

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, August 21, 2016**

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

Hymns: 13, 9:5, 603, 616, 51.

Lessons: Job 19:25-26, 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24, Matthew 25:14-30.

Sermon Text: Luke 20:27-40.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ, the Living Lord, Fellow Redeemed:

The longer we live, the more we experience the truth of these words spoken by Job: *"Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure."* Job 14:1-2 Death is a sure thing; it will come to all of us unless the Last Day comes first. Death is the result of sin. The Apostle Paul writes: *"Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."* Rom. 5:12 So we accept the fact - we are going to die.

Is that the end of everything, then? Some people believe this and so live only for this life. So the question Job asked, *"If a man dies, will he live again?"* Job 14:14 is certainly important. If this life is it and there is no resurrection and no hereafter, then, as Paul told the Corinthians, we as Christians *"are to be pitied more than all men."* I Cor. 15:19 But, if there is a resurrection and life eternal, then we as Christians are of all people the most blessed.

Every Sunday we confess: "I believe... in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Let us learn also from our text why we make this confession as we consider the theme:

**GOD IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING**

- 1. The Sadducees had a clever way of questioning Jesus and denying the resurrection;**
- 2 Jesus had a two-fold answer for them to prove the teaching of the resurrection.**

Our text speaks of a party of the Jews called the Sadducees. *"Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question."* The Sadducees were the aristocrats among the Jewish religious parties. They were few in number, made up of educated, wealthy men. They are remembered especially because they denied the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul. They also denied the existence of spirit beings or angels. As we study our text, we should keep in mind also that the Sadducees accepted only the five books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy, as their source of teachings.

Though the Sadducees hated Jesus, and in this way were in agreement with the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, yet they also were in competition with these other parties of the Jews. When they observed that the Pharisees and the chief priests had just failed in their attempts to ensnare Jesus with a clever question, they decided to try themselves. It should be understood that they did not come to Jesus to learn from Him, but to trap Him with a clever question.

They got their idea for a question from the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy: *"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.'" In the book of Deuteronomy we read: "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."* Deut. 25:5-6 This Bible passage was misused by the Sadducees. They most likely made up the foolish story about the seven

brothers. *"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?"* The Sadducees had in mind to ridicule the teaching of the resurrection. They knew very well that Jesus taught the resurrection of the body. They thought they had Jesus trapped with this clever story. For they wanted Jesus to answer: Which one of the seven brothers will have the woman as wife after the resurrection? And they thought: After all, our question is based on what Moses wrote in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Questions like the one the Sadducees asked are prompted by Satan. It is he who wants to do away with Jesus' teachings. It is he who wants people to try to prove that one Bible passage is contradicted by another Bible passage. Satan has succeeded in getting many people to reject the Bible or to ridicule its teachings. These people say the Bible is filled with contradictions and errors. They set themselves up as judges over God's Word. They want to decide for themselves which passages of the Bible they accept. They as creatures of God want to tell their Creator that His Word is filled with mistakes. But the holy God does not make mistakes. So also, we believe that every thought and word of the Bible is God's Word, and therefore cannot contain any errors or contradictions of any kind. We believe what Paul wrote to Timothy: *"All Scripture is God-breathed..."* 2 Tim. 3:16 And for that reason we believe what the psalmist writes: *"All your words are true."* Ps. 119:160

Today too, there are many skeptics and scoffers who question the teaching of the resurrection. They ridicule the idea that dead bodies, buried through the centuries and by now turned into dust and ashes can be made alive again. They ridicule the idea that bodies burned up or blown up in an explosion, or buried at sea and devoured by sea creatures, can possibly be raised to life again. Has Satan tempted us with such thoughts also? Let us learn from Jesus' two-fold answer in our text how Jesus proved His teaching of the resurrection.

## 2.

The first part of Jesus' answer to the Sadducees shows the foolishness of their question, and has to do with some facts about people after the resurrection. *"Jesus replied, 'The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 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, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.'"* So long as this world lasts and people are mortal beings who die, there will be a need for marriage and having children. But in eternity, in heaven, there will be no marriage. Since in heaven the believers in Christ have entered into immortality and are no more subject to death, there will be no need of having children. Those who by God's grace believe in Jesus and take part in the resurrection of the just, will be considered worthy of life eternal in heaven. Jesus says the believers in heaven will be like the angels. Not that they will become spirit beings, for the believers in Christ will rise from the graves with their own body. But they will be like the angels in this that they will be sexless. Believers in Christ will not bear children in heaven, but they are all God's children with God as their heavenly Father to all eternity.

The second part of Jesus' answer to the Sadducees was the most important part, for it teaches that God is the God of the living, not the dead. *"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 the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."* Jesus could have quoted other Old Testament passages to prove the teaching of the resurrection. But knowing that the Sadducees accepted only the five books of Moses, Jesus referred to one of them in His answer. The book of Exodus tells about Moses at Mt. Horeb where God attracted his attention by a burning bush that continued to burn and was not consumed by the fire. Here it was that God told Moses: *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."* Ex. 3:6 At that time Abraham had been dead 329 years, Isaac 224 years, and Jacob 198 years. Their bodies had been in the grave for many years. But Jesus says: *"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."* This was Jesus' special way of proving from God's Word of the Old Testament Scriptures that dead people will live again, that the dead will be raised up on the Last Day, the Day of the Resurrection.

This is such a precious thought: God is the God of the living! And because it is such a precious thought, we don't want to think about the resurrection only on that day when we wish each other a happy Easter! No, we eagerly want to often hear of the resurrection from the dead. God spoke through Moses saying: **"See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life."** Deut. 32:39 Also in the Old Testament the resurrection of all people is taught: **"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."** Dan. 12:2 And you hear Job's confession of faith in the resurrection in our Old Testament Lesson. Jesus teaches. **"Do not be amazed at this, for 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, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."** John 5:28-29 So the bodies of all people who died and were buried will be raised to life on the Last Day. So our text says: **"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive,"**

All who deny this fact are making a foolish error. They use their human reason and say a bodily resurrection of dust and ashes is impossible. They forget that God in the beginning created man from the dust of the ground by the power of His almighty word. They forget that the humanly impossible is possible with the Lord. The angel told the virgin who gave birth to Jesus: **"Nothing is impossible with God."** Luke 1:37

What Jesus told the Sadducees in our text was not only important in this way that He put them to silence and no one dared to ask any more questions, but Jesus' words are important to bolster our faith in the resurrection. God is the God the living! This was the assurance Jesus gave Martha when Lazarus died: **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."** John 11:25 Jesus' work of redemption has made the resurrection and life eternal possible, for He atoned for all our sins. John writes: **"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins..."** I John 2:2 By His death Jesus paid for our sins, and by His resurrection He won the victory over the grave. Paul writes: **"Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."** I Cor. 15:54-57

Our victorious Savior promises us: **"Because I live, you also will live."** John 14:19 And so we poor mortals who have Jesus as our Savior by faith can say:

"Jesus, I die to Thee Whenever death shall come;  
To die in Thee is life to me In my eternal home," Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 591:2)

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