**WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE RESURRECTION**

**(We are not born to die; We are born to live)**

April 10, 2016

Luke 20:27-38

Key Verse 20:36 “and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection.”

Death has been a problem for mankind ever since Adam sinned against God. In order to deal with death, every culture developed an idea of life after death. In Egypt, in the tomb of Pharaoh, sealed over 5,000 years ago was found by archeologists the solar boat which he had built to sail through the heavens in the afterlife. In the ancient Greek religion, a silver coin was often placed in the mouth of a corpse to pay his fare across the mystic river of death into the land of resurrection life. Even American Indians often placed within the grave of a dead warrior his bow and arrows and sometimes his dead pony so he could have them in the happy hunting ground. In Greenland, dead native children were buried with a dog to guide them through the cold wasteland to come.

The Jews were no exception. Especially, the Pharisees loved to discuss the resurrection. For example, they discussed things like when you are raised from the dead, will you be naked or will you have clothes on? They couldn’t comprehend that everybody in the resurrection would be naked so they came to the conclusion that you would have clothes on. And then the question was where would you get the clothes? And then the debate was about whether you get new clothes or whether you rise in the same clothes you used to wear; in fact they concluded that you would rise in the very clothes with which you were buried. And then the question they loved to discuss was if you have defects in this life, physical defects, or mental defects, or whatever, when you rise from the dead again will you have those same defects? It is absurd. So the group known as the Sadducees thought that the resurrection was ridiculous, and they loved to scorn and mock such ridiculous things as rising from dead with the same clothes on. Look at verse 27. “Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.” The Sadducees were mockers of the resurrection. One of the things that was bizarre and irrational about resurrection to them was what if somebody had married multiple times in this life, in the next life if you are going to come back in the same clothes, in the same form, with the same defects, and in the same relationships, who is going to be your husband and wife? And apparently this question had never been satisfactorily answered, because when it comes their turn to throw a question at the Master Rabbi, this is their best shot. The Sadducees wanted to discredit Jesus in front of the people by asking him a question that nobody has been able to answer.

They asked a question made up of a sad and grotesque story which goes as follows: “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. 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, in making up a story, made use of the Jewish law of marriage, which is based on the story of Judah and Tamar. (Deuteronomy 25)

Their story is more gruesome than a modern soap opera and more tragic than Shakespeare’s plays. It shows us clearly how their minds worked and what was in their hearts. The contents of their story can be summarized as marriage, death, and who gets the woman. If it was made into a movie, it might be titled, “Seven weddings and eight funerals.” Here we must deeply realize that man without resurrection faith is nothing but a slave of the power of death, no matter how well decorated he may be. As St. Paul said, “The mind of sinful man is death...” (Ro 8:6). Those who think that money is everything or that pleasure is everything or that worldly glory is everything are greatly mistaken. Without resurrection faith, there is no escape from the power of death. Those who live without resurrection faith all become slaves of the power of death. Those who are under the power of death suffer from the symptoms of death, such as sorrow, fear and despair. Without resurrection faith, the Sadducees were nothing but the walking dead. Someone joked, “That’s why they are so sad, you see.” Because there is no life to come, there is no hope for the future.

The gist of the Sadducees’ question was, “At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?” The Sadducees thought that in asking such a question they rendered the whole idea of the resurrection completely ridiculous. They thought they were very smart. But they ridiculed themselves by presenting to Jesus such an overly exaggerated question. For instance, how can a woman, a human being, marry seven brothers unless she is made of steel? Even if she is made of steel, how could she change her emotional feelings like we change the cartridge of a printer, in order to marry seven times? The Sadducees never understood the integrity of a woman. Their question reveals that they were sarcastic, sadistic and unspiritual and ungodly. When we analyze their question, the Sadducees were people who could do anything to carry out their political intrigue.

The Sadducees had no spiritual understanding. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection—that is, the foundation of the spiritual world. So they only had the present realities on their minds. They only thought about the things of the world, such as physical pleasure, hatred and anger among men and the spoiling things of the world. Probably they were preoccupied with gourmet foods in all kinds of 100 different ethnic restaurants, who gets what prize, who marries whom. But when they had to attend funeral ceremonies of their friends, they were gripped with fear that they would die and all their hard work come to nothing.

The Sadducees were tragic because they were spiritually blind. They were tragic because they could not digest the tragic things of the world with spiritual meaning. On the other hand, those who have spiritual eyes are not tragic, even though they live in the midst of the tragic world. Helen Keller was born a normal child, but she contracted a terrible illness at the age of 19 months which left her deaf and blind. It looks as though she was born to suffer and die. But through the help of Anne Sullivan, she graduated from college. She became one of history's remarkable women. She dedicated her life to improving the conditions of the blind and the deaf-blind around the world, lecturing in more than 25 countries. She still serves as a source of inspiration to millions across the globe as an example of triumph over tragedy. Paul, who suffered for the sake of Christ more than one can say, said in Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Those who have opened their spiritual eyes can see the deep meaning of human sufferings and agonies and can grow in the image of God, like Joseph in the Old Testament.

Jesus heard the Sadducees’ question and realized that they were overly sophisticated, and full of evil intention, not knowing the truth of God nor God himself. Nevertheless, Jesus did not overlook them. With great compassion Jesus taught them a Bible truth. Look at verse 34. “Jesus replied, ‘The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.’” Jesus knew what people of the world mainly do. To mankind, birth, marriage, and death are the three main events of life. Men do their best to grow up to get married, and then die. Most women devote a great deal of time to solving their marriage problems. The people of the world seem to be doing many great things. But they are doing the same things as the people in the time of Noah. They are eating and drinking; they marry and are given in marriage; they are cheating and being cheated.

Look at verses 35,36. “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.” Through Jesus’ death and resurrection God gave us a new birth into a living hope in the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God, there will be no more marriage problems or broken family problems. There will be no procreation and no death. Those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will be “like” angels. It does not mean that they become angels. They become like angels, immortal. They will look most beautiful. They will look most glorious. They will look like our Lord Jesus.

When people learn of the teaching of Jesus in this passage, namely, that there will be no marriage in heaven, there are several reactions. Some, who are unhappily married, are glad. Others, who are newly-wed, are sad. They want to make their union beyond eternity. In fact, the Mormon church has the sealing ceremony. It is to seal family relationships, making possible the existence of family relationships throughout eternity. You are sealed with your spouse and children forever in eternity. It is a feel-good idea, but not true reality. Not only there will not be marriage in heaven, there will be no father and son relationship, mother and daughter relationship. We will all be brothers and sisters in heaven.

The Sadducees’ problem was that they did not study the Bible. They thought the Bible study was of no use since the Bible stories were old and out of date. Probably they said to themselves, “Why do we have to study the Bible when it does not give any practical benefits?” So they did not know the main point of the Bible. Contrary to what the Sadducees’ thought, death is not the end of everything. When we die, our flesh goes back to the dust of the ground because it came from the dust. But our soul lives forever. Those who have resurrection faith are not bound by anything; health or money or material things. They can live victorious lives everyday without the thought of power of death.

The Sadducees, however, insisted that they could not believe the resurrection of the body because there was no information about it, still less any proof of it in the books of the Law. But Jesus gave them an answer from the book of Exodus. Look at verses 37,38. “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.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.” In Exodus 3:6 God said, “I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob.” God did not say, “I was the God of Abraham. I was the God of Isaac. I was the God of Jacob.” God said, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” The Almighty God is not the King of corpses. He is not the Lord of bones. A king cannot be a king unless he has living subjects to reign.

Jesus’ logic was: God’s statement (present tense), “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” makes no sense if they are not presently alive. If someone comes to you and says, “I was your father (or your mother’s) friend,” it may be because your parent is dead or there has been a change in their relationship. But if one comes to you and says, “I am your father’s (or your mother’s) friend,” that conveys two things: the existence of your parents and the ongoing relationship. God, in this threefold repetition is not only declaring the ongoing existence of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but also his ongoing relationship with them. To put it another way, if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are nothing but dust, God cannot now be their God!

Then Jesus says, “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.” Death does not end one’s existence. There is another life, an afterlife, a resurrection life, for those who belong to God in his presence. Jesus says in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live even though he dies.” If we belong to Christ, we will live forever in the presence of Christ and in the presence of God. Contrary to what the Sadducees thought, we are not born to die; we are born to be immortal children of God.

If God is the God of the living, then he has called us to live. He created us for life, not death. That means that our faith is an active faith, a lively faith seeking to do his will. The living God is with us. If God is with us, then there is nothing we can’t do that is according to his will. The God who says, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” is not establishing his glory on the basis that he is worshiped by corpses. That wouldn’t bring him any honor. The dead cannot praise God. God will carry us through to live. God will not carry us to the dead end. Many people are in despair because they think their life is in dead end. Their life looks as though dead. They suffer from hopelessness.

How shall we respond to the reality of the resurrection? We should respond through “resurrection eyes.” We will not look at the task before us in light of the past events, past struggles or failures. That will only run us down. No, because we believe in the resurrection, we live for the future and we serve for life. Starting this very moment, we should live and serve our living God through resurrection eyes, eyes that see God at our side in every challenge, struggle and pain, eyes that see God leading us to path of life, not path of dead end, eyes that see God leading us to the glorious kingdom of God, where we will live forever.