

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for November 9, 2025
Proper 32 Year C – Pentecost 22 Remembrance Day
“Resurrection Life” – Luke 20:27-38

May only truth be spoken and may only truth be heard. Amen.

The tensions are rising in the relationship between Jesus and the religious authorities of the day. Jesus is confronted in the Temple by the Sadducees who ask him: If a woman was married seven times to seven husbands, who will she be married to in the resurrection? You see, the Sadducees don't believe in life after death because, as far as they're concerned, if something isn't mentioned in the Torah (the five books of Moses), then it doesn't exist. The Sadducees claim that resurrection is not found in the Torah, therefore they don't believe in it. In this confrontation, they wish to mock Jesus and make the belief in resurrection appear ridiculous. But what does this have to do with marriage?

Nothing, but here's why the Sadducees are using this example. In the time of this encounter, women had no rights, had no access to land, had no way of supporting themselves. They got married so that they could be taken care of someone other than their father. If they have a son, then that responsibility passes down to him. According to the law of the time, if a man dies, his brother is to marry the wife until there is a son old enough to take over. If that brother dies, the next brother takes over, and so on. Now, I guess this family was extremely unlucky because seven brothers died without bearing any children (or at least male children), leaving this woman with nothing and no one. She finally dies herself, putting us at the Sadducees question – which one of these brothers will be the woman's husband after death?

As is Jesus' way, he doesn't answer the question directly. Instead, he teaches and turns the argument upside down. And it certainly has nothing to do with marriage, but everything about resurrection. What is resurrection life like? What is life after death like? What is "eternal life"? We have all had these questions. People 2000 years ago had them. And many people have them today. These questions are the mystery of our faith. We will never know what it's like to die, or to be resurrected. It's not like a person dies and then reports back! In our limited human capacity to think about heaven and the life to come, we tend to imagine it as simply a more glorified version of what we already know and have experienced here in this earthly life. But Jesus is trying to tell us that eternal life with God is beyond our imagining! Everything will be changed. Everything will be made new.

With this Gospel reading falling between All Saints' Day and Remembrance Day, it is a perfect time for us to consider what we think resurrection might be like, what heaven might be like. Often people question whether or not they deserve to go to heaven, or are worried that their loved one won't make it into heaven, or ponder who they might meet in heaven. These are questions we will never know the answer to. Even for our loved one on

their deathbed, in that last moment before death, we don't know what happens at that point. Does God meet us at that last breath to give them full and eternal forgiveness and mercy?

That is the mystery of our faith. That is the good news that we have received through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That Jesus died for the forgiveness of all our sins so that we may have eternal life with God in heaven. That is the Gospel that we are to be sharing through the actions in our lives.

The Sadducees' biggest argument was that they didn't believe in resurrection because it never happened in the Torah. But it did! Just not how they were imagining resurrection to be. When we keep the memories of our ancestors and live through their teachings, we are keeping them alive! Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses....These are all Jewish ancestors that have taught us through the millennia how to maintain right relationship with God. When we keep the memories and teachings of our own ancestors, we keep them alive in ourselves and through ourselves. This is resurrection!

It's not all about what's going to happen to us after we die. Resurrection is about how we continue to keep our ancestors alive by telling their stories and living out their teachings here, today. The last line of the Gospel today is like this, "Now he is God not of the dead but of the living, for to him all of them are alive." God is not just sitting around waiting for us to get to the other side so that the real work can begin. No! God wants us to live the resurrected life here and now, while we are still alive.

And we are invited to begin this resurrected life where we are – in the reality of our broken and beloved world. It is out of the blue and in surprising moments that God meets us, surprising us with what God has had in store for us all along...resurrection from deaths, both big and small, experienced at a variety of points in our lives. For example, we can think back on the woman in our story. A world of resurrection life does not contain the many deaths we inflict on one another by treating one another as objects. Instead, a world in which a person's belovedness is based on nothing else but that they have been hand-made by a loving God. In God's world of resurrection life, all are beloved and cherished because of who they are in themselves, and communities in which the resurrected Jesus brings that world into the present, are beloved and cherished because of who they are in themselves.

Ultimately, life after death will look nothing like life before death. In our resurrection, we will be redefined as a person, our relationships to one another will be changed, and our relationship with God will be strengthened. But Jesus is saying that we don't have to wait until we physically die to experience resurrection life. Jesus' announcement of the resurrected life changes the present world by bringing God's intended future to us right now! We can participate in resurrection life now! This is how Jesus changes the present

world! That is the good news of Jesus' resurrection life for us now! Think of how freeing the future resurrection life will be for that woman the Sadducees speak of. A life in which she can simply enjoy being in the safe, unconditional love of God.

Homiletician Luke Powery says, "In order to experience life, resurrection, or hope, one must go through death." Even as the liturgical season turns back towards Advent, the texts for this Sunday continue to teach the reality of the deaths in which we live. So what does that mean for our community of St Peter? How can we experience God's resurrected life? Are there any small deaths that need to happen in order for St Peter to be redefined in resurrection?

These are the questions I ask you to consider as we proclaim with confidence our faith that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob raised Christ from death and promises to do the same also for us. Here at the little church on the hill where all are welcomed, where all are fed, where healing happens, where peace is made, and where justice is pursued. Here, in this place, is where God's resurrection reign comes into the present. So with Jesus and all those witnesses to resurrection life and resurrection living, let us say, "Amen."