

## Sermon for November 10, 2013

### Twentieth Fifth Sunday of Pentecost

#### Gospel Luke 20:27-38

**God bless my dad.** As Toni can attest to almost **every** week I get **something** in the mail from him here at church. Some weeks it is a piece of information he has gotten from **his** church in Lake Havasu which he may or may not be happy about, or it is **coupons** he has cut out of the Sunday paper that he sends for Toni and I, or it might be a story or an article that he has found in one of the many newspapers or magazines he has read during the week.

This last week he sent me something that I would like to share with you this morning. As you may or may not remember last week I had brought with me an article from the Press Enterprise (our **local** Riverside newspaper) regarding the rise of atheist and agnostic groups on college campuses across the country. Here is what my dad sent to me. (READ THE JOKE.) Now I **suppose** you could take that joke **two** different ways. It could be that marriage was going to be like **heaven** for the girl's future husband or **maybe not**. I guess **either** way the mother thought he would learn a bit about what heaven or hell would be like right here on earth.

Today, as it just **so** happens, our **gospel** lesson is about marriage as well as what **Jesus** has to say about what happens **after** we die. Here we have the Sadducees doing their best to trip Jesus up—**yet again**. For us to **truly** understand

what is going on here I would like to give some **background** on the structure of Jewish culture then and the **belief** at the time of Jesus regarding marriage as well as the **laws** regarding what happened when a husband **died** and left a wife behind. The way they believed was rather different than the way we believe today.

**First**, the Sadducees were the more **conservative** priestly members of the temple hierarchy. They did **not** believe in the afterlife **or** resurrection of the dead unlike the Pharisees and some of the **other** Jews did. The Sadducees believed in **only** the first 5 books of the bible which **Moses** wrote. They said that they found **no** evidence of the resurrection in those 5 books, so they **rejected** the idea. As I said, they did **not** believe in the afterlife so they lived their lives for **this** world and for **this** world alone. Their belief on marriage was based on the law written in Deut 25:5-6 which says, *“When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.”* This law was written so that the **woman** would be taken care of; also she would not be turned out onto the streets as a widow. By marrying **another** brother the family name would be kept **within** Israel. But a rather strange twist in this law would be that if there were **any** children born to the woman, no

matter **how many** of the brothers the woman married after the first husband died, the children would be considered the children of the **first** husband. **WHEW!!!!**

**Confusing or what!!!!**

Now, all this would be all well and good if there were any children born but that was **not** what happened in our gospel reading for today.

What the Sadducees were trying to corner Jesus on was—they wanted to know, “Just whose husband would this woman be when she gets to heaven when she had married all 7 of his brothers and still remained childless?” That was their burning question.

Now I suppose it is **human** nature for us to think that heaven is going to be an **extension** of our lives here on earth. For those of you who have been married **more** than one time in your life—have you ever asked yourself the question? Whose **husband or wife** will I be when I get to heaven? Maybe you have not wanted to ask yourself that question for one reason or another. (Possibly you just wanted to forget the past and move on???) Anyway, what the Sadducees were thinking **only** had to do with the laws they knew of here on earth which had been set before them. They could not envision any other way of thinking or believing about marriage. They could only see what was right in front of them. They **only** understood this world to be a place where God would keep the promises made to

them through Moses. Clear and simple/cut and dried for them. **Yet this is not the way of God.**

Jesus begins to explain to them what they do not know or do not understand. Jesus tells them of a God who will **keep** His promises **beyond** the boundaries of this world. Of a God who is so much bigger than that which we can see with our **own** eyes. Jesus taught that **all of life** is under the direction of God. **Everything** we do is to be seen in light of God's activity in the world. We cannot remove ourselves from **God's** presence, so all of our life is lived within that presence.

It was as though Jesus was saying to them, *“You are mistaken, you do not know the power of God. For in the resurrection (which they did not believe in) people neither marry nor are they given in marriage, but they are like angels and are children of God.”* There will be **no need** for marriage in heaven; the issues of lineage will **no** longer apply. Procreation is not **necessary** in heaven like it is here on earth. The ordinary events and relationships by which we live by in this life do **not** describe our eternal lives because **resurrection life** is not an extension of this life; but it is a whole different way of being. The **laws and focuses** of this world will **no** longer apply as we dwell with God in eternity.

Jesus was **not denying** what the Sadducees were saying about the law but he was **reminding them** that this was not a part of the teaching of the gospel of the kingdom because if *God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of*

*Jacob; he is **not** the God of the dead but of the living; for to Him **all** of them are alive.*

Where is the **good news** in this for us? Well, think about it. If Jesus says that *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and all the patriarchs have died—otherwise they would be thousands of years old by now—they must still be alive with God.* The **true** God is **all** about life. Once we realize that life and death are **not** two separate events but are a part of the whole we can begin to view things differently. That will be the change that changes **everything** for us. The promise of resurrection and life after death is a promise of **hope** for us all. We will see the world in which we live with **resurrection eyes**, eyes that **see God** at our side in every **challenge, struggle, and pain**. We are **all** children of the resurrection who can no **longer die** because of God's promises for us.

This morning baby Serenity is going to be baptized. She will be the **newest** member of God's kingdom. She will be **marked** with the sign of the **cross** of Jesus Christ, she will be **promised** a place in the heavenly kingdom forever, a life filled with God's **hope, grace, and love** freed from the power of sin and death. She will be a member of our **Eden** family; living among God's **faithful** people. With **her** new beginning may **our** lives be renewed in God as well. Lives that **serve** God abundantly through lives lived with purpose and direction. Lives lived **without fear of dying** and lives lived with the **hope of living eternally** with new

energy and vitality. With a new direction as we go forward with ‘**resurrection eyes**’ being assured that there is a place in heaven **waiting** for us all as we dwell with the **God** of the living. **AMEN.**