

# “God of the Living”

*Luke 20: 27-38*

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From the Pulpit

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*Prayer for Illumination: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

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I’ve been listening to a podcast called, Death, Sex and Money.[1] It’s about big questions and hard choices that are often left out of polite conversation. But what great topics for our life of faith! All three have deep roots in scripture and indeed speak to the values we hold as a people of faith.

But the church isn’t necessarily good at talking about some of these topics. Some of you fidget a little in the pews we talk about money. But let’s be honest, Jesus talks about money more than he talks about anything else, so why wouldn’t we talk about it? God cares about the decisions we make with our money.

And then there’s sex---um, sex (there I said it!). When was the last time you heard a sermon on the subject? I can say I’ve never preached sermon on sex, and it won’t be today---but I have now said the word more times in a sermon inside of a church than I ever have before.

Today, I'm not going there----but my colleague down the street IS talking about sex in her sermon. If you hurry, I am sure you can catch part of it at Broad Street Presbyterian Church.

Which leaves us with the topic fraught with big questions and hard choices, death. In church, we do talk more about death than the other two topics of the podcast.

Last week, in the Christian tradition, we celebrated All Saints Sunday. This is a day when we acknowledge the reality of death and we remember and give thanks for those who have died. From the very beginning the church has believed that when we die, we don't disappear; we become a part of something we call the communion of saints.

That word "saint" can be misleading. We aren't talking about super holy people. The communion of saints is a collection of ordinary, everyday people, people who have gone before us, people who give us – the living – hope and strength.[2]

On All Saints, we give thanks to God for those who have entered the life to come, those we have known and loved, those who have carried us and those we have the privilege to carry.

Today's text expands the theme from last week. Call it All Saints 2.0.

When Jesus is confronted in our text this morning, he is on the move toward Jerusalem where he will die. He is very aware that his time is running out. He is desperately trying to get the

attention of the disciples, other followers, the crowds, anyone who will listen.

Jesus is questioned by the Sadducees, the Temple priests, who take the first five books of the Bible—the Torah---as authoritative. They do not believe in the resurrection. They don't believe there is a reference to resurrection in the Torah.

The Sadducees aren't putting this question to Jesus because they actually want an answer. They put this question to Jesus because they want to see Jesus falter. They are trying to test Jesus, by questioning him about a widow and her marriages.

Jesus' response brings a distinction between those who are here and still living and those who have died. Jesus seems to be saying, marriage will not matter in the future, in the life to come.

“Look,” Jesus is saying to the Sadducees, “you're asking me this question that presumes that everything in the resurrection will look exactly like it will before the resurrection, and it simply isn't so.”

Jesus goes on to say, in the life to come, our “success” in life won't be defined by how many kids we have, but by whose kids we are. And the people of the resurrection are God's children, says Jesus. That's the primary relationship. That's the one that matters.

Finally, Jesus says, “You may not have a full vision of the resurrection right now, but God sure does.” Jesus refers the

Sadducees back to the Torah. Sure there was no mention of resurrection in the Torah, they are reminded of that when God appears to Moses in the burning bush. God identifies Godself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ‘Not, I was their God.’ But, ‘I AM there God.’ Present tense. Even future tense. I am your God.

Jesus points them to the central truth that God’s vision is a lot bigger, a lot more beautiful and a lot different from theirs.

For the Sadducees, there is tension between who they understand God to be and the overwhelming truth of who God is.

That day Jesus opened the eyes of the priests to show that God was too big to be contained by the holy words of the scrolls of the Torah. God wasn’t just the God of the dead, God was God of the living. The resurrection reminds the world of the partnership God made with humanity. A partnership aimed toward life.

God is so eager to be with us, to save us, to love us, that God couldn’t wait for us to understand or get things right. God is so eager that God became flesh and walked among us.

Encountering God doesn’t start with us understanding or even recognizing God. It starts with God understanding us. God understands our faults and flaws and fears and wants to be close to us anyway. God understands our denial of death.

The Sadducees are asking the questions that were important to them in their time. But these are not our questions.

If you had Jesus in front of you, what questions would you ask him about the life to come? What do we really want to know?

- Will I be reunited with my loved ones?
- Will I be made whole?
- Is heaven real?
- Do we have an existence beyond death?

When we think of death---what we fear the most is that we'll drift into oblivion and nothingness and no one will remember us. We fear that our children will not connect with each other once the matriarch or patriarch has died.

The claim of the church is that when we die, we don't disappear. We join a great cloud of witnesses--- the communion of saints who are united with God in every time and place.

We cling to the ancient promises that in life and death we belong to God. In the life to come, our loved ones will be okay, pain will be no more. And we will be ok, too. We hold on to the promise of one Easter morning where death did not have the final word. The claim of the church is that the communion of saints is present and alive and among us here

today. That says that God is not a God of the dead, but of the living.

The response Jesus gives the Sadducees is that God's care is not contained and not restricted. Pursuing a life of the Spirit means that life with God is unbounded and continuous.

Resurrection is where God is, across generations, across circumstances. The Sadducees focus on the men dying. Jesus sees how the generations have lived on.[3]

God continues to reveal Godself in the Communion of Saints and the promise of the life to come. In other words, Listen Up! God is still speaking.[4]

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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[1] <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/458929318/death-sex-money>

[2] Rev. Amy Miracle, "Carried" BSPC.org, November 3, 2019

[3] Oluwatomisin Oredein, Living by the Word.  
<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/living-word/november-10-ordinary-32c-luke-2027-38>

[4] [www.lutheranmoxie.wordpress.com/2013/11/10/sermon-luke-2027-38/](http://www.lutheranmoxie.wordpress.com/2013/11/10/sermon-luke-2027-38/)