**11/6/22**

**Thinking Inside of a Box**

**Luke 20:27-38**

Last Sunday we discussed the Reformation and Luther’s very role in it. We learned about his intent to sharpen the focus of the church while refocusing it back on the Word of God. He said, “In short, I will preach it, teach it, write it, but I will constrain no one by force, for faith must come freely without compulsion.” (4) We were also reminded of the fact that he had no interest in creating a new movement or church. Then, we reviewed Zacchaeus’ transformation from Chief Tax Collector to a model of discipleship. This man of small stature climbed that sycamore tree to seek out who Jesus was. His very willingness to let go of his status, and not allow his ego to limit his opportunities, brought about a change that would be such a significant impact on his life, and the lives of others.

This week we honor our Saints that have passed on this past year. Yes, we miss them, and we have fond memories. No day goes by where it is easier without them for sure. However, we try and live out their honor and their legacy.

With that being said we also move into a very confusing Gospel Reading in my mind. Not understanding life after death from this ball of mud is something we will only get to experience all of the wonder and glory of first hand when we arrive. In an effort to continually challenge Jesus the Sadducees threw a lot of trickery in the mix. “They formulate the convoluted case of a serial widow who marries a succession of seven brothers.” (1) However, I am not too sure they realized who they were fooling with. Jesus responds in a way most of us might not have had the capacity or tenacity to do. By the end of the reading “Jesus responds by teaching about God to whom all are alive and in whom all relationships are fulfilled.” (1)

Now, their trickery may have very well been directed due to their disbelief in the resurrection of the dead. “Because of their limited view of the Scriptures and their disregard for the ensuing theological development of Israel that developed over the years, the Sadducees view of life was very pessimistic and joyless. They did not believe in the hope of resurrection, a concept that developed in the theology of Israel two hundred years prior to the birth of Christ, or any kind of positive life beyond their earthly existence. To them, when a person died, their soul went to Sheol, a placed deeply imbedded in the earth, where at best, you lived a diminished sort of life.” (3) Now, Sheol does not sound like a very exciting place to me… How about you?!?! So, one might ask why such a place was conceived or even thought of, and why such limited hope was even present. There is no honor legacy in a diminished sort of life like this. It just goes to show without grace and belief in all aspects of the faith you get a very limited perspective.

We can also take a look at things from a viewpoint that some of the Sadducees state of mind could have just been their continued jealousy or feelings of contempt for Jesus too. For example, “The Sadducees… found many of the actions of Jesus to be unorthodox and in violation of the law. To them, Jesus defiled himself with his frequent association with known sinners, social outcasts, and tax collectors. And Jesus openly broke the law by allowing his disciples to eat with unwashed hands, and when Jesus healed a man of his sickness on the Sabbath, he had blatantly snubbed for disregarding the sacred laws of their faith.” (3) These man made laws were that which Jesus showed did not really exist. Care and love for others was paramount, and there was no excuse for not being a loving and caring person no matter the so-called rules or consequences. His actions would continually make any ruler unhappy, and their lack of control would leave them very displeased and angry. So, in long and short, Jesus liked to stir the pot, and thank God for that!

However, we come to any conclusion on the situation at hand it completely amazes me how they, and we ourselves, all too often feel the need to put things in a box. We feel the need to limit things. Furthermore, we feel the need to disprove things. Do we do this to feel more comfortable, or do we do this because we only have a limited capacity to understand? Well, the answer is very simple in my mind. We think in a very finite way when we need to be exploring and allowing for more of an infinite perspective. We need to allow our inner-childlike faith to come back out, and allow for the possible in what we deem impossible.

Whether we are talking about the Trinity in Lutheranism 101, or talking about this woman here in our story today. We manage to focus on one point, and sometimes one point only. That point all too often is the wrong point as well. Our lack of foresight or hindsight at times can be very damaging to our learning and growth.

We are reminded that she married seven brothers following the rules and the customs set forth. Now, mind you she did that so that she could bear a child to continue carrying on the lineage or heritage of that family. Unfortunately, things did not work out and no child was conceived. So, instead of having compassion for the woman in our story, and lifting her up for following the laws and customs set forth, she is instead to be made out to be some kind of wicked person. Furthermore, the question is proposed by the Sadducees regarding whose wife she will be in the afterlife. We are reminded that, “Since all seven married the widow and died without siring a child, none could be considered her “real” husband, at least in terms of having begotten an heir.” (2) This is also where we are reminded that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and to even make things worse they lacked insight in their very own teachings. The Sadducees tried to mock Jesus, and they tried to trick him. However, their focus was so limited that they forgot there was indeed a bigger picture. Jesus does not hesitate, and he reminds them of this bigger picture, as he paints a better understanding of things for all of us. Jesus rears up as he classically does.

This is the point where we hold onto our seats. This is where the movie or the game gets interesting. We move into that big fight scene, or we move into overtime or extra innings. So, grab your popcorn, sit back, and enjoy the show and the majesty of how Jesus schools the Sadducees in a respectful and not demeaning way.

“Jesus speaks first of the condition of this present life. Marriage and procreation are necessary for the continuation of the human race, for “children of this age” to continue in being.” (2) Furthermore, “God instituted marriage as a means to help us experience and support one another as we seek to live our lives growing and understanding what his redeeming grace and love is all about.” (3) “In answering their trick question Jesus…. used the ruse to teach a more profound truth than the specific issue his opponents were concerned with.” (2) “Jesus says there is a sharp difference between life as we know it here on earth and life in eternity.” (2)

“In verse thirty-seven, that the dead will rise even Moses made known: Now Jesus does to the Sadducees what he always did to the Pharisees when they tried to trap him. He argues with them on their terms and out-argues them. He uses the Passage from Exodus 3:6 and the scene of the burning bush to point out to them that there is, indeed, scriptural basis for belief in the resurrection from the dead. It is significant that he quotes from the Pentateuch because these first five books were the only ones the Sadducees recognized as revelation. Jesus has just pointed out to them that they had wrongly assumed that earthly conditions, such as marriage, would persist into the next world or eternal dimension. He now shows them that the resurrection is implied in Exodus 3:6. Long after the deaths of the patriarchs -Abraham, Isaac and Jacob- God, appearing to and speaking to Moses, could still speak of himself as their God. Thus they must either still be alive in some way or can confidently expect to be raised by him from the dead. The Sadducees did not understand their own scripture wherein Moses himself revealed the fact of the resurrection.” (2)

“In other words, they were interpreting heaven from the viewpoint of earth. Jesus, on the other hand, was teaching that we must interpret earth from the viewpoint of heaven. They had their perspective backwards.” (2) “Thus Jesus teaches us that even from the beginning of Scripture, God has planted the message that he is the God of the living. And throughout the history of the Scriptures, both in the Old and the New Testaments, his word has consisted as both his law for our lives, which more often than not, convicts us of our sins rather than to direct us in how we live our lives. But the Scriptures also assure us of God’s redeeming grace, the forgiveness of our sins, and the hope of life eternal in God’s heavenly kingdom, through Christ’s atoning death for our sins, and his victorious resurrection. For that is the proof of God’s love.” (3)

Again I urge you to get away from small minded thinking. Don’t feel the urge to have to put things into a box to make things comfortable, or easier for you to understand. You are allowed to be confused, and you are allowed to constantly hunger for more and more knowledge. As we live our lives in the glory and honor of our Father, we also pay respect and homage to those that have passed before us as we create our own legacy. Don’t be tricked or fooled by anyone! For it is ‘sad you see’ if we lose sight on knowing who we are, and whose we are!

AMEN

**References**

(1) SundaysandSeasons.com

Sunday, November 6

Lectionary 32, Year C

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

or All Saints Sunday

(2) "We Are Children Of The Resurrection.”

Contributed by Dr. Jerry Morrissey on Nov 1, 2001

Scripture: Luke 20:27-40

Denomination: Lutheran

(3) Jesus Answers Even The Trick Questions.

Contributed by Ronald Harbaugh on Nov 10, 2007

Scripture: Luke 20:27-38

Denomination: Lutheran

(4) Living Lutheran

Reformation 500: 50 Reformation quotes

By John Potter, Rod Boriack

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**Luke 20:27-38**

Some Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, try to trap Jesus. They formulate the convoluted case of a serial widow who marries a succession of seven brothers. Jesus responds by teaching about God to whom all are alive and in whom all relationships are fulfilled.

27Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to [Jesus] 28and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. 29Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; 30then the second 31and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. 32Finally the woman also died. 33In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.”

 34Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; 35but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. 36Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. 37And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”