

Sunday Sermon November 13, 2016

Sermon Text: Luke 20: 27-38

Sermon Theme: There is something much more important to talk about.

²⁷ Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. ²⁸ “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. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. ³⁰ The second ³¹ and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. ³² Finally, the woman died too. ³³ Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

³⁴ Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵ But 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, ³⁶ and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection. ³⁷ But 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.’ ³⁸ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”

If this election taught us anything, it’s that we wanted to talk about something else. I think we all felt the fatigue of the election in one way or another. Our airwaves were filled with political advertisements, we saw the posters and got the mailers, it was on our minds and we talked about it all the time. Even now that the election is over, we are still talking about the election. Even though the ads aren’t there anymore, the news programs still are giving us facts and figures, analyses and fallout. We just can’t escape.

Don’t we have better things to talk and think about? The answer is yes, we do. Because we know we have a Savior who has opened the doors of heaven, we have something much better to talk about and think about and even look forward to.

While politics are important for our everyday life, think about what would happen if we would put as much time, effort, money and emotion into something talking about Jesus with people? What if we would care as much about Jesus, who has already won the most important victory for all of us, as we do about our candidate? Jesus has won the victory over sin, death and devil, there will be no recount or controversy in his victory. His victory opens the door to heaven and allows us to be victors with him.

On this Saints Triumphant Sunday, we will focus our hearts and minds on something more important to talk about; our Savior and the eternal victory of heaven that he gives to us.

Jesus was at the center of political and religious controversy for most of his earthly ministry. He was a religious threat because he was an outsider who was preaching and teaching a different message, a different way to heaven that went against the Law of the Jews and their accepted tradition. But he was also a political threat. Not that Jesus was political, but all the other religious leaders used their religious message to gain a following of people and with it political power. When the people heard Jesus’ message, believed in him and followed him, this made him a political threat to them and their power.

Much of the opposition to Jesus came from the Pharisees, who were the largest group with the most religious and political power in Judea, but there were other smaller groups as well. The Sadducees, the Scribes, the Zealots, those who followed Herod and those who followed Caesar were all groups that opposed Jesus in one way or another.

Most of these groups wanted Jesus as an ally because that would mean more power and following for them. When Jesus could not be coaxed to join a side in this religious conflict, the groups began an ugly smear campaign of lies and half-truths. If they could get Jesus to say something controversial in front of others, then they would have him.

On this day, it was a group of Sadducees who wanted to prove that Jesus was wrong. But to understand the Sadducees complex question, we need to understand a little more about these men.

Like the Pharisees, the Sadducees were priests. They held the minority position of power in the Jewish religion. Even though the Sadducees worked and served with the Pharisees in the temple, their beliefs were very different.

The Sadducees only accepted the Torah, the first 5 books of the Bible, as God's pure Word. It was in these books that the Jew could find God's promises to them. The Pharisees followed the Talmud which included not only the books of the OT, but also the writings of historical rabbis. It was these writings that the Pharisees cared more about.

The Sadducees centered their activities on the religious matters of keeping the temple and their traditions pure. It was the Pharisees who really held the power, crossing over from religion into politics and holding control over both arenas.

Luke also tells us why the Sadducees asked what they did, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection. They thought that rising from the dead was at best a myth and at worst ghoulish. The Sadducees didn't really want to know what Jesus thought about the resurrection when they brought him this question, they were trying to get him to say something that would prove to the people that he was not fit to be a religious leader, that his ideas were different and controversial from accepted thought, or that he was just too crazy to be listened to.

The Sadducees brought to Jesus a question with no good answer. This is what the Pharisees and Sadducees would do. They would make up these hypothetical situations and try to trip each other up with them. It was game, but with much greater consequences. If you said something against the Law, you would be branded as a heretic and a blasphemer. Since it worked so well with them, they thought they could trip Jesus up as well.

They bring to Jesus a story about a woman who had the unfortunate occurrence to lose her husband. As was the Jewish custom, the next brother would marry her to take care of her, he too died and so on down the line until there were 7 dead brothers and the one woman left standing. They then ask, "Who will she be married to in heaven?" Gotcha Jesus!!!!

Instead of looking at the Word and promises of God that showed the Messiah, then listening to Jesus as he taught he was fulfilling those words and promises, the Sadducees had followed their own way. Their own thoughts on God were more important than Jesus' words showing how he was fulfilling God's promises. They denied that Jesus was the Messiah and denied the blessing of heaven through him that he offered. They would rather follow their own message than Jesus' message.

Are we any different? Do we get so caught up in our own messages that we get lost in them? As we have been going through our Sunday morning Bible Study, *Idols we Never Knew we Had*, we have been looking at God's blessings in our lives that we turn into idols. Things like family, sports, success, and politics. We focus on these things, devote time to them, and then talk about them so much that they become our main focus. They become more important to us than our Savior.

Which is more important, our Savior, or another weekend with the family, another ball game or, tournament? Which is more important to us, making sure we win any argument or disagreement, or letting our light of faith and love of the Lord shine? Which is more important, getting into arguments about politics, or talking about how God will make sure to work through anyone and anything? We have something very important to talk about and it is none of these things.

Jesus' knew that his main purpose on earth was not to spend time on hypotheticals, it was to teach that he forgives sins and that he gives eternal life.

Jesus answers their most important problem and question emphatically: there is a resurrection from the dead that has always been part of God's plan for those who believe, even going back to the first five books they cherished so much. **They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.** ³⁷ **But 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.'** ³⁸ **He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."**

When we understand that this is the most important part of Jesus' answer, we will also understand Jesus' direct answer to the Sadducees question as well. In the resurrection, when we are in heaven, we will no longer live under the same rules as we have lived in on earth. Jesus doesn't spend too much time on explaining this, he just says it will be this way. Heaven will be a glorious and wonderful place which will be wonderfully different from this earth. Our minds cannot fully understand what heaven will be like, we are only given glimpses in the Bible. Do you remember the ways that Isaiah described this new heaven and new earth? Listen again to the glorious differences between the new life in heaven and our life of earth: "**Behold, I will create new heavens**

and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.. ¹⁹I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; ²⁵The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,”

We have something much more wonderful to talk, to think about and to look forward to than these earthly things which will pass away. We have heaven which Jesus has already guaranteed for us which extends before us into eternity. We can already live in this joy because heaven is already ours. Jesus has restored the perfection and peace with God that God intended in Eden for all those who believe.

This peace and joy of heaven is seen in our reading from Revelation. In the middle of the great city of heaven is the tree of life. This tree of life is for us. No longer does God have to show his love for sinful people by keeping that tree from us, by not allowing us to eat of it and to live forever in sin.

In heaven where there is no sin, where peace with God is restored, where there is only joy and perfection, the tree of life is there for us to eat from to give life eternal to all who believe in the name of Jesus. Give thanks to the Lord for this blessing of heaven is yours by faith.

Jesus focused on a very important message while he was here on earth. His message was meant to lead all people to heaven. Jesus purpose and mission in life is also our mission and purpose. We have something more important to talk about: our Savior and the Heaven which he gives to us.