

The Party Dress

by Angela Georgantas



Is Being “Good”, Good Enough?

This is the story of two sisters: Atheista and Christiana. Both sisters were given beautiful white ball gowns and invited to The Party to be held by The Host. Now, no one knew the date or the time for The Party, but everyone knew the rules. When celebration day came around, The Host would only allow those who were dressed perfectly for the event to come inside.

Atheista was very careful with her dress. Sure, she spent time in her garden occasionally, but she was very meticulous when she ate, using a napkin to protect her dress from drips and stains. She also made sure to sit on her couch in such a way that would not wrinkle the delicate fabric, and every once in a while, she would even get out the iron and touch up the edges. All in all, she was sure that when it came time for The Party, she would be ready to dance the night away with The Host and all His wonderful party guests.

Christiana was also careful. She, too, played in the garden sometimes, but she also used a napkin and was mindful when she sat down. But one day when she went to get her iron to touch up the edges of her dress, she caught sight of herself in the mirror in the hall. How could she not have noticed before? After so much time wearing the dress, she was a dreadful mess. The formerly near-white fabric was now more of a yellowy color with marks where her napkin had not caught the stains. She was wrinkled from head to toe, and the dress' hem was black from the mud in her garden. She was filthy. Appalled, she realized that looking like this, there was no way that The Host would allow her into the party. If she had just been more careful, if she had just stayed out of the garden, maybe she would be able to go to the party, but now it was too late. Christiana sat down to cry. Then the phone rang.

“Hello?” Christiana managed through her tears.

“Hello. This is Great Open Day and Son Dry Cleaning calling to tell you about a very special offer we are having on all our services. All you have to do is come down to the shop and trade your dirty party dress for a freshly pressed, brand new, white-as-light party dress for free!”

Christiana's head snapped up. “What? You would give me a brand new dress in exchange for my old one for free?” She grabbed a Kleenex from the box, mopping at her face and sniffing loudly. “What's the catch?” “Catch? There's no catch. My Father, the owner of Great Open Day and Son, is The Host of The Party, and He wants lots and lots of guests to come. To please him, I spent all the money in my college fund and left Home to help people get ready for The Party. The city doesn't like my shop and has tried to use ordinances to shut Me down, but my Father is too powerful. Nothing happens in this town without His say-so.”

“So what do I have to do?”

“All you have to do is promise to stop spending time in the garden, and any time you get a small spot, stain, or wrinkle on your brand new dress, you just come back down and We replace the dress again – for free! That way when it comes time for The Party, you will always be ready to go...” Christiana didn't hear the end of the sentence because she was already grabbing her purse and heading out the door.

When she got to Great Open Day and Son, the Owner's Son was waiting for her. She was embarrassed as she handed over the ripped, stained dress, but He was true to His word. The new dress that He offered her was just as perfect – and an even brighter white – than her first dress when it had been brand new. There wasn't a wrinkle or spot on it, and the intricate sequins and embroidery shone brightly in the sunlight coming in through the window. Even better, the new fabric was stain-resistant, so it would even be that much easier to keep sparkling white.

“Now you remember what you should do if you happen to get this one dirty, right? You just take it right back here, and I will give you another one. And just so you make sure that you are always ready for the party, I'm going to give you this special matching pair of glasses that will always help you see when you accidentally muss your dress.” Christiana was smiling from ear to ear, but then something awful occurred to her. “How many times will you replace my dress if I mess it up? Once? Twice? What if I mess it up so many times that you get tired of replacing it?”

The Host's Son smiled. “Life is a very messy business. As long as you stay out of the garden mud, I will replace your dress with any accidental spots and stains as many times as you need Me to do so. You just come back here and talk to me, and I will fix you right up. In fact, come on down any time you want to talk. Maybe there is something you can do to help Me with My referral program. My Father wants a full house at His Party, and the only way that's going to happen is if people get enrolled in the same clothes-cleaning program you just joined. Sound good?” This sounded very good to Christiana, and she left the shop smiling and radiant. This was such an amazing deal; she just had to tell her sister, Atheista. Atheista was also looking forward to the party and trying to keep her dress very clean, but what if Atheista's dress was as dirty as Christiana's had been? What if she was in danger of missing the party? Christiana knew just what she had to do. She had to go and see her sister right away to tell her about Good Open Day and Son Dry Cleaning. After all, without her sister at The Party, how much fun could she herself actually have there?

When Christiana got to her sister's house and rang the bell, she was so excited. She couldn't wait to show her sister her brand new dress and tell her about the terrific deal at Great Open Day and Son. But when Atheista opened the door, amazingly enough, she didn't even seem to notice Christiana's new dress. To Christiana, the difference in their dresses was night and day, but Atheista didn't have the special pair of glasses and hadn't gotten around to purchasing a mirror in the hall. To Atheista, her own dirty, tattered dress was still beautiful.

“But you need the Son to give you a new dress so that you'll be ready for the party,” Christiana said again in exasperation. All you have to do is stop playing in the garden, and He will give you a new one for free every time you even get a little spot or wrinkle. It really is as easy as that.” “My dress is fine,” said Atheista. Besides, I like to play in the garden. I just got another notice from the city; my garden is the best on the block! I'm sure when the party rolls around – if it ever even gets here – I will look just like everyone else, and The Host will have to let me in. Christiana was heartbroken. Every time she came to visit the Son, sometimes to get a new dress, and sometimes just to talk about life, she would talk to Him about her sister, Atheista. All she began to think about was The Host and making sure that she could please Him when she met Him at the Party. As for her sister, Good Open Day and Son had called her many times to offer the same deal, but without realizing how dirty her dress was, there was really no reason that Atheista would bother to replace it.

One day, The Party was finally here. Invitations were hand delivered, and limousines waited to carry everyone in style. Arriving at The Host's beautiful mansion, Christiana was in awe. It was just as perfect as everyone had told her it would be. She could hear soft music wafting out into the front garden, and the smells coming from the back patio were mouth-watering. She rang the doorbell and waited. She had never met The Host before. What would He be like? Would he like her beautiful dress? When the door opened, it was actually the Son standing there. She gave her old friend a hug. Even though she had just seen him earlier that day and every day that week, He always made her feel so special and loved.

"Christiana! Welcome!"

"I'm here for The Party. How do I look?"

Christiana asked Him, beaming. Do you think your Father will like it?"

"Of course!" said the Son, smiling. You are dressed just like We are," He said gesturing at his own perfect tuxedo with the same sparkled sequins. "Pure white and perfect. Please come in. I will introduce you to The Host." Christiana smiled and stepped inside, but she hesitated. Her sister Atheista was just getting out of her own limousine and was heading to the door. "Pardon me for a moment," He said, and turned back toward the door. The bell rang again. "Can I help you?" Christiana heard Him ask.

"I'm here for the party," she heard her sister say.

"I'm sorry. I don't know you, and you are most assuredly not dressed for the party. Your dress is torn and dirty, and my Father gave you every opportunity to have it replaced." A tear slid down Christiana's cheek as she heard her sister sobbing on the other side of the door. Atheista had thought being careful was enough. She thought she could do it without the help of Great Open Day and Son, but now in the light from The Host's house, she realized at last that the dress she believed to be beautiful was actually very dirty and rumpled. And now she was outside alone, and it was getting dark and cold.

Back inside, the son gave Christiana a hug. He would introduce her to His Father who would wipe all her tears away. Christiana would be sad for a while, but there were lots of things to do and see at the party, and lots of friends with whom to share good times. The party would last all night long, and in the morning, everything would be bright.

Many atheists believe that just being a good person, not harming others, and helping people in life is enough to get them into heaven if there really does turn out to be a God. In this story, the dress is the state of our souls. We start with only a near-white soul because of the sin from Adam, and because life is so messy, our souls get dark with sin even when we try to be "good."

The drips, stains, and wrinkles are accidental sins, while the garden mud is chronic, purposeful sin. Using a napkin and sitting carefully represent trying to abstain from cheating, lying, etc., and the iron represents good deeds and money donated for worthy causes. The hall mirror is the Holy Spirit Who allows people to understand their true spiritual condition. People who haven't listened to the Holy Spirit (taken time to buy the hall mirror) don't know how wretched they really are.

Good Open Day Dry Cleaning and Son are obviously God and his Son, Jesus. After people repent of all sins (stop playing in the garden), Jesus offers people a fresh, pure white and renewed soul, or dress. This perfectly white covering is our only hope of entering The Party, or heaven, where The Host, or God, waits with all the good things that heaven offers. The new fabric is stain-resistant because when people receive a new life through Jesus Christ, we hate the sin we used to love, and are therefore more resistant to it. Because we are fallen creatures, Christians still sometime sin, but the Holy Spirit (the new glasses) reminds us that we are not right with Jesus and tells us to repent to regain our relationship with God.

The Son is the vehicle by which the fresh dress is offered. He gave up his college fund and left home. This represents Jesus coming to earth and sacrificing His own life for our sins. The dry cleaner's Son wants to get us ready for The Party just like Jesus wants to get us ready for an eternity with God. It is the Son's introduction to The Host that secures our spot at The Party, or Heaven.

The city represents the devil. He uses the power he has been given in this world to try to stop people from coming to Jesus. In the story, the city tries to shut down the dry cleaner and encourages people to play in the garden. In reality, the devil tries to steer people away from Jesus and encourages them to sin willfully. When the time for The Party comes, at the end of a person's life, he or she is either ready to enter with the pure white covering of Jesus or will be left outside where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In the story, the Son calls out Christiana's name because He knows her.

They have a relationship from the many times Christiana visited His shop to replace the dress, just to talk, or to help Him with His marketing plan. In life, knowing Jesus is not what gets you into Heaven; it's when Jesus knows you. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his/her Savior, this is just the beginning of the relationship. Prayer connects us to Him during the times we ask for forgiveness for new sins, talk to Him about our lives, or ask His advice about how to introduce others to Him (help Him with His referral plan). When the Son knows your name, He will invite you in to meet the Father.

On the other hand, when Atheista tries to enter The Party, the Son doesn't know her. Her dress is tattered and stained, and she is not dressed for The Party. Even if Atheista had kept her dress 100% spotless and without wrinkle (which would be impossible), the near-white color still wouldn't get her into The Party, and the Son would not know her to introduce her to The Host. In the natural, there is no way a person can be "good enough" for Heaven. Heaven is perfect and requires perfection from anyone who wishes to reside there. Since this is not humanly possible, God created a way for people to become perfect by the substitution of the Son. When Atheista could not enter the party, she was left outside in the dark to weep. In life, those who choose against Jesus Christ will be left without God for eternity. They will not enter heaven, and will be left to exist hell, the space without the love, light, and life that God brings.

If you are a Christian, ask yourself if you have been keeping up your side of the relationship with Jesus. Do you talk to Him every day to request forgiveness for new sins and to ask Him what His will is for your life? Will He know your name when your life is done and it is time to meet the Father?

If you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, do you think your good works will save you? Do you think God will understand that you rejected the sacrifice made by the Son to give you the perfection required by God? Do you think that The Party's rules will not apply to you? In Jon 5:24, the Bible says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Salvation is there for the asking. If you're ready, you can pray like this: "Jesus, I believe that you shed Your blood, died on the cross, and rose from the dead for me. I repent of my sin. I ask you to forgive me and come into my heart. Help me to live for You in Jesus' name. Amen."