

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Twentieth Sunday After Trinity, October 22, 2023**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 27, 193:6, 359, 196, 144:5.

Lessons: Exodus 3:1-10, Acts 7:16-34, Matthew 22:23-33.

Sermon Text: Luke 20:27–40.

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Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Men who didn't even believe in the resurrection of the dead asked Jesus a question about what would happen in the resurrection.

Sadducees had just seen Jesus humiliate their enemies the Pharisees in the verses before our text. With these verses we see that they thought they saw another opportunity to declare victory, not only over their enemies, the Pharisees, but over Jesus. These men thought they could humiliate Jesus. They hated him more than they hated the Pharisees. They hoped to expose Jesus publicly and destroy the confidence and trust of the people who had praised Jesus on Palm Sunday.

The Sadducees were wealthy and sophisticated Jews, who although relatively few in number were influential in the administration of the temple. They controlled the high priesthood and a majority of seats in the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the council of 70 who guided the religious matters of the Jews. They accepted only the 5 books of Moses, not the entire Old Testament. They did not believe in angels, either.

This all happened on Tuesday of Holy Week, in the last days of Jesus' life on earth. They ask Jesus a strange question, and in Jesus' answer

**WE LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RESURRECTION**

- 1. Unbelievers ask Jesus a ridiculous question.**
- 2. Jesus uses that as an opportunity to teach about the resurrection,**
- 3. For in the resurrection, believers will live forever with the living God.**

The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, start with an idea that is found in Scripture and seek to prove that the resurrection is a ridiculous idea. *“Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?’”* After all, if a woman had 7 husbands, they ask, which one would be her husband in the resurrection? They make reference to these words of Moses from Deuteronomy: *“If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.”* (Deuteronomy 25:5–6, NIV84) This passage makes it a man’s responsibility to marry his brother’s widow, if his brother dies without leaving any son. The first son from this union was added to the genealogy of the dead man as his legitimate heir, and should be accepted as the one who would perpetuate his lineage. He should also bear the name of the dead man. So the second union was really considered a continuation of the first.

They simply ask ***“at the resurrection.”*** Notice they don’t speak of “heaven” or “eternal life”. These were ideas the Sadducees didn’t believe, either. Their story is probably invented. They are telling this story to make the idea of a resurrection especially preposterous. They imagine that they may even prove from the Scriptures the absurdity of a belief in the resurrection. If this is the case, their argument could be that even Moses didn’t believe in the resurrection!

Jesus listens, and immediately refutes them, telling them they are ignorant of the scriptures. Jesus answered them, as we read in Matthew’s narrative: ***“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”*** Matthew 22:29 (NIV84)

He tells them ***“those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels.”***

Jesus attacks their underlying error. He starts with the fact that marriage is the way we do things on earth. There will be no marriage in heaven in the resurrection. God ordained marriage as one man and one woman intended to live together for life here on earth. Not two women, not two men, not multiple partners. Not sexual immorality of all kinds which in our world today seems to be the prevailing idea. One of the purposes of marriage is to bear and raise children and ***“bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*** (Ephesians 6:4, NIV84) God instituted marriage so that man would survive on the earth and populate the earth. There will be no children born in heaven. Children was the purpose of this command of God recorded in Deuteronomy. Earthly family relationships will have become unimportant in heaven. Human relationships end at death, but the relationship a person has with God will continue forever. The life of the blest in heaven is not bound to the conditions of this earth nor to its needs. Because there will be no death, there is no need to marry and have children.

What makes us worthy to enter heaven? It is certainly not our lives and deeds on earth, no matter how good they may seem to be. We always have sin clinging to us. We are made worthy by the blood of the lamb, Jesus Christ, who takes away the sin of the world. It is the works of Jesus Christ which make us worthy to take part in eternal life in heaven. It is faith in the works of Jesus Christ which gives us that grace of God and there will be only believers in heaven. No one will be there who rejected Jesus Christ.

Jesus also says that in heaven believers will be like the angels. ***“They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection.”*** He does not say that they will be angels, as some people think that once a believer dies, he or she becomes an angel. They will be eternal like the angels. Angels are spirits without physical properties. Angels are God’s invisible spirits who do his bidding, made visible by God at a few places in Scripture. In heaven, all will serve God in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. In heaven everyone will praise God continually, like the angels.. After the resurrection, believers are eternal, too. Their bodies have been transformed, as we read in First Corinthians: ***“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:42–44, NIV84) You have here the picture of the burying of a seed. It is “sown” and comes back to life. When we are raised imperishable, we will be changed. There will be no more decay and death. Our bodies are no longer earthly, but heavenly, glorified, immortal.

Jesus tells us ***“a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live.”*** (John 5:27–29, NIV84) Believers are those who ***“have done good”*** as fruits of their faith. It is faith, after all, that gives one the gift of eternal life at the resurrection, not ‘doing good things’. It is faith that Jesus Christ paid the price for my sins and forgives them so that I am able to inherit eternal life in heaven.

On communion Sundays we hear the words that “we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God: Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heave we laud and magnify (praise, glorify and honor) thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.”

But Jesus has more to tell us. Mark writing about this incident tells us: ***“When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising—***

*have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am 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. You are badly mistaken!’”* (Mark 12:25–27, (NIV84)

He uses Moses and his inspired words when he stood before God at the burning bush. ***“In the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and 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 are alive.”***

The living God is truly the God of all the living. Our God is not just a statue. He is not a stone, or a golden or silver image. He is a living God, and as such, he is the living God of the living, not the dead.

The dead who have died in unbelief are in hell, waiting for the resurrection of their bodies to suffer with their souls eternally – forever – in the fires of hell.

Everyone must die an earthly death, a temporal death. but for all who believe in Jesus as the Redeemer from all their sins, that earthly death is the door to eternal life.

Scripture also speaks of a “second death”, meaning eternal death – what a terrible picture!

We read in the book of Revelation ***“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.”*** (Revelation 2:1–11, NIV84)

All who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior will live forever, even if they suffer persecution for a short time here on earth, ***“for ten days”*** is the way God speaks of that short time. The living God is their God, as they live forever with God and his Son Jesus Christ in heaven.

Even Stephen, when he preached before his death said ***“After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord’s voice: ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.”*** (Acts 7:30–32, NIV84) God did not say I was ***‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’*** God is the God of those who live with him in heaven, following the resurrection. He said I am. We see here again the importance of every word of the divinely inspired Scriptures.

Jesus turned their argument back against the Sadducees. They hoped to use the words of Moses to trip Jesus up but he used the divinely inspired words of Moses against them.

The fact of the Resurrection of the dead would be proven less than a week later when Jesus himself rose from dead. Because of faith in that Jesus, we will be sharing in that unending time and beautiful place of eternal life.

He tells them – and assures us – that in heaven all who believe will live forever with the living God. And even while we are here on earth, Jesus assures us in the last words of Matthew’s gospel: ***“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*** (Matthew 28:20, KJV)

This is not only our hope, but also our comfort. Look to your living God every day for life, life in heaven and the abundant life of faith here on earth as you wait for the resurrection. Amen.