

A beggar lived near the king's palace. One day he saw a proclamation posted outside the palace gate. The king was giving a great dinner. Anyone dressed in royal garments was invited to the party.

The beggar went on his way. He looked at the rags he was wearing and sighed. Surely only kings and their families wore royal robes, he thought. Slowly an idea crept into his mind. The audacity of it made him tremble. Would he dare? He made his way back to the palace. He approached the guard at the gate. "Please, sir, I would like to speak to the king."

"Wait here," the guard replied. In a few minutes, he was back. "His majesty will see you," he said, and led the beggar in.

"You wish to see me?" asked the king.

"Yes, your majesty. I want so much to attend the banquet, but I have no royal robes to wear. Please, sir, if I may be so bold, may I have one of your old garments so that I, too, may come to the banquet?" The beggar shook so hard that he could not see the faint smile that was on the king's face. "You have been wise in coming to me," the king said. He called to his son, the young prince. "Take this man to your room and array him in some of your clothes." The prince did as he was told and soon the beggar was standing before a mirror, clothed in garments that he had never dared hope for. "You are now eligible to attend the king's banquet tomorrow night," said the prince. "But even more important, you will never need any other clothes. These garments will last forever."

The beggar dropped to his knees. "Oh, thank you," he cried. But as he started to leave, he looked back at his pile of dirty rags on the floor. He hesitated. What if the prince was wrong? What if he would need his old clothes again. Quickly he gathered them up.

The banquet was far greater than he had ever imagined, but he could not enjoy himself. He had made a small bundle of his old rags and it kept falling off his lap. The food was passed quickly and the beggar missed some of the greatest delicacies.

Time proved that the prince was right. The clothes lasted forever. Still the poor beggar grew fonder and fonder of his old rags. As time passed people seemed to forget the royal robes he was wearing. They saw only the little bundle of filthy rags that he clung to wherever he went. They even spoke of him as the old man with the rags.

One day as he lay dying, the king visited him. The beggar saw the sad look on the king's face when he looked at the small bundle of rags by the bed. Suddenly the beggar remembered the prince's words and he realized that his bundle of rags had cost him a lifetime of true royalty. He wept bitterly at his folly. And the king wept with him.

We have been invited into a royal family -- the family of God. To feast at God's dinner table, all we have to do is shed our old rags and put on the "new clothes" of faith that is provided by God's Son, Jesus Christ. But we cannot hold onto our old rags. When we put our faith in Christ, we must let go of the sin in our life, and our old ways of living. Those things must be discarded if we are to experience true royalty and abundant life in Christ.

"Behold, the old is passed away; the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). **HAPPY NEW YEAR**

(NOTE: This story was shared with me by a dear friend, Dr. Lucius Holsey Pitts, President of Miles College, Birmingham, Alabama.)