

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Pentecost
 November 11, 2012
 Luke 20:27-38

In Christ Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Is there life after death? Throughout history people have wondered about and longed for the possibility of life after death. Just recently I heard of another near death experience, this time by a doctor, who doubted anything that was not scientific and was pretty much an agnostic. He said he experienced what many have--a light, he felt warmth, a beautiful young woman was speaking to him who comforted him. He now says he is not afraid of dying and is convinced there is an afterlife.

Many books have been written about people who say they have passed over to the other side and have come back and give vivid details of this afterlife. Movies have been made about the dead and the afterlife. One of the members I served in a former congregation who suffered a heart attack felt himself out of his body, looking down upon himself; another member told me he felt nothing and remembers nothing. What does all of this mean? It means that if we rely upon people to tell us **IF** there is life after death and **WHAT KIND OF** life it is, we are relying on unreliable opinions, human emotions, on sinking sand. The only reliable source is God Himself.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

I: MAN'S REASON DENIES IT.

II: BUT WE HEAR JESUS DESCRIBE IT

III: AND WE SEE SCRIPTURE CLEARLY TESTIFY OF IT.

Our text this morning took place on Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus was in the temple. The leaders of the Jews were looking for evidence to bring against Jesus. He was becoming far too popular for them to dismiss Him as a passing fad. Something had to be done to turn the people against Him, to disgrace Him. The chief priests, elders and scribes questioned His authority. Later the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus into speaking against the government in regard to the paying of taxes. All of these attempts failed. In verse 19 we are told, **AND THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE SCRIBES THAT VERY HOUR SOUGHT TO LAY HANDS ON HIM, BUT THEY FEARED THE PEOPLE.**

In our text this morning we are told that the Sadducees now took up the cause to try to ridicule Jesus. They ask Jesus a question about the resurrection to try to make Jesus look foolish. The Sadducees were not real popular with the people for they didn't have much in common. They were members of the aristocracy, the elite in Israel consisting mainly of the chief priests and their families. They were not like the Pharisees in that they did not practice all of the observances of the traditions and laws of the elders, while the Pharisees were sticklers for outward observance. They also differed from most of the people in other religious views. In Acts 23:8 we are told, **FOR THE SADDUCEES SAY THERE IS NO RESURRECTION--AND NO ANGEL OR SPIRIT.** It is obvious that the Sadducees were rationalists who rejected any teachings which they regarded as contrary to their reason.

In presenting their question to Jesus, they intended to so confound Him so that He could not defend the teaching of a resurrection. It is interesting that they used the Scriptures to try to destroy this Scriptural teaching. It probably was a question that had stumped many a Pharisee and common Israelite and they were confident that Jesus would not be able to solve the problem either. They believed He would lose respect and favor with the people if the question could not be answered. Jesus, however uses the Scriptures to defend the teaching of the resurrection and makes fools out of them.

The Scriptures that these Sadducees pointed to was Deut. 25:5-6. We read, **IF BROTHERS DWELL TOGETHER, AND ONE OF THEM DIES AND HAS NO SON, THE WIDOW OF THE DEAD MAN SHALL NOT BE MARRIED TO A STRANGER OUTSIDE THE FAMILY; HER HUSBAND'S BROTHER SHALL GO IN TO HER, TAKE HER AS HIS WIFE, AND PERFORM THE DUTY OF A HUSBAND'S BROTHER TO HER. AND IT SHALL BE THAT THE FIRSTBORN SON WHICH SHE BEARS WILL SUCCEED TO THE NAME OF HIS DEAD BROTHER, THAT HIS NAME MAY NOT BE BLOTTED OUT OF ISRAEL.**

The question: **NOW THERE WERE SEVEN BROTHERS. AND THE FIRST TOOK A WIFE, AND DIED WITHOUT CHILDREN. AND THE SECOND TOOK HER AS WIFE, AND**

HE DIED CHILDLESS. THEN THE THIRD TOOK HER, AND IN LIKE MANNER THE SEVEN ALSO; AND THEY LEFT NO CHILDREN, AND DIED. LAST OF ALL THE WOMAN DIED ALSO. THEREFORE, IN THE RESURRECTION, WHOSE WIFE DOES SHE BECOME? FOR ALL SEVEN HAD HER AS WIFE.

By asking this seemingly unsolvable question, the Sadducees show how foolish and faithless they really are. Even today people try to make God look foolish by asking questions like, **IF GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL, WHY DOESN'T HE JUST DESTROY SATAN? IF HE IS ALL-LOVING, WHY DOES HE ALLOW SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD? IF HE IS BOTH ALL-POWERFUL AND ALL-LOVING THEN WHY DOESN'T HE JUST PUT AN END TO ALL EVIL? HE MUST BE NEITHER POWERFUL, NOR LOVING,** they conclude.

Was this question a dilemma or problem for Jesus? Hardly! In Matt. 22:29 we hear Jesus respond to the Sadducees with these words, **YOU ARE MISTAKEN, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES NOR THE POWER OF GOD.**

Jesus then comes right to the point showing their faulty logic. They are speaking of two different ages: the present age and the one to come. Marriage is an institution for this world only. One of the purposes of marriage is to bring children into the world. Another purpose is for life-long companionship. But in the age to come, there will be neither birth nor death and earthly relationships will be changed. We will be equal to the angels in that we will be immortal; we will never die again--and we will no longer have the same relationships that we have here on earth; with parents, children, husband, wife, a family of relatives. This may sound disturbing, even sad that we will no longer have a spouse or family as such in heaven. But remember what Jesus says, we **ARE SONS OF GOD.** Physical, earthly family ties will no longer be important since all Christians will be one family--God's holy family--united in heavenly joy and bliss.

Through faith we are already God's children here on earth. But when we have received our immortal and glorified bodies after the resurrection, we will have received the full and eternal inheritance of life, peace and joy. Jesus in His Word does not give us a detailed description of what life in heaven will be like. Therefore we should not speculate about things which are not clearly stated in the Scriptures. Jesus however, spent much of His ministry directing people's attention away from this life to the importance of the next life of perfect, everlasting peace.

Jesus is not content just to simply answer the absurd question posed by the Sadducees. He now goes on the attack against their unbelief. The Sadducees professed a belief at least in the first five books of the Old Testament, the books of Moses called the Pentateuch, the Books of the Law. Jesus now points to one of those books, Exodus and says, **NOW 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." FOR HE IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD BUT OF THE LIVING, FOR ALL LIVE TO HIM.**

You remember the story. Moses was watching his father-in-laws sheep in the wilderness and he saw this burning bush. It burned and burned but never burned up. When he approached it a voice from inside the bush said to him, **DO NOT DRAW NEAR THIS PLACE. TAKE YOUR SANDALS OFF YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE WHERE YOU STAND IS HOLY GROUND. I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER--THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. AND MOSES HID HIS FACE, FOR HE WAS AFRAID TO LOOK UPON GOD.**

When God said these words to Moses all three of these men, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been dead for a long time. But the living God spoke of His relationship with them as being present. Not **I WAS THE GOD,** but **I AM THE GOD...** This means that they still live and will continue to live with God forever. If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would remain dead in the grave, then Jehovah would be a God of the dead. That is impossible. He is a God **OF THE LIVING.** Human relationships end with death, but the relationship a person has with the ever-living God goes on eternally---first with the soul, the being of the person, after death; then with the body and the soul, after the resurrection.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH? Man's reason denies it. Reason can only accept what it sees. "This life is all there is. There is no eternal joy, nor is there eternal punishment," reason declares!

But like the Sadducees we too are sometimes guilty of living as if there were no eternal life, living as if this life was all there was. That is why the problems and trials of life so **DEPRESS** us, so affect us and that is why the material things and the good times in life also so **IMPRESS** us and so affect us. If

we would keep our eyes of faith focused on what is to come, the glorious eternal hereafter, then the trials and troubles would be put in their proper perspective and then the material things and the good times or the sorrows and the evil days would not overtake our heart.

Remember for us Christians who trust in Jesus alone as Lord and Savior, heaven is our home. Jesus has given us heaven as an inheritance, as a gift which He earned for us by His perfect life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead. We are put here on this earth to be led to repent of our sins, to be brought to know our Savior God through faith and then to serve Him and our fellow man in faith so that someday we will praise Him forevermore in heaven. This life is temporary, the hereafter is eternal. Where should the emphasis be, on things temporal or things eternal?

We have the assurance of eternal life right now!

Jesus describes it.

Scripture teaches it.

We believe it.

Let us also live it.

The Apostle Paul declares, **FOR IF WE LIVE, WE LIVE TO THE LORD; AND IF WE DIE, WE DIE TO THE LORD. THEREFORE, WHETHER WE LIVE OR DIE, WE ARE THE LORD'S** and again he writes **FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.**

May that be our blessed assurance and lifelong desire.

Amen.