



"Jesus Teaches Resurrection"

Luke 20:27-40

March 29, 2020

Please join me in Luke Chapter 20, where once again we come to a portion of Scripture that I think is very timely for the season that we are living in. In this portion of Scripture, Jesus Himself taught about the great resurrection that is to come.

This is timely because at this moment the global human race is being given a very needed reminder of the frailty and brevity of human life. People everywhere are being confronted with the fact that someday their bodies are going to die of something, whether it is Covid-19 or something else.

Each one of us, we are living in bodies that get sick and, unless Jesus Christ comes back very, very soon, that going to die of something. The Scripture teaches us that there is great wisdom in thinking about the brevity of life and thinking about the fact that the time is coming when we are going pass from this life, and we are going to meet the Maker.

The Scripture teaches us that it is appointed for each person to die and then to face judgment. The God that created everything, He is good. He is pure. He is loving. He is holy. He is righteous. Scripture teaches us what we know that intuitively, and that sin is serious, and we are accountable for our sin.

The good news is that the Son of God, Christ Jesus, came into the world to save sinners. The good news is that He came to bring forgiveness and cleansing to all those who repent and look to Him in faith. He came to bring us everlasting life, eternal life, resurrected life. All of those who are in Christ, who trust in Him, they will live forever in His Kingdom.

This morning I think that we have an incredibly encouraging passage of Scripture for every believing heart. In this portion of Scripture, Jesus taught us about the resurrection. I use that language comprehensively—the resurrection.

Jesus gave us this glimpse into the eternal state, into the age to come when God creates what the Bible calls the new heavens and the new earth, where the people of God will been given everlasting, permanent, imperishable, strong, durable resurrected bodies in which they will live in His glorious Kingdom forever.

Jesus spoke to us about the resurrection and as we take these things in, every child of God in Christ can say hallelujah that there is going to be no novel infectious disease that has the last word with them. No form of cancer. No fatal injuries or even a quiet death of old age. None of these things will prevail. There is everlasting life in Christ and in Christ alone. Here in this portion of Scripture we get a glimpse into the things eternal.

As we dig into Luke Chapter 20 once again, let me remind you as we have been studying the Gospel of Luke from the beginning, now we are near the end of the earthly life of Christ presented to us in the gospel.

It was just a few days prior to His crucifixion, and this portion of Scripture brings us into a contentious context. As we have been studying in Luke Chapter 20, evil had been at work in Jerusalem. The enemies of Christ had been trying to set clever traps to catch Him in His words, or just to make Him look foolish before the people that He was teaching.

This morning we enter into a portion of the Gospel of Luke that kind of reads like a Q & A session, where different people had been coming with different questions. Last week we read how the conservatives of the Jewish leadership of Israel came to Jesus with a question about paying taxes to Rome.

As we continue this morning, the theological liberals tried to stump Jesus with a question that related to eternal life in the Great Resurrection to come. Last week it was the Pharisees. This week it is the Sadducees came.

We learn a lot about this group called the Sadducees, not only from the pages of the New Testament, but also from the writings of a Jewish historian of the First Century by the name of Josephus. One of his book is called *Jewish Antiquities* correlates so well with the things that we read in the New Testament.

What we know about the Sadducees is that they were kind of like the liberal theologians of their time. They selected portions of the Hebrew Scriptures that they found acceptable. Then they set aside the rest. They said that the only legitimate Scriptures that they based their faith upon were the first five books of the Hebrew Bible—the Pentateuch, the writings of Moses.

They believed in its authority. Their doctrine had it that they did not believe in angels, demons, any kind of future judgment, or life after death, or any eternal state, or resurrection to come. They denied all this. Hence, they basically lived for the present day.

They got as much profit out of it as they could with which to enjoy life in the here and now, with not as much thought of the afterlife, because they did not believe it existed. It would become no surprise to us that the way the Sadducees were working things, they were the most wealthy of the Jewish sects.

They came to Jesus with this scenario, a theoretical situation. They were trying to demonstrate that Jesus' belief about any kind resurrection was in error; that those who believed in the resurrection to come had not really thought it all the way through. They tried to prove it from a scenario related to marriage.

First, we will see the situation the Sadducees brought to Jesus in Verse 27 through 30. Understanding that, we will then see how Jesus replied, the real heart of this passage where Christ gave us an amazing glimpse into eternity.

Let's see how the Sadducees approached Jesus. Luke Chapter 20, starting in Verse 27:

²⁷There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection. ²⁸and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁹Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. ³⁰And the second ³¹and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. ³²Afterward the woman also died. ³³In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."

So the Sadducees came and they questioned Jesus about the Old Testament practice of Levirate marriage. The Hebrew language of levir I understand to be related to the English language of in-laws. So the Sadducees approached Jesus with the practice of what you might call brother-in-law marriage. It was an ancient system of welfare and life insurance, you might understand.

If a husband died without a child, the wife would then come under the care of his brother, who would provide for her. The deceased man's name and estate would be carried on through the children that were brought forth from their union. Therefore, the wife would then have a child to grow up and care for and provide for her in her old age. That was the heart of this practice of Levirate marriage.

In the temple courts here in Luke Chapter 20, I picture this group of Sadducees, perhaps with a particular spokesman. Maybe the spokesman was struggling to contain his smirk as he presented Jesus with this scenario.

They picture for Jesus what would be a scene of great confusion at the resurrection, because here was a woman who seemed like a black widow in life with husband after husband falling to his death. Now at the resurrection you have these seven confused men asking whose wife is she going to be.

That is kind of the picture that is presented. They set their trap and now, King Jesus responded to the situation laid before Him. We continue. Luke Chapter 20 and Verses 34 through 40:

³⁴And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, ³⁵but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." ³⁹Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." ⁴⁰For they no longer dared to ask him any questions.

Here at the end of the story we have the Sadducees, and they had been shut up. Now the scribes, they spoke up! The scribes, they would have most likely been from the Pharisees, the super conservative sect of Jewish leadership.

Many of the scribes would have also been opponents of Jesus, but hearing the wisdom with which He answered, they could not contain themselves. They responded with something like, *Dude, good answer! Really good answer.* They appreciated it.

If those First Century scribes appreciated and took to heart what Jesus had to say, how much more we, the followers of Christ, learners, and the disciples of Jesus should also. I pray that every person that is listening to these words, by the work of the Spirit, would have hearts to hear and to receive and to believe what Jesus said about the life to come.

Jesus is the one who is uniquely qualified to speak to us about things eternal. Jesus did not emerge from history. The Son of God entered into history from eternity. Now the Living One in human form is talking to us about things eternal. We must tune into what is here.

It comes to us in a certain context as Jesus speaks to us. I think there are two parts to what we just read. Jesus was speaking about things to come, Jesus provided clarification about marriage in eternity. Then He provided a demonstration of life, a demonstration from even the earliest Old Testament Scriptures that there is life beyond what we experience here and now on this earth.

First, let's see what Jesus gives to us in:

1. A Clarification About Marriage
(Luke 20:34-36)

In Verses 34 through 36, we need to tune into this because even though it is in the context of the question of marriage in eternity, there is more here that speaks to the powerful and everlasting quality of the life that we will have.

Jesus was clarifying marriage. First of all, Jesus revealed the Sadducees' misuse on the passage about Levirate marriage and their misunderstanding about the duration of marriage. The passage that the Sadducees approached Jesus with did not declare in any way that human marriage extends into eternity. Neither does any other passage from the Bible.

Marriage is a lifelong bond but it is not an eternal bond. Marriage is intended and designed by God to be a permanent bond in this life between a man and a woman. But it is not going to extend into the age to come, as its purpose will have been fulfilled.

All along God intended marriage to be a picture of the union between Christ and His bride, the church, when we get into eternity. There are different illustrations that are used of our relationship with Christ. One of them is that the church is His bride. That is the only marriage that is going to extend into eternity.

The teaching that human marriage is not going to endure into heaven, I imagine it draws a mixed reaction from those who hear about it. There are some who live this life as a single person. They are not married. They never get married and they hear about the fact that marriage is not going to endure into eternity, and they are fine with that.

They may say it might be a little bit easier for them to fit in. They have been hanging out with married couples and finally everyone will be in the same boat. There are some who might respond that way.

There are some who hear this and they have been in difficult marriages, even painful marriages. We think about all of the couples that take the difficult step of divorce. So for them, it might be something of a relief to know that marriage does not extend into eternity.

Then there also might be some who read about their marriage union not going to continue on in heaven, and they say what?!? There are some who have been in very healthy and nourishing and intimate marriages, and they hear this language that marriage and that relationship is not going to be the same in heaven and they say, whoa, wait a minute here!

Here in the context of Luke Chapter 20, you have this Q&A session with people approaching Jesus with their questions, some people might say they are going to get in line and ask Jesus what He means there is not going to be any marriage in heaven.

If I'm being honest with you, I'm in that category. I think about the fact that my wife and I have been together for well over two decades as a couple. I kind of like being close to this woman! If I'm not mistaken, I think that she kind of feels the same way.

Here is the thing: God is so good. For those people that are in marriages that are healthy and strong, you must remember the doxology that we will probably end this service with: *Now unto Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power.*

If we have relationships on earth that are so healthy and meaningful that we want them to extend in the same way into the eternal state, how much more does God have in store for us in Heaven? I told Kristy this morning that I was preaching on the passage that marriage does not go into eternity. And she slumped her shoulders and made a sad face. I told her same here!

But what I can assure her of is that whatever our relationship is now, it is going to get better in Heaven. Better things are to come. Sometimes when a man's wife is pregnant, they like to get close to the woman's belly when the baby is kicking and talk to the little baby.

Imagine a dad speaking to the baby in utero and trying to explain to that baby what a Beethoven Symphony is like, or what the Grand Canyon is like. How can we in this life fully comprehend the glory's of Heaven? Whatever our relationships are, they are only going to get better. Of that I am confident.

We are going to share this intimacy with God and together as the family of God with one another, and it is going to be so fulfilling and rich. Right now we as the body of Christ need to be filled with the Spirit that we might make better reality here on earth as much as possible.

We must take a good look at Verse 36. If you ask me, that is a very important verse in the Bible. Given this scenario here in the context, Jesus gave three reasons why marriage does not extend into eternity. What is amazing is that as Jesus addressed that particular issue, we are also getting glimpses into what our existence is to be like in the resurrection.

There are three things that are true of us in Verse 36 as sons of the resurrection. Yes, that includes men and woman. Like I have said multiple times here on Sunday mornings: Ladies, if we men can be a part of the bride of Christ, you woman can be a part of the sons of God, because that had great legal import there in the First Century.

As sons of the resurrection, there are three things that are true for us. First, we cannot die anymore. Second, we are equal to the angels. Third, we are sons of God. Let's read Verse 35 and 36:

³⁵but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

There are three reasons why marriage does not extend into eternity. One, Jesus said that we cannot die anymore. I think the understanding is that there is no more death in Heaven. Therefore, there is no ongoing need for procreation in Heaven. There is no need to repopulate Heaven, because people are not going to be dying.

The population of Heaven is going to be fixed. Let me be emphatic with this. Take this in body of Christ because we cannot die anymore. Therefore, the things that cause decline and death will not be experienced anymore. Disease will not afflict us anymore. Decline will not afflict us anymore.

There will be no more quarantines. There will be no more stay at home orders, so that sickness won't spread. Those things will be done because life is going to be everlasting. It is going to be experienced in bodies that are perfectly and permanently and perpetually healthy and strong.

Jesus died and rose again at age of thirty-three, so I picture us as a bunch of thirty-three-year-olds eternally relating to one another in Heaven. I don't know. We will see. That is just my theory. But we cannot die anymore. Hallelujah!

There is another reason Christians won't have marriages in Heaven. That is because we are equal to the angels, this verse says. So you Dodgers fans will finally get what you have always longed for. You will be equal to the angels! No, that is not what this text is talking about!

We human beings will somehow be on equal standing with all of the holy angels of God. We will be similar to them. We will be like them. Now, understand that this is not saying that we will become angels. There is a very popular misconception that gets perpetuated in this society, and that is when loved ones pass on, they become angels in heaven. No, they do not!

No human being has become an angel. You are no more going to become an angel that you will become a feline or a dolphin or a chimpanzee. You are not going to become an angel. An angel is another kind of created species.

When believers die, they remain human beings. They become resurrected human beings, perfectly healthy, strong, everlasting human beings, but human beings we will remain. We will not become angels, but there is a sense in which we will be like them.

Verse 35 says that we will be equal to angels. I think that speaks to the fact there is no marriage among angels. Hence, no marriage among human beings. There is no mortality rate among the holy angels. Hence, no mortality among human beings.

Also, human beings will have ongoing access before the Throne of God. We will have equal standing and we will all worship the Lord together as we carry out the directives that He has for us in His ever expanding government of Heaven.

Finally, Verse 36 Jesus also said there is not going to be marriage because we are going to be sons of God. To be a son of God means that we will have full legal standing as heirs in His household.

That means that we will experience the closeness and security of a Father who loves us, who accepts us, and who wants to know us personally and individually with intimacy forever and ever.

So Jesus gave us this glimpse into Heaven. We got to hear some things about the resurrection as Jesus responded to that question and that issue. We continue, now that Jesus addressed the issue of marriage in the resurrection and how that has become a platform for Him to describe for us the quality of our ongoing life in Him, then Jesus kind of pulled back a little bit.

Jesus clarified from even very early on in the Scripture that there is ongoing life in the Lord for those who believe in Him.

2. A Demonstration of Life (Luke 20:37-39; cf. Exodus 3:1-6)

There is ongoing life in His presence. Jesus took them back all the way to Exodus Chapter 3. Let's see how He alluded to this in Luke Chapter 20 and Verses 37 and 38:

³⁷But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him."

Once again, it seems historically that the only Old Testament Scriptures that the Sadducees recognized as truly authoritative were the first five books, the writings of Moses—the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

So Jesus dealt with the question on their playing field, you might say. He went all the way back to Exodus Chapter 6, taking them to that scene where you have Moses shepherding the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro.

Moses was near Horeb, the mountain of God. There in the distance, he saw a bush that was burning, yet not being consumed. Moses was wondering what was happening, so he approached the bush. As he got close, the Lord spoke to him from the bush. Exodus 3:5 and 5 and 6:

⁵Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶And he said, “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 at God.

The tense of Exodus 3:6 is vitally important. That is what Jesus was pointing us to. *The Lord said, I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob.* That present tense indicated this ongoing relationship that God had with them as their God.

God did not say, *I was the God of Abraham when he was alive. I was the God of Isaac. I was the God of Jacob.* Rather, God said *I am their God*, indicating their ongoing life in His presence for all who do have everlasting life, live to the Lord.

The tense is so important and Jesus pointed us to that as a demonstration that those men, even though they had long deceased physically, were somehow still related to God in ongoing life. *I am their God.*

I was thinking about the people that have departed from the Bethel Grace family this past year, children of the Lord, and how the Lord can speak the same thing of them. I am the God of June Furry. I am the God of Keith Wells. I am the God of Eric Weaver. Just picture our brother Eric there in the presence of the Lord, full and in a clear mind, rejoicing in the presence of God.

There is ongoing life for those who are in the Lord. And Jesus was pointing us to this even way back in the earliest pages of Scripture. As we finish, there is one last enormous question that needs to be weighing on our hearts. That question goes back to Verse 35, where Jesus spoke of those who would be considered worthy to attain the resurrection; who would be worthy to attain the life to come.

Who are they? The implication of such a statement is that not all will be considered worthy to attain that everlasting life. So the big question that we really need to be wrestling with is who is worthy? And how do we know if we are worthy? How do we know if we have been good enough, if we have done enough?

How can you know if you have passed the test? I remember back to my college and high school days when we took an exam or submitted a research paper. The time came when the teacher would hand back the tests or the papers. Do you remember the moments of tension, wondering what grade you would get. An A? An A-? A B? A C? Oh no, a D? Please not an F!!

Where do we draw the line of what is worthy enough? This ought to be something that is very sobering in view of what we read in Scripture both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, both in the Psalms and in Romans Chapter 3.

From God's perspective, as He evaluates this human race, there is no one righteous. No not one. All have turned aside. It says in Scripture that each and every last one of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Let's be honest with each other, we have sinned in a great many ways. Some sins have been on accident, but some have been on purpose. We have sinned knowingly against the Holy Law of the Lord. How can we know that we are worthy?

I am going to make it easy for you. You are not worthy! I don't say that self-righteously, because I'm not either! None of us are. We are all fallen in sin. Yes, created in the image of God and capable of some pretty amazing things, but even good things that God and in His common grace empowers people to do, we are stained with our iniquity that comes out in so many different ways.

We are not worthy, but there is One who is. There is a worthy One. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain! Worthy is the King who conquered the grave! Jesus is worthy. The good news is that Jesus came into the world on a rescue mission to save sinners like us.

His life was thirty-three-years. He lived a life of absolute holiness and grace and love and perfection and truth. On that thirty-third year, Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross and He shed His blood. The testimony of Scripture is that that blood has power to cleanse every spot for the one who comes to God in Christ, confessing their sin and their need.

Jesus came to cleanse us by the power of His blood. He did not then just leave us in a neutral position because He also lived a perfect life that He gives as a gift to those who come and trust in Him, so that not only is the sin of each person who is trusting in Christ washed away, but His righteousness is given as a gift so we are covered in the righteousness of Jesus

Jesus is the One who makes us worthy. He is the One who clothes us for the resurrection; for heaven. He is the One who makes it so that we fit in in that place of unspeakable, impeccable purity and life and love. Jesus is the One! Turn to Him! Trust in Him.

If you deny Him, and if you reject Him, your sin remains on you. Your sin is stuck to you and you will pay for your sin. God is a god of justice. Your sin will remain on you and you will be responsible for it. Yes, the Bible teaches us of a fearsome place called Hell, where justice is distributed.

Jesus came to deliver us from that place. When we trust in Him, our sin vanishes from us in God's sight. We are seen in Christ as pure and holy. We are covered in His righteousness. Right now the soul of the Christian that dies, it goes disembodied into the presence of the Lord. That is awesome to think about.

For every Christian that has died, there is the soul experience in heaven, but some day Christ is coming back and He is going to resurrect the dust and the particles of our bodies. He is going to form that into something eternal, everlasting, into something that is glorious and powerful.

The soul and the body will be joined together and we will be risen in Christ to live in the glory of His joyful, happy Kingdom forever and ever, where, even Baptists like us are going to be dancing the happy dance. In that Kingdom, we cannot die. This is what Christ in His goodness is preparing for us.

This for me has been another timely portion of Scripture in the Gospel of Luke. I pray that it will be the case for you too. I pray that these things would be believed in each heart and that we will rejoice even now in the midst of this lockdown in our homes. I pray that we would rejoice in our Messiah because He is worthy, He is worthy, He is worthy!

If you want to be a Christian, you confess to the Lord, *You have made me but I am fallen in sin. I put my trust in Jesus. I turn myself over to Him. Cleanse me in Jesus. Raise me up in Christ. Now let me, help me, and empower me to understand His teaching and to walk in His ways.*

If you prayed that prayer or if you would like to talk about the Christian faith, let me know. Email me jeffs@bethelgrace.org. I would love to come along side you in this faith.

Let's close in prayer and then we will sing one more song of praise about that great day that is coming when we will rise up into the resurrection. Let's pray together.