

**SERMON PREACHED AT ST ANDREW'S WALKERVILLE ON SUNDAY NOVEMBER 5,  
2017 BY THE REVEREND STUART LANGSHAW, LOCUM TENENS.**

**THE KIRKIN' O' THE TARTANS**

It has been estimated that some people spend nearly as much on clothes throughout their lives, as they spend on purchasing a house. The clothing industry is a billion dollar venture around the world. Shakespeare said it first, and then Mark Twain repeated it. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare wrote "Apparel oft proclaims the man." (*Hamlet*, Act 1 Scene 3). Putting it another way, Mark Twain wrote, "Clothes make a man. Naked people have little or no influence on society."

There is the story of the married couple who had been invited to an important function. The wife said, "I have nothing to wear ... and, by the way, I need more space in my wardrobe." Or there is the children's joke about clothes ... What kind of jacket do you wear on a hike? A trail-blazer.

We certainly wear a great variety of clothes for a great variety of reasons. We have formal and informal clothes. Some clothes are a badge of office, such as the Police uniform or the uniform worn by branches of the armed services. There are ceremonial clothes such as the marvellous uniform worn by the Household Cavalry in England. Or there are protective clothes such as those worn by the medical and surgical staff during operations, and by the people who remove asbestos. Some items of clothing are a status symbol – men's ties that proclaim that they belong to this club or to that organisation. And from years ago we remember "church clothes" – for women ... frock and matching shoes, handbag, gloves and hat, or for men, three piece suit and tie.

Tartans are a badge of belonging – belonging to a group that is larger than your immediate family. For those who know the colours and patterns, tartans place you within this group or that. Highland dress with its bonnet, its shirt, its kilt, sporrin and pin, the plaid, with its Sgain Dubh (*pronounced "skeeen doo"*), the hose and garters and brogues – highland dress is a most distinctive national dress. Some years ago, when I was Chaplain at Woodlands School, one of the former students met her Scottish fiancé off the plane in February at Adelaide Airport. He had flown in from Edinburgh. These were the days when you walked from the plane and across the asphalt to get to the terminal. Being a romantic Scot, this young man thought he would impress his young lady by wearing his full Highland dress. It was a stinking summer's day in Adelaide – 40° C- and the plane was quite a walk from the terminal. He got to the door of the terminal and fell down in a heat-induced faint. Highland dress is fine for Scotland – not for Adelaide in summer.

A little thought-about part of the Highland dress is the pin – that holds the kilt closed. The pin is usually silver, and is designed to have the clan symbol and the clan motto. Some clan mottos have excellent moral teaching. MacQueen ... "constant and faithful." Pringle ... "Friendship gives honour." Crawford ... "I will make thee safe by my strength" MacThomas of Finegard ... "I shall overcome envy with God's help." Someone will need to explain to me the motto of Chatton, MacBain and MacGovern ... "Touch not the cat without a glove." When a clan member looked at the pin and read the motto, he or she was instructed with values and standards that were important to the clan.

Awaiting trial, in Rome Saint Paul looked at the armour of the Roman soldiers guarding him, and he thought that just as the military's clothing protected the soldiers who wore it, so the values and standards of the Christian faith were like individual bits of the soldiers' armour and

weapons – giving protection, and allowing Christians to take the initiative to live God’s life in theirs. Our offertory hymn this morning had the opening lines, “Soldiers of Christ arise, and put your armour on – strong in the strength which God supplies through his eternal Son.”

In the letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6. St Paul made a list of the armour and weapons of his guards – belt ...breastplate ... footwear ... shield ...helmet ... sword. As he wrote his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul said that the followers of Christ should be clothed with the belt of truth ... the breastplate of righteousness ... the footwear of God’s good news ... the shield of faith ... the helmet of salvation ... the sword of God’s word.

Of course, it’s important for us to dress in ways that are appropriate and suitable for the event we’re going to attend, or the work we’re about to do. And we do like to dress in such ways that we don’t look odd or out of place, or in ways so that people won’t be put off by the way we dress. We also like to dress to express our personality and our individuality.

But by far the most important consideration is – what sort of person is it who dresses herself or himself? In the end, the clothing is merely a wrapping for the person within it. It is the nature of the person who is inside the clothes that is more important than the clothes on the outside of the person. We don’t need to dress up in the Highland Dress gear of the Clan Macqueen to be “constant and faithful” as their motto says. We don’t have to dress in any particular set of clothing to show the characteristics of truth and righteousness and good news and faith and salvation that come to us as we spend time with God and God’s teachings.

Perhaps the best advice about getting dressed comes from St Paul, in his letter to the Romans “ ... put on the Lord Jesus Christ ...” Allow Jesus Christ and his teachings to be the covering and protection you have. It is as we spend time with Jesus Christ, worshipping, learning and serving, that we find ourselves with the values and standards we need to live well, to live positively and to live well-balanced lives.

The pins used to keep kilts closed have their own stories to tell. The mottos of the clans have their advice to give. The tartans of Highland dress have their sense of belonging to give. The teachings and example of Jesus Christ have their guidance and inspiration to give us.

Let us celebrate the Kirkin’ O’ The Tartans, but let us also not forget to look deeply into what we can learn from them, and from their pins.