

Text: Luke 20:27-38. Saints Triumphant Sunday. **November 13, 2016.**

You are God's triumphant saints. Amen.

No resurrection? Can you imagine? No resurrection? Just think about it. I suppose practically we'd have to change the name of our church. But there would be much bigger issues than that. What would you do on Sunday morning? Why bother coming to worship a dead guy? Why bother coming on the day of the week he supposedly rose? Seems kind of hollow, doesn't it? Jesus lived. Jesus died. And that's it, doesn't have the same ring as Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose! Think of what a hopeless life it would be with no resurrection. What kind of life would that be? Life stinks. And then you die. And then it's all over. Where's the hope? Where's the strength to endure troubles? No resurrection? That would be pretty sad.

Exactly. That's why these guys were called Sadducees. They didn't believe in the resurrection so they were, "Sad-u-see." Insert rim shot. But seriously. The Sadducees were a religious group and a very powerful one. They were a political group, that held most of the important places of honor. But the one thing the Bible asks us to focus on about them is this: they say there is no resurrection. They say there is no resurrection. They literally speak against the resurrection. The way the words are written direct our attention to this one thing: they say there is no resurrection. Wow! They were sad, you see.

And so, from that hopeless, earth only centered existence, from this mindset of unbelief, they approach Jesus with a question. Really, let's call it what it is, bait for an argument. They really didn't want to learn more from Jesus. They wanted to trap him and accuse him. They weren't sincere seekers or new believers. They already had their minds made up that the resurrection was really foolish and they figured they had the perfect situation to set Jesus up.

Moses wrote 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 and died childless, then the second and third and all seven. Now, whose wife will she be? And if the Sadducees had been holding a microphone, they would have dropped it on the ground, stepped back and started high fiving each other. Snap! Resurrection? No way! Come on, Jesus! You just got served!

Let's examine their argument for a second though, ok? They had some things right. The law of Moses they quote is in the Bible. You can check out Deuteronomy chapter 25, verses five and six to verify. This law sounds strange to us, but it was a way to keep alive the name and memory of the man who had no children. They had the situation right and if indeed there were seven brothers and you carried this law to the furthest degree, this would be the case of one bride and seven brothers. But it was a minor point, in just a couple of verses. It's certainly not the main teaching of the Bible.

But let's look deeper. For one thing, they took this law to the seventh degree and want to base everything on this most extreme circumstance. And only by the most extreme circumstance can they "disprove" the resurrection. And part of the irony is, why did they have to go to the seventh degree? Wouldn't two brothers make the same point? But think for a second about the passage they present. It's a passage that talks about marriage and offspring, not resurrection. Deuteronomy 25:5-6 says nothing about resurrection, so why make it the passage and situation to discuss when discussing resurrection? It's not our intent to get into a whole training course on discussing the Bible, or apologetics, defending the Christian faith, but I'm guessing you've had these discussions. Someone who doesn't believe the Bible and quite honestly doesn't want to believe the Bible presents a bizarre and extreme scenario, based on one vague reference in the Bible and wants to make that the one and only point of discussion. And the passage used is not even a passage that talks about the teaching they are trying to disprove.

Now, I'm not getting angry about this, or judgmental. We'll see that Jesus dealt kindness and tact, while still correcting them.

The deeper point is this: Have you had this argument with yourself? Resurrection? Come on! I've never seen a person come out of a coffin. Resurrection? Really? I'm not so sure. You mean I'm supposed to live my whole life for a guy I've never seen, because you say that he rose from the dead? I should sacrifice my time and my money and bet not just this life, but an eternity on some guy rising from the dead, a thing that just doesn't happen? Why is it worth it to give up this life, which is all I can see, for a Jesus I can't see? And all because he rose from the dead? Resurrection? No way!

Jesus answers with kindness and tact. You can see him pick up the dropped microphone and in a gentle voice respond to the voice of argument in our minds and the argument the Sadducees were trying to start. You are thinking only in earthly terms. You are thinking about marrying and giving in marriage. After the resurrection, things will be different. And thank God they will be. After the resurrection, we can no longer die. We can no longer die! Did you hear that? Jesus said after the resurrection, we can no longer die! No more death! No more sin that causes death. No more suffering that leads to death. No more mourning because of death. No more crying at losing loved ones! We will be like the angels, perfect and living forever, unconcerned about the things of this earth.

We are God's children. That means we are children of the resurrection. And now you see what a difference this is. Children of the resurrection has the implication, "Forget everything else you might know about this person. Here's the one characteristic that matters. He will rise. She is a child of the resurrection." What a difference from the Sadducees. The one thing we saw earlier was that they spoke against the resurrection. The one thing that matters about us is we are children of the resurrection. We will rise because Jesus rose. Because he lives, we too will live. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die. No resurrection? No way!

Jesus doesn't spend or waste time pointing out the foolishness of their argument. He doesn't have to point out that their situation really didn't talk about the resurrection. Jesus just had to redirect them to another part of the Bible. Jesus chose wisely. He picked an account from the life of Moses. You see, the Sadducees accepted only the first five books of the Bible as truly the Word of God. These five books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These five books are sometimes called the books of Moses because they were written by Moses. So Jesus answered them from a book they claimed to believe. And Jesus quotes an account that was well known to them, the account of the bush. I think we can learn a lesson here about answering objections. Jesus took something they would accept and really couldn't deny, then used that to show the faulty thinking in the situation they presented. I don't want to give a bunch of examples here, but ask me later or discuss in Vine and Branches.

So what is this account of the bush? Well, this is from the book of Exodus, chapter three. Moses saw a bush that was on fire and yet did not burn up. God spoke to Moses from the bush. I know, this sounds as silly as the resurrection if you want to argue purely on the basis of human logic. But in that account of the bush, the Lord said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Now, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all long dead by the time of Moses. So was God the God of dead people? Can dead people have a God? Did death end their relationship with God? No! In God's eyes, these people were alive, because God had raised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the dead. They were alive, when God spoke to Moses and when Jesus spoke to the Sadducees and as I'm speaking to you today. They are alive! Just as surely as your grandmother who believed in Jesus is alive and as surely as your spouse who believed in Jesus is alive. They have risen! They live! They can no longer die! If they were dead, death would be the winner. But death is defeated. Look at the empty tomb. Death is the loser,

consider Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus himself.

Physical death is only temporary. Physical death doesn't end your relationship with God. Physical death merely confirms your relationship with God. Let me say that again. Physical death doesn't end your relationship with God. Physical death confirms your relationship with God. Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Then death is not the end of life. Physical death is the beginning of a better life, a perfect life, eternal life with Jesus. Death doesn't end that relationship. Death confirms and perfects that relationship. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

For to him, all are alive. Now, I'll be honest with you. I had to read this a few times and pray about it and think about it and read it a few more times and consult others to figure out this final phrase. To God, all are alive. But not everyone is physically alive. Not everyone is spiritually alive. I was born dead in sin and anyone without faith in Jesus, sad to say is still spiritually dead and everyone who has died without believing in Jesus is eternally dead. What does Jesus mean? Look back at the beginning of Jesus' reply. Those who take part in that age (the coming age of eternal life) and those who take part in the resurrection from the dead (all believers). These are the people Jesus is talking about: believers. Jesus is not speaking here about the resurrection of all people, some to everlasting death, some to everlasting life. Jesus is focusing here only on the believers. To God, all believers are alive. To God, all believers will never die. For every believer, death is defeated. Eternal death, not gonna happen. Spiritual death, not happenin' now. Physical death? That's just my ticket to eternal life.

Don't you see that's why we have this special service every year called Saints Triumphant? You are a triumphant Saint. You are a holy person who has defeated death because your Savior defeated death and keeps on giving you the victory he won. You win! You are spiritually alive now and Jesus will raise you to eternal life forever. You don't have to be sad, you see. There is a resurrection. You don't have to wonder what will happen to you. You will rise. There is a resurrection. You don't have to doubt, or argue and say it can't possibly be. There is a resurrection. Resurrection gives us hope, a certain hope that we will live forever. The resurrection gives us strength to face every trouble in life. No resurrection? No way! Amen.