**WORK ON THE TEXT**

besides the text study

**Church Year and Other Readings:**

Sunday of Church Year: End Time 3, Saints Triumphant

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 65:17-25

Epistle Reading: Revelation 22:1-5

Gospel: Luke 20:27-38

**Context:**

**Within Book:** In the middle of opposition’s tests of Jesus, during Holy Week when his focus is much more on end time.

**Message of context:** Partially an assertion of who Jesus is in relation to his mission, but also

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Importance | Passage |
| --------------- | Then some of the Sadducees |
| -------------- | who deny there to be a resurrection |
| ------------- | approaching asked him, |
| -------- | “Moses wrote for us, |
| ----- | ‘If a certain brother dies having a wife |
| ------ | and he should be childless |
| ------ | that his brother should take the wife |
| ---- | and he should raise up descendants for him.’ |
| ---- | Now there were seven brothers |
| ----- | the first, having a wife, died childless, |
| ----- | also the second and third had her |
| ----- | then likewise also the seven |
| ---- | didn’t leave a child and they died. |
| ----- | Finally also the woman died. |
| ---- | Therefore, in the resurrection |
| -------------- | of which of them will the woman be the wife? |
| ------- | for the seven had her as a wife.” |
| --- | Jesus said to them, |
| -------- | “The children of this age |
| ----- | marry and are married, |
| ------ | but those counted worthy |
| ------------ | to experience that age and the resurrection |
| ------- | do not marry nor are they married, |
| -------- | nor are they still able to die, |
| ------ | for they are as the angels |
| ------------- | and they’re sons of God, being sons of the res. |
| --------------- | But that the dead are raised |
| ---------- | also Moses made known re: the thorn bush |
| ----- | as he calls the Lord |
| ------ | the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. |
| ----- | He is not God of the dead, |
| ---------- | but of the living; |
| ------ | for all are to him alive. |

BASIC OUTLINE

for sermons

MAIN THOUGHT OF THE TEXT:

**Malady:** disbelief and scurrilous question about the resurrection

sub: wanting the resurrection on our terms

**Remedy:** searching the Scriptures for the truth about this most comforting doctrine

**Purpose:**

**Summary Sentence:**

Asserting that God’s people will have eternal life

TELL THE STORY! (What are the main points of the text. Story flow for narrative; thought development for teaching text.)

1) Jesus is asked a trick question about the resurrection

2) He addresses their trick question

3) Then trounces their doubt about the resurrection

APPLY THE STORY (convict, console, encourage, instruct, guide, direct)

1) Who are the people who would try to rob you of your Christian joy, especially with rationalistic questions?

2) Carefully examining the Scriptures will strengthen our faith; failure to do so is a recipe for a weak faith

3) Imagine what eternal life is like (but don’t go beyond what is written); use hints from other sections of Scripture

4) God’s great gift to you and desire for you is eternal life.

Craddock’s organizational principle for a sermon: (for examples, see *Preaching*, p.157)

*Text:* Luke 20:27-38

*Theme:*  Jesus asserts the resurrection and some of the joy it will be

*Subject:* Finding Joy in the Resurrection

*Title:* Questions about Heaven

Jesus Defends Our Greatest Joy

Sending Pumpkin Smashers Packing

Jesus Sends Pumpkin Smashers Packing

Questions about Heaven // Jesus Defends Our Greatest Joy

1. What Heaven Will Be Like
   1. Sadducees bring a question to Jesus
      1. Their beliefs
         1. They did not believe in the resurrection
         2. Nor did they put stock in anything but the Pentateuch
         3. They held others in contempt, especially re: after death stuff
         4. Not unlike the rationalists and their view of the religious
            1. notice that this is nothing new
      2. They bring a question
         1. Not a direct attack. Too easy to raise people’s ire
         2. But a question to make Jesus (and others) look foolish
         3. The Levirate Law explained briefly
            1. A law which even in Jesus’ time was not much observed
            2. That no name be wiped out of Israel’s inheritance
            3. Their point wasn’t the law, but how to manipulate it
      3. The real motivation is not the question
         1. but to cast aspersions on the resurrection.
         2. and Jesus, since he had spoken in favor of it
   2. Jesus’ rebuttal
      1. His primary point is the this/that age dichotomy.
         1. There is going to be a great difference
         2. Not different in all ways, but a great difference
         3. “Like angels”
            1. No death
            2. No marriage
            3. Not angels, though many think this

e.g. we will have bodies, they not

* 1. Our Questions about What Heaven Will Be Like
     1. Who are those who would rob us of heaven?
        1. Rationalists
        2. So-called Friends
        3. We ourselves?
        4. People who like to say all kinds of blasphemous things about heaven
     2. Jesus says we must be willing to let God be God
        1. “I don’t see how…”
        2. “I don’t want to go to heaven if…”
     3. Jesus could tell us things about heaven
        1. that you and I can’t say; we don’t have that information
        2. but he did because he was from heaven!
     4. Jesus takes us beyond the final judgment and speaks of God’s Children
        1. The judgment holds no fear for God’s children
        2. Only the expectation of life
     5. Our joy in this new life
        1. Like angels
           1. Not angels, but like them
        2. No death
           1. remember being 19 years old with life before you?
        3. No marriage
        4. Brings up questions of what heaven will be like
           1. Remember that everything that is bad in this world was not the Father’s intention, but his children’s choice
           2. Our questions are not bad when asked innocently
           3. Our questions are bad when asked, “Well I don’t see how…” or “If it’s that way, I don’t want to be there…”

1. That There Is a Resurrection
   1. Jesus has confounded their mockery of heaven’s nature
   2. Now he attacks their deeply held erroneous conviction
      1. Jesus has spoken of eternity often,
         1. Indeed, being from heaven, he has unique authority on this
         2. but will meet them on their ground
      2. He goes to their authority: Moses
         1. He proves from “Moses”, from the very calling of Moses, that the resurrection is the teaching of the whole Bible
         2. Neither in preceding verses nor these does he try to prove the resurrection, but simply states it as true.
         3. Explaining the passage
            1. Not that God was their God, but is.
            2. All are alive, the soul immortal
         4. Note how like Jesus’ opening of ministry this is: (Lk 4:1ff)
            1. Scripture satanically twisted
            2. Jesus bests them with Scripture
   3. For Us
      1. Such consistency, from Genesis to Revelation heartens us
      2. Knowing God’s Word gives truth, combats truth, brings joy to our hearts
      3. Our need to hunger for Scriptures and to humbly take them at their face value (Isaiah 66:2)

**Luke 20:27-38;** Isaiah 65:17-25; Rev. 22:1-5 11/15/19

**THEME: Jesus Defends Our Greatest Joy  
OR: Sending Pumpkin Smashers Packing**

Pumpkin smashers – that’s what they were.

I grew up in a small town. Our parents gave my brother and my sister and me a safe, sheltered, and somewhat naïve childhood. It was good, very good. But sooner or later every child runs up against the cold, cruel world. For me, one of those times was a certain Halloween when I was 8 or 10 years old. My dad came in the house and said, “Well, they smashed the jack-o-lanterns.” Immediately, I went out front where we had put two home-carved jack-o-lanterns, and they were just bits and pieces and mush. Who would do that? That pumpkin my mom and I had spent an afternoon carving just a day or two ago—all that time, all that happiness—smashed. Why do that?

Pumpkin smashers, that’s what they were, except they were called Sadducees. Sadducees, the rationalists of their day, who felt nothing but contempt for people who believed in heaven and hell, and life after death. “Thinking people don’t believe that stuff anymore,” they said. “Old superstitions made up by people who can’t deal with real life,” they said. Not content with their own conceited thinking, they enjoyed smashing what other people held near and dear. And so they came to Jesus with a question questioning a truth dear to many hearts.

Pumpkin smashers, that’s what they are. I can tell you where to find them. People who, not content with their own godless perspective on life, take great joy in shaking other people’s faith in God. They take joy in creating doubt, in rattling foundations. They ask clever questions to make you say in the quietness of your own heart, “Maybe… maybe I am mistaken. What I have believed surely was the thinking of a naïve, unsophisticated child. They sound so wise, so reasonable.” If you’ve been to a university, you’ve probably had a professor like that. If you spend time reading internet news articles and especially the comments, you hear their haughty insults. Maybe you even work with some of them: pumpkin smashers, faith wreckers.

You have to hand it to them. They were brilliant—the Sadducees, I mean. The vast majority of Jews at Jesus’ time did, in fact, believe in a physical resurrection. If the Sadducees had directly attacked the idea of the resurrection, the crowds would have risen up and shouted them down. Instead, they brought a clever question, well thought out, almost satanic in the way it twisted God’s Word to say something ungodly. Instead of denouncing the resurrection they asked a question designed to imply that those who believe in the resurrection are surely foolish simpletons.

They brought a case before Jesus of seven brothers and one woman. Whether it was hypothetical or real, we don’t know. It doesn’t matter. In our reading, this law of Moses that sounds outrageous to our sensibilities, was quoted accurately. We don’t have time to go into the reasons and purposes of this law, but this was God’s law. Seven brothers each successively married a woman, each dying without leaving any children. The clever question the pumpkin smashers finally asked Jesus is, ***“Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be?”***

They did not want an answer. They didn’t ask the question to learn. The question was meant to say, “This whole resurrection thing is made up by people who didn’t think things through! It just doesn’t make any sense! Our question proves it.”

There is no more favored way to attack faith than a question that we can’t give the answer to. “If God really is out there, why did he let my best friend die of leukemia at age 10?” “How can God condemn people to hell? I thought he was a loving God.” So the questions go.

But I want you to notice one thing. These questions are the same ones people still challenge us with 2,000 years later. There is a certain comfort in that fact. Many unbelievers think they have finally found the question that was never thought of. They think they finally have the question that will *prove* the Christian wrong. Well, our reading shows that people have been asking the same questions for 2,000 years. God’s word and his Church have endured and they will. Not without damage, but they will endure.

Without hesitation Jesus exposed his enemies’ error. He attacked their dishonest question, ***“The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 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.”***

When we have questions about heaven, Jesus points them, his enemies, and us, to a little detail we may miss. Jesus sets up a contrast between ***“this age”*** and ***“that age;”*** between the here and now, and eternal life after death.

Most questions that you, I or Jesus hear about heaven forget that there is a profound difference between now and eternity. The Sadducees pointed to heaven as simply an extended play version of what we now experience. In their question, they assume that we will be raised to do this whole thing all over again.

Their clever question starts to make us ask questions. “If heaven is going to be a bunch more of what we are doing right now—maybe a little better, but basically the same—who needs that?” “If heaven is just praising God, leave me to lie in my grave! I hate singing.” If heaven is just more of the same, those tired out by seven, eight, nine decades of life on this weary earth can hardly look forward to more of it. If heaven is like this place, except that there I can’t do what I want but only what God wants, why would young people who are enjoying their lives, thank you very much, want that life? The pumpkin smashers who want to smash your Christian joy and hope want you to have nagging questions about eternal life.

Jesus reminds them and us about the ***“this age/that age”*** division. Eternal life is going to be fundamentally different from this life in many ways. ***“This age”*** is a world partly of our making. Death, illness, pain, sorrow, cruelty, bullying, doubt, addiction, lies, wars, all of them exist because we, not God, wished them into existence.

***“That age”*** will be a time when all the evils we have brought down on our own heads will disappear. Gone in a way we can’t even imagine. Think about a recovered addict. Go to a support group meeting and listen to someone who is 34 years distant from their last drink. But what does he still say? “Hi, I’m Bob. I’m an alcoholic.” The battles may have gotten easier over 34 years, but they are still there. Imagine what it would be like for that person to be able to say that he actually is no longer an alcoholic, and will *never* have that battle again. Now we are starting to get to what ***“That age”*** will look like. Things will be changed, *we* will be changed.

We will be ***“like the angels.”*** We will not become angels—though many people think that—but in some respects we will become like them. Jesus specifically mentions some of those changes: ***“they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; and they can no longer die.”*** It will be eternal life, life without end.

As we scour the Scriptures, we find a few more details: no more sorrow or pain. We won’t even be tempted. We will have physical bodies, not just spirits floating around. Other details we only get hints of. Meanwhile some of our biggest questions just aren’t going to get answered until we get there, like, “When I get to heaven will I have my six-year-old body, my twenty-six-year-old body, my eighty-six-year-old body?” Truth is, we just don’t know.

What is really required when thinking about eternal life is a childlike trust in God. We will be happiest with the prospects of heaven when we trust our heavenly Father like children trust their parents for the gifts under the Christmas tree. Did not Jesus, perhaps anticipating our childlike doubts about heaven, did he not tell us, *“In my Father’s house are many rooms… I am going there to prepare a place for you”*? I hear an assurance from Jesus that our heavenly places are not one-size-fits-all cookie cutter apartments designed first and foremost for the convenience and profits of the developers. Jesus said he is going to prepare you and me places in heaven, prepared with us in mind. God’s Word beautifully assures us elsewhere, *“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”* (1 Cor 2:9).

Jesus answered the smashers’ insincere question with devastating divine truth. Then he went on the offensive to attack their underlying unbelief. It’s as if Jesus is saying “I can tell you that there is life after death because, you know what? I lived in heaven for a while, like from eternity! But since you guys don’t want to believe me, I will beat you at your own game. You say—you say that you believe what Moses wrote.” (Which is what they said they believed. The Sadducees accepted the first five books of the Bible, the so-called books of Moses, as authoritative. They downplayed the rest of the Old Testament.) So Jesus stepped up and said, “If you really mean that, then why don’t you believe what Moses wrote: ***‘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.’*** *”* Jesus exposed their unbelief by confronting them with what they supposedly agreed was God’s word.

Don’t you love to see Jesus send our enemies running, sending the pumpkin smashers packing! It’s an echo from years earlier. Think back to the beginning, to Jesus rising out of the baptismal waters of the Jordan River, then led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where he was tempted for forty days. There Satan tempted him, even as these Sadducees, twisting the Word of God to say what it didn’t say. There Jesus warded off every temptation with the Word of God. And here, just days before completing his mission on earth, we hear Jesus’ final challenge by people misquoting the Bible. Again he defeats them using the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

As we live and reach for the goal of eternal life, we are challenged by those who think it great fun to smash our faith to pieces. The best thing we can be strengthened with is the very thing Jesus used to defeat his spiritual enemies: God’s Word. We need to gather round, to hear, to be strengthened by the truth. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit fights the battles out there in the world and in here in our hearts!

To truly let the power of God’s Word loose in our hearts, we have to stop misplacing our priorities. We need to keep in check our pursuit of wealth and stuff and social media and gaming induced dopamine. Make God and his word your priority. Put aside time for him every day, and a chunk of time every week. This is the only place you are going to get 100% reliable information about God and you and eternity. In God’s Word the victory is a certainty, and God has counted you worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead.

That is our joy. A joy won by Jesus, a joy defended by God’s Word. Amen.

Isn’t that your joy, my joy, when we read our Bibles, when we read our devotions. We hear the word of God and pick up something that answers a question in our lives. and we you get to the end and you say, “Well said!” That joy that God has revealed his truth so clearly lifts up your faith like you are holding a beach ball in swimming pool. You feel weightless, lifted by some other mysterious power.

In our reading, in Jesus’ last week before completing his mission to save us from our sins, he ends as he began.

Stop listening to the haters of Jesus, to the rationalists who insist that there can’t possibly be a god out there, to the pagan who says “You Christians have your god, but the Hindus and Muslims have theirs.” Listen to God’s Word. Let the Holy Spirit fight the battles out there and in your heart!

I don’t know. I’d guess their only thought was, “Sure was fun to smash it!”

Shame on the child who doubts that her loving parents have her best interest in mind. Jesus hints at the wonderful nature of what God has prepared for our eternity.

And one of the Pharisees, you know the other religious faction waging a cold war against Jesus, Pharisees were just as anti-Sadducee as they were anti-Jesus. The Pharisees *did* believe in the resurrection. The very next sentence after our reading, that Pharisee when heard Jesus prove the resurrection, he burst out, “Well said, teacher!”

that everyone believed in God, in heaven and hell, in all that religious stuff until the last one or two hundred years when we finally got “scientific” and “sophisticated” enough to know that those things just can’t be true.

Convinced of our Savior’s concern and love, what then happens is that we listen to every word the Scriptures have to say about our eternal homes, and we listen with wide-eyed wonder, not cross-armed doubts.

POSSIBLE CHILDREN’S SERMON

Prop:  
Truth:

Message: