

November 6, 2022

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 20:27-38 or Luke 20:27:34-38 (*the italicized*)

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, 'if someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman but died childless. Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be? For all seven had been married to her."

Jesus said to them, "The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise. That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called 'Lord' the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

Background:

In the gospel for last week, Luke described Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. That text concludes, "...for the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost (Luke 19:10). Much transpires as Luke's gospel continues from that point. Luke next relates Jesus' telling of the parable of nobleman who was going off to claim his kingship over the land. He distributed ten gold coins to his servants to use them on his behalf while he was gone (Luke 19:11-27). Luke says that Jesus told this parable because he was near Jerusalem and people were thinking that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately. Following that parable, Luke tells of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Once Jesus arrives in the holy city, he welcomes the crowds, weeps for the city, and drives out from the temple those engaged in trading, he is questioned by the chief priests about his authority, tells the story about tenant farmers, and finally is questioned about the emperor's right to tax the Jews. Within these verses are several key statements: After Jesus expels those engaged in trading in the temple, Luke tells his readers, "...The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people, meanwhile, were seeking to put him to death..." (Luke 19:47). Then relating Jesus' parable of the tenant farmer, Luke concludes with, "The scribes and chief priests sought to lay their hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people..." (Luke 20:10). This is how Luke has set the stage for this Sunday's gospel.

The Sadducees controlled the temple. They were a conservative group within the Hebrew tradition who relied only on the written Torah. They rejected oral tradition and any later writings that many other Jews of the day included as guidance for their lives. Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees accepted the oral tradition of the interpretation of the Torah. They also believed in life after death, which was a new religious concept. Because the Sadducees did not believe in life after death, having children was an important way to extend one's life beyond death. Their understanding is reflected in Deuteronomy 25:5-10:

5 "When brothers live together and one of them dies without a son, the widow of the deceased shall not marry anyone outside the family; but her husband's brother shall go to her and perform the duty of a brother-in-law by marrying her. 6 The first-born son she bears shall continue the line of the deceased brother that his name may not be blotted out from Israel. 7 If, however, a man does not care to marry his brother's wife, she shall go up to the elders at the gate and declare, 'My brother-in-law does not intend to perform his duty toward me and refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel.' 8 Thereupon the elders of his city shall summon him and admonish him. If he persists in saying, 'I am not willing to marry her,' 9 his sister-in-law, in the presence of the elders, shall go up to him and strip his sandal from his foot and spit in his face, saying publicly, 'This is how one should be treated who will not build up his brother's family!' 10 And his lineage shall be spoken of in Israel as 'the family of the man stripped of his sandal.'

This issue of a brother marrying the wife of his brother was very real for people of the day. It was also linked to the much deeper issue about how one's life continues after death. Our text is using the question of marriage and life after death to ask the questions about belief in the resurrection and, more importantly, the role of Jesus as one through whom God is revealing His relationship to the people.

Reflection Questions:

1. How did you celebrate Halloween, the Feast of all Saints, and All Souls? Does how you observed these days reveal to you anything about your attitudes toward life after death?
2. Is it important for you that "something of you" goes on after you have died?
3. Do you believe in life after death? Do you have questions about what life after death will be like?
4. Have these questions ever changed for you? Why?
5. In eternal life, do you think you will have a relationship with your own body, or with people you loved, or with those you may have offended? Will you have a relationship with creation?
6. Do you think you will be surprised by who is in heaven, or by who may not be there?
7. How do you think your relationships with people will differ in eternal life? Will those relationships be transformed into something new, healed and made whole by the power of God, or will God give you the ability, the desire, and the grace to engage in reconciliation?
8. Is there a part of you that would rather not think about life after death?
9. Can you take some time to talk with God about your own thoughts, fears, and/or questions about your life after death?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for November 10, 2019, the Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Seven brothers were tortured by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of God's law. One of them said: "We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." At the point of death, the second said: "You fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying." When the third suffered their cruelty, he put out his tongue when told to do so, and bravely held out his hands, as he said: "It was from Heaven that I received these; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again." The king and his attendants marveled at his courage, because he regarded his sufferings as nothing. When the fourth brother was near death, he said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up by Him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.

O Lord, attend to my outcry; hearken to my prayer. My steps have been steadfast in your paths, my feet have not faltered. I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my word. Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. But I in justice shall behold your face; on waking I shall be content in your presence.

May Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has given us encouragement and hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word.

Pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people, for not all have faith.

But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

We are confident that what we instruct you, you are doing and will continue to do.

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ.

Some Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and said to Jesus,

“Moses wrote for us, If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.

Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman but died childless.

Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless.

Finally the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be?”

Jesus said to them, “The children of this age marry and remarry;

but those who are deemed worthy of the resurrection neither marry nor are given in marriage.

They can no longer die, for they are like angels; they are the children of God, the ones who will rise.

That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush,

when he called out ‘Lord,’ the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;

and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”

Excerpts from 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14; Psalm 17; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5; and Luke 20:27-38

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for November 6th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the gospel from Luke, some Sadducees question Jesus about the resurrection of the dead. If a woman marries after her husband dies, seven times, so that she has been married to seven brothers, which brother will be her husband at the resurrection? Jesus tells them there will be no marrying in the coming age. "They can no longer die, they are like angels; they are the children of God, the ones who rise."

The other readings also have similarities to the gospel, including references to God saving believers to eternal life by their faith. In the first reading from 2 Maccabees, seven brothers endure torture to the death, one after another, rather than violate God's law. They tell the king who persecutes them, "You are depriving us of this present life. The King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. But for you there will be no resurrection to life." Psalm 17 proclaims, "Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full. In justice I shall behold your face; I shall be content in your presence." In the second reading, from the second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "God has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement and hope. Not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will guard you from the evil one."

Joe