

November 6, 2022

Luke 20:27-38

“Marching Orders: Expect More”

Today we have one of those texts where it is so easy to identify with Jesus and nearly impossible to identify with his critics. In part because they are an unusual group for us to interface with. Sadducees were generally upper class, politically connected and theologically conservative. They limited religious authority to the Pentateuch and found no evidence for resurrection in the books of Moses. Jesus tells them to look again.

The great thing about today’s text is it has **all kinds of specific information** that *was tied to the moment*, but it is a story which **transcends** that moment into *universal recognizable* human experience. The crux of the matter is *God is a mystery* and people are *wired to disagree*. We are coming up on mid-term elections in our nation – and elections are fertile ground for emphasizing difference. In pandemic we reached a point where we seemed to imagine *difference of opinion* was more important than our belonging to one another. People disagree – no matter where you are in the world this is true.

I understand the Sadducees are different – but ***didn’t that opening story seem more than convoluted?*** *Beware when the point being made requires too many twists and turns to arrive at home.* After all – if the story had really happened, I doubt the seventh son would have ever married her. *“I am so sorry, my dear, but you are clearly bad luck!”*

Jesus’ message to his critics and to us today is that ***we need to expect more from God.*** We especially need to expect ***more than we have already figured out.*** What we have learned from our experience of God at every point in our lives *is important.* The danger is we will become like the Sadducees and *feel so confident* in what we know that God in Christ can stand right in front of us, and ***we won’t recognize him.*** This story isn’t just about the reality of resurrection – it is also about ***the reality of God’s freedom. God is free*** to pull us along into territory we have not known before. Yes, our faith has a crucial core, and there are helpful disciplines to practice our faith – and by grace we evolve over time. In our tradition this has been carried forward from the time of the Reformation with the phrase *Ecclesia Reformate Semper Reformanda. The church reformed and always reforming.*

Jesus' argument with the Sadducees is rooted in *their desire to keep things neat, clean and limited*. No Resurrection in the first five books of the Bible? No problem – that means no resurrection. Jesus makes it clear that when we try to keep things too neat and clean, we are in danger.

We need to expect more from God, and we need to *widen our vision* and expect more from the **God who is the God of the living** – and our living is oriented toward God's future. That's what it means when we pray, *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

The Sadducees approach to discovering the presence of God in life was to use the authority they could find to *paint God into a manageable corner*. Jesus asks us to stop painting and *let God energize us for living* – an open-ended courageous trust in the God in whose presence we live now - and will live always.

This past week in our preaching practicum here at the church I was reminded of the wise words of St. Theresa of Avila: *"Know what you can do, know what God can do, and proceed with holy daring."* Let's believe in the God who is always here and always at work in life – *even life beyond what we can see*. Let's expect more from God as *we orient our lives to God's kingdom and God's ways*. Let's look past all the noise and busy clatter of life and **proceed with holy daring**. Let's expect more.