neither God, not His plan are easily thwarted! Joseph may have been traded as a slave into Egypt, but God's plan sees him in the role of a trusted manager in the royal household, and that is where his second coat comes in.

Joseph never gave up his faith in God. He was hired by the captain of Pharaoh's guard and rose to be in charge of the Captain's entire household. Joseph wore a ***Servant's Coat***, which identified him as one with significant responsibility.

It wasn't long before the Captain's wife noticed the young, handsome Hebrew boy made her feelings known. Joseph spurned her advances, she grabbed his arm, he wriggled free and fled, leaving her holding his coat!⁷

⁶ Genesis 17:4

⁷ Genesis 39

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Joseph's Servant's Coat became the instrument of accusation which landed him in prison!

This is the pattern of life for a person who chooses to follow Christ: clothed in Christ's righteousness, our natural tendency is to stand up against anything that is abhorrent to God. Satan being satan, we become targets of unfair, even illegal accusations, which for some, means social quarantine, as in a prison.

The **first** coat is the **Coat of Righteousness**, God's favour of accepting us as righteous as Jesus Himself which sets us apart.

The **second** coat is the **Servant's Coat** which identifies us as a follower of Christ, and makes us a target for serious trouble.

God never stops His work of salvation in our lives, to unite us with Him, now and in eternity.

At that time, Joseph was not aware, a **third** coat was waiting for him: the **Coat of Destiny**, a coat of a Prince in charge of the Royal Household.

Psalm 105 describes this coat so very beautifully: *the Lord tested Joseph's character. (In God's perfect time) the Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; Joseph was put in charge of all the king's household and he became ruler over all the king's possessions.*

Life is not about suffering, nor is it about acquiring for ourselves, the "good life".

Life is about being clothed in the righteousness of Christ to avoid God's destructive anger against sin; it sets us apart and might cause hardship, even social ostracism, exclusion and rejection. But for each of us, God has a **Coat of Destiny** waiting. Would you like to know what this coat looks like and when we might be clothed in it?

Turn with me to chapter 19 of Revelation. When God has destroyed satan, chapter 19 begins with Heaven's reaction: *After this, I heard what sounded*

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like a vast crowd in heaven shouting, "Praise the Lord! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. His judgments are true and just. He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. He has avenged the murder of his servants."

*(v.6) Again I heard what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder: "Praise the Lord! The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him. The time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride (**WE** The Church) has prepared herself. She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear." The fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people.⁸*

What are these **good deeds**? Anything we do that is motivated by faith in God, by which God is glorified, is considered **good deeds!**

Does the Bible have anything to do with fashion and clothing? It most certainly does! Fashion like you haven't ever seen before, but more than a fashion statement, the clothing God gives us, identifies us as His special people!

AMEN.

⁸ Revelation 19:6-8