

Scripture Reading:

Luke 20:27 “Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to [Jesus] and asked Him, **28** saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. **29** Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. **30** And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. **31** Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. **32** Last of all the woman died also. **33** Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife." **34** And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. **35** But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; **36** nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. **37** But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' **38** For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him." **39** Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." **40** But after that they dared not question Him anymore.”

"The Glory of the Resurrection"

Well last week I stepped on lots of toes and we set the record for the longest Q&A over lunch! This week I hope to bring an uplifting and encouraging message as we see Jesus once again answering a crafty question, silencing his enemies and focusing our thoughts on the glory that is to come! I hope I am up to the task because I am going to try and do this with a passage that was troubling to me for many years and I am sure has been for many others as well!

Before we consider the glory of the resurrection, I want us to see again what is going on here in Luke's account: His orderly account! We do not just have a random collection of things Jesus did during this final week.

Jesus has arrived at the appointed time to be the great sacrifice for sin promised and pictured throughout the entire Old Testament. Those who should have welcomed the Messiah, those who are the religious leaders, the shepherds of Israel are rejecting Him as had also been foretold... Jesus, the great rock who is the cornerstone of His Kingdom is for them the stone upon which they will stumble. These leaders are seeking to kill Jesus but cannot attack him outright because He is so popular with the people. So they come with their craftiness as we saw last week...

- Craftiness we are warned about in Psalm 55:21 “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.”

Perhaps we should call chapter 20 the ‘question chapter’ because these leaders come with a series of crafty and deceptive questions trying to trip up Jesus.

First the Pharisees come to question the authority of Jesus making the most direct attack. Jesus responds with the question about the authority of John the Baptist which they cannot answer and they are silenced.

Last week we saw those who Matthew tells us were Herodians coming with the question about paying taxes to Caesar hoping to trip Jesus up, getting Him in trouble with the Roman officials or eroding His popularity with people. With the famous words, render therefore unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and render to God what is God’s, Jesus gives us important instruction which is timeless as we saw last week.

Finally we see the Sadducees, those lawyers who are really skeptics, come forward with their question about the resurrection, which they don’t even believe in!

NONE of these three are asking honest questions and in fact, these three don’t really even like each other... BUT they have a common enemy in Jesus so they are willing to fight together in this case.

These skeptical lawyers come with no pretense or words to butter up Jesus before trying to trip Him up as the others did: They come directly with a question they are convinced cannot be answered!

A woman is married to seven brothers, as each dies childless...

➤ Their question is simple: In the resurrection, whose wife does she become?

I think Jesus gives a direct answer this time rather than confronting their hypocrisy because it is a question that can rightly be asked. Most of us are familiar with Elizabeth Elliot whose first husband Jim was killed by a violent Indian tribe in the 1950’s. After spending many years evangelizing the very Indians that had killed her husband she returned to the states where in 1969 she married Addison Leitch. Addison died in 1973 and years later she married again to Lars Gren.

➤ So there is a real life modern example where we can ask who will be the husband of Elizabeth in the resurrection?

Now before we get to the good stuff and consider the wonder of the answer that Jesus gives these men, I want to pause to comment about how and why we should ask questions.

As we have said often, we are obligated to give honest answers to honest questions, or as Peter says, be ready to give an answer...

It is also a good thing to ask questions: When Moses is giving God’s people instructions about the keeping of the Passover, he expects the children to come asking questions about what is being done. We hope and pray that our covenant children will do the same with how we live and worship as Christians!

The Apostle Paul was even willing to answer the questions that had been asked by the Saints at Corinth, despite all the problems in that Church.

On the other hand, we have seen with the Pharisees, Herodians and now the Sadducees that it is wrong to ask deceptive questions or to not be honest in our searching.

- **However, these Sadducees should remind us that continual questioning is not good as well.**

They were always questioning things like the resurrection and spiritual things to the point where they had become religious agnostics...

- **Always talking about religious things and putting on a show, but never pondering in their hearts what it all means.**

This was the problem that Zacharias had in questioning the Angel Gabriel when he was told about the coming birth of John the Baptist. Mary also asked Gabriel a question, but it was in the context of believing that God was going to do what He said was going to happen. We can do this today in many areas of the faith:

Each week we hear one of the Elders in Christ's Church declare that our sins are forgiven! There are many questions that can be asked about this great gift of salvation, but first and foremost we should believe what is proclaimed and celebrate this forgiveness.

- **If we sit there and ponder all the possible implications and come up with a dozen questions about how God did this or that, it is possible to miss the very blessing that is being given.**

Such is the case with the question that has come to Jesus in this morning's text: As we have shown, it is one we can ask about with situations we know about today, and it is not wrong to wonder how this is going to be worked out in heaven.

- **However, while these Sadducees had figured out a tough question to ask about the resurrection, sadly they no longer believed the TRUTH of the resurrection.**

As we consider the answer Jesus gives, we do not want to become so engaged in sorting out details of something we can hardly imagine, that we miss the BIG picture of Jesus bringing us to glory one day with resurrected bodies!

Matthew and Mark inform us that Jesus first tells these Sadducees that they err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God:

- **Jesus says they are wrong about the very things these proud lawyers would have boasted about... God and His Word. They knew a LOT about them, but it did them no good because they did not approach either in faith!**

Jesus then answers their question by saying, “the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, nor can they die any more for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

Now, there is a LOT packed into the answer and we could use it to ask another hundred questions... OR we can believe what Jesus is saying and celebrate the wonders of having our names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!

Your homework this week can be to once again study the 15th chapter of I Corinthians where the Apostle Paul wrestles with the same questions about our resurrected bodies and tells them about our glorious bodies, our final victory and commands them to therefore “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

- **We are not to be navel gazers or Sadducees... We are to believe in the glorious future that await us and thus know that ALL the work we do here ultimately has real meaning in God’s plan!**

So this brings us to the one point about the answer that Jesus gives that can give us pause, especially those of us who are happily married...

- **Is our marriage not an important part of our labor for the Lord?**
- **Does not Paul use earthly marriage as the best picture of Christ’s love for His Church?**
- **Why then is there no marriage in heaven?**

I want us to think about a couple of things that I hope helps here: Our marriages here do reflect the reality of Christ’s love for His Church and in some small way reflect the wonder of the eternal love of the Trinity where the three persons are the one God...

- **With God there is ultimate love & ultimate unity of which we get just a glimpse in the wonder of the two people becoming one flesh in marriage.**

Now, while marriage in this age gives us that demonstration of God’s character, it is also essential to the first command that God gave to mankind: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

- **God gives man three things to do and two of the three speak of filling the earth so we don’t miss the point!**

God goes on to establish the institution of marriage so that the man and woman can come together, demonstrating the love of the Trinity as they become one flesh and carrying out the command to be fruitful and multiply by bearing and raising covenant children.

Now IF Adam had not fallen into sin there would have come a time when the earth would have been filled! I don't know what that number would have been or how long it would have taken, but at some point the command would have been carried out and things would have changed at that point.

Jesus now comes as the second Adam: He solved the problem of sin and He now goes on with His Church to complete the command that God had given to fill the earth and take dominion.

- **All the nations are to be discipled and Jesus will bring in the fullness of the Gentiles.**

After this has been done Paul explains that death will be the final enemy to be defeated and we will be resurrected with glorified bodies to enjoy God forever!

- **Thus Jesus says they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, nor can they die anymore having tasted of the Tree of Life.**

Well, that still leaves us with that haunting question of what about my wife or husband? God has made Christian marriage SO glorious even in the midst of this sinful world that most of us cannot imagine going forward without it!

Allow me to use another example to help us understand a little of what to expect...

Most of you have gotten to know Al who is Linda's father who she loves dearly. Some may not know that Al is her second father as her biological father died when she was only a teenager. In fact, Al has now been Linda's Dad longer than her first father, but I can assure you that she loved him just as dearly and misses him to this very day. So we could pose the same type of question here:

- **In the resurrection, who will be Linda's father?**

From a human standpoint we could think, wow, this could cause some problems, but we are not hearing what Jesus and Paul are saying... In heaven we will know and love our parents but they will no longer be our parents... We will all be in the very presence of our heavenly Father.

From our human perspective it is hard to make the comparison: It should remind us of how we consider a 100 watt light bulb that is almost too bright to look at inside, but if you take it outside on a sunny day it actually casts a shadow in the presence of the sun!

- **The light bulb is good, but it is NOT needed on a sunny day...**

- **It is safe to say, we will not spend a single moment in the glories of heaven wishing we had our old earthly relationships back!**

Now do not misunderstand what I am saying here: Our marriages, families and vocation ARE important here & for eternity!

- **This is exactly what Paul meant when he said that our labor here, even the glorious labor of love in marriage and our families is NOT in vain!**

God is moving all of history forward toward that day that Jesus comes to judge the world and give us our glorious resurrected bodies...

- **We will see clearly then the REAL meaning and purpose of all of our marriages, families, vocations and labor here on earth!**
- **Things will be quite different in many ways as both Jesus & Paul have explained, but none of these changes will make us sad or regretful!**
- **We will rejoice as sons of God, sons of the resurrection, those who are now free from sin and death!**

And finally Jesus, confronts the unbelief of these wicked lawyers directly with another example that should be greatly encouraging to us as we labor here on earth... Jesus turns to the Law they knew so well to show them how wrong they are about the resurrection:

37 “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called Jehovah 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

We must remember that the history of God’s people is OUR history: Here Jesus shows that God did not say to Moses that He was the God of Abraham, but that He IS the God of Abraham.

- **He is comforting Moses by saying I am Abraham’s God and Isaac’s God and Jacob’s God and your God.**

We can declare that the God of Abraham, the God of David, the God of John the Baptist, the God of Augustine, the God of John Calvin and the God of Francis Schaeffer is our God!

Jesus is the living God of His people down through the ages and He has given life to His people so that we all serve Him together and will be with Him together for all eternity!

Even some of the scribes realized the wonder of what Jesus has said saying, Teacher, you have spoken well.”

We who have come to Jesus in faith should rejoice at the answer that has been given!

We should rejoice with Paul as he concluded his discussion of the glory of our resurrection this way:

I Corinthians 15:51 “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Communion Meditation:

Revelation 19:5 “5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"