

Jesu Juva

“Life and Hope, Now and Forever, in Jesus”

Text: Luke 20:27-40

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

What's heaven like? How old will I be there? If I die old will I be old, or if I die young will I be young? Will I have gray hair? Will I have hair? What about babies who are aborted, or those people who die in horrible ways? Where are we all going to live? What will we be doing? Aren't I going to get bored? Will I know everybody? What will I remember from this life? What is heaven going to be like?

You know people who have asked questions like that. *You* have asked such questions. Sometimes those questions are asked because we'd really like to know the answers. But sometimes questions like those are asked not for an answer, but to mock belief in heaven. To try to show how ridiculous it is to believe that there is a life after this one. To try to mock our belief in something we know, really, so little about.

So it was with the Sadducees, who came up to Jesus that day and asked him a question about heaven and the resurrection. They weren't really looking for an answer because they didn't believe that there is a resurrection. This was their latest attempt to trick Jesus, mock Jesus, discredit Jesus, and eventually kill Jesus. *So, a resurrection, huh Jesus? What's it going to be like, in this life after death? What about in a case like this, this woman who had seven husbands . . . that's kind of a stickler isn't it Jesus? Maybe this "life after death" is not all its cracked up to be.*

Well, it's not a stickler for Jesus, but we'll get to that in a moment.

First, though, think about these Sadducees for a moment. They denied that there is a resurrection, which means that for them, this life is all there is. Long life, short life, rich life, poor life, hard life, easy life, *this is it*. This is it. And even though the Sadducees as a group disappeared a few years after Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, there are many today who follow in their footsteps and believe that there is no resurrection. This life is all there is. Whether it's those who believe evolution, those who believe in reincarnation, or those who don't believe anything at all. You live for a while, you die, and that's it. So eat, drink, and be merry.

But I'm not really concerned about those people today. I mean, I am concerned about them; we should be concerned about them - but they're not who I'm talking to today. They're not who I'm preaching to today. I'm preaching *to you*, who confess yourselves Christians; who confess that you do, in fact, believe in *the holy Christian Church, the*

communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting (Apostles Creed). I'm concerned with you who confess this with your lips, but live like a Sadducee. Who live as if this life is all there is.

And we do, don't we? I'm afraid more than we'd like to admit. We do when we get so busy and so wrapped up with the things of this world and life that we give little thought to the bigger picture, that there's more to life than this. It's why we get so upset when something is taken away from us here, or when we think we're not getting what we deserve. It's why we hold on so tightly to what we have, even when there are so many in need. It's why in our world today, suffering and doing without and discipline have become anathema, and pleasure and fulfilling your every dream and desire have become the highest good. And woe to those who get in the way of this highest good, who get in the way of the dreams, desires, or pleasures of anyone.

But today Jesus says to the Sadducees and us who live like them: *you're wrong*. And you couldn't be more wrong. There's more to this life, and more life after this life. This world and this life is ending, that is true. But that's not the end. There's more. And Jesus proved that when not too many days after He spoke these words, He Himself rose from the dead. After He had taken all our misguided "this life is all there is" sins and died for them and with them, and then rose to a new life. And then said: *this is for you too*. To start to live a life now that not even death will be able to end. To start to live a life now that's *more* than just a rush to fulfill every dream, pleasure, and desire. To start to live a life now like there is a tomorrow, and an eternity of tomorrows after that. In Jesus.

So Jesus tells the Sadducees: you're not thinking right. You're trying to imagine heaven through the lens of how things are on earth. But it's *different* than that. It's *more* than that. It's *better* than that. Marriage is an earthly thing, for companionship and for children to populate the earth. In the resurrection, however, there is no more death and everyone is a brother or sister in Christ - and so earthly marriage won't be needed anymore. *It will be better*. Husbands won't bury their wives or wives their husbands. Children won't bury their parents or parents their children. No more separation or divorce. No more loneliness, no more need. There will be not many families, but one family around our one Father. Jesus' Father. Who in Jesus we call *Our Father*.

One Father, one family, which includes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who Jesus says are still living - just no longer in this life. One Father, one family, which includes Moses, who led the people of Israel out of Egypt as God said, and who, though he could not enter the Promised Land of Canaan, nevertheless entered the Promised Land of heaven where he lives still. And one Father, one family, which includes you. You who have been baptized into this family and have a seat at the family table with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Your brothers and sisters here in this life, and your brothers and sisters in the next life. One Father, one family, *one table*. And we are taught, we are reminded, as we eat this feast with them, that there is more - more **to** this life, more **than** this life. Much

more.

And so taught and reminded, we repent. For when we have lived as if this is all there is. For when we have lived as if this world and life was all important. For when dreams, desires, and pleasures have become our gods and what guides and controls us in this life. And much more. We repent, for our Lord is here to restore us to life again. That life which starts now and never ends. That life which He gives to us in forgiveness when He places that forgiveness into our hearts, minds, and souls through our ears and our mouths, through His Gospel and His Supper. And He says to us: *you are not now what you were before*. Or as I rather like to say: *you are no longer living a life that will end in death; you now die a death that ends in life*.

And that's really what repentance is: a little death that ends in the life-giving forgiveness of Jesus given to you. Practice, as it were, for the real thing. But also now so taught and reminded and forgiven, we live. We live the new life given to us **in** Christ, **by** Christ. A new life in an old life world. An old life world filled with folks like the Sadducees' hypothetical widow. Put yourself in her sandals for a moment. She's married (joy!) but has no children (sadness). Then her husband dies (grief). Many of you know what she went through - that sadness of wanting but having no children, or of standing by the grave of your spouse. But then it happens to her again and again and again and again. Seven times.

And what other sadness and grief is there like that in our old world today? And that so often happens again and again and again and again. The situations change, the stories change, but the sadness and grief is the same. What is the message for them? *Too bad! So Sad! This life is all there is and you got dealt a bad hand*. Of course not. We **speak** of hope and **live** a hope that there's more to life than this. That even in the most desperate times and places, we have a Saviour. A Saviour who's been through it and who gives life. A Saviour who has come to provide more than just what we see here and now.

A Saviour who brings light into darkness, hope into struggle, and life into death. And who assures us that after the cross is the resurrection. To a life far better than we could ever imagine.

So dear brothers and sisters in Christ, live that life and hope. And take that new life here given out into our old life world - to the widows, to the dying, to the hurting, the wounded, the struggling, the desperate, and give them hope. Your hope. Give them Jesus. The Jesus who came once in the flesh to ascend the cross, and who is coming again in glory to raise us from death to ascend with Him into heaven. For yes, Sadducees, there is a resurrection and a life that never ends.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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