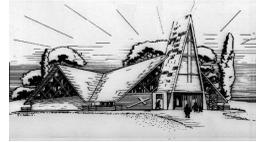




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Third Last Sunday

God is not God of the dead!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 20, 27-40:

- **ESV 27** And some of the Sadducees, having come to him—those saying there is no resurrection—they asked him,
- **28** saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us, ‘If someone’s brother should die, having a wife, and this one should be childless, that his brother should take the wife and raise up seed for his brother.’
- **29** Now there were seven brothers. And the first, taking a wife, died childless.
- **30** And the second **31** and the third took her, likewise also the seven did not leave children and died.
- **32** Finally, also the woman died.
- **33** The woman, therefore, in the resurrection, becomes the wife of which of them? For the seven had her as wife.”
- **34** And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this present age marry and are given in marriage,
- **35** but the ones deemed worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection out of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.
- **36** For they also are not able to die anymore, for they are equal to angels and they are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.
- **37** But that the dead are raised—even Moses made known in [the pericope] of the bush, when he says, ‘The Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’
- **38** Now God is not of the dead but of the living, for all are living in him.”
- **39** And some of the scribes, answering, said, “Teacher, you have spoken well.”
- **40** For they no longer were daring to ask him anything.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts for the comforting message, fact and wisdom of the Resurrection from the death! Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

• Something very extraordinary is revealed to us today, in this Word. *There is no death in God!* God is not connected with the dead! Death cannot be where God is! God is only connected with Life! There is no darkness in God! So, we have to change our tune, we have to watch what we say, we have to rethink what we assume when we say my dead father, husband, wife, son or daughter are with God!

- There are only two possibilities: People who are really dead- that is, removed from Life- *cannot be with God!* If however our loved ones are with God, *they cannot be dead! They have to be alive!*
- Now, of course, I do understand, what we mean when we say they are dead or have passed away is, we refer to their bodies- they are not here with us anymore. That is sad for us. It is not a pleasant experience at all. To have to say goodbye, especially when it is for a long time- we do miss our loved ones- and we may, but, we must be careful, that we do not slip into this idea of the Sadducees that there is no resurrection of the dead!
- The Sadducees of all times deny the resurrection of the dead and our old Adam is a born Sadducee! Now the chief priests of the Sanhedrin came from this party, the Sadducees. They claimed as their ancestor the high priest under David, Zadok. “Sadducee” means “Zadokite”. The party also included laypeople. They held to the written code of the Five Books of Moses, especially the Law. They were theologically opposed to the views of the Pharisees regarding the oral law. This is the only time that the Sadducees feature in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus’ main enemies were the Pharisees, who were the scribes of the Sanhedrin. Jesus warned His disciples against the hypocrisy of the pharisaic scribes.
- So, now we can understand why Jesus took a Scripture passage from Exodus to prove that the very Scriptures they claim to know so well speak against them. The story of the burning bush clearly teaches and confirms the Resurrection of the dead. God introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob. God is not God of the dead. Therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must be alive!
- And then Jesus gives us a little peep into the Life after the Resurrection. The sons of the Resurrection will not marry or get married in the new Creation. Procreation will not happen anymore. (This is by the way the opposite of what the Islamic warriors expect to find in their heaven, as they hope to each receive 70 virgins!)
- All those who are counted as being worthy, by God’s judgement, to participate in that new age, will be like angels, says Jesus. They are sons of God, that is, heirs of His promise! They are sons of the resurrection!

- These are some mighty wonderful promises Jesus taught very close before His suffering and dying on the Cross. Through His Crucifixion the Great Reversal will become effective! Jesus is the guarantee that all of this not only is true, but is fulfilled!
- Those who now die to sin, those who realise that they are not worthy to be sons of God, those who humble themselves will receive this LIFE in the truest sense of the word, as a gift from God.
- Those who die as children of God are not dead, as in removed from Life. The opposite is true: they are alive in Christ. As Paul writes, they are asleep in Christ. In other words when a disciple of Christ dies he is safe and sound in God's hands. In fact death has lost its power over him or her forever! Although the body of that person is dead in the grave, the person as such is alive in God!
- Dear congregation, we don't need the books on near death experiences (NDE's), which at best are speculation. Here we have a Word from the Lord who lives that life already.
- Life in the age of Resurrection will be quite different to what we experience here on earth. Yet, it will be a Life in our resurrected bodies. It won't be a bodyless existence. It will be Life without death, completely separated from death. We won't be able to die anymore!
- Sickness, body ailments, sufferings, worries, credit cards, car accidents, unruly politicians and all evil within me will be of the past. One thing is certain, it will be good! We will never regret it!
- It is comforting to hear this good news from the new world. We need it, especially as we have also heard what is going on in the world, in the Epistle Reading. It speaks of a great apostasy, a great falling away which needs to come before the Last Day will come.
- The man of lawlessness will be revealed it says. He will set himself up in God's temple, that is he will infiltrate Christianity! His coming will be in accord with the workings of Satan in all power, signs and false wonders. A massive deception will lead many astray- and now comes the clue of whom Paul is speaking here- because they did not receive the Love of the Truth onto salvation. They did not receive the Love of Christ and so be saved.

- The deception lies in teaching semi- or full works- righteousness! Those who receive the Love of Christ and live from the very Love He gave us, will be saved. Jesus went to the cross to be able to share His Love with us. Whoever rejects His Love, whoever thinks, I don't need His forgiveness, His body and His blood, His blessing, will become easy prey for the man of lawlessness.
- He certainly teaches the upliftment of the Self, and blinds people with all his signs and wonders, promises great experiences and feelings and how he will change the world and will bring peace amongst the nations.
- That is not where the Love of Christ is handed out. The Love of the Truth is poured out by the One who got crucified and now is alive to make us alive by His gifts, which are tied closely to His sacrifice on the Cross.
- Through suffering and affliction Christ's way heads to the crown. However, victory is certain, in Him. He has conquered death through death. His death is our Life. As you receive the Love of Christ, today, you may realise, that is who I am, child of God, son of the Resurrection. And that is why at funerals Christians should focus on what God has given their loved ones, because His gifts make us worthy to participate of God's Life! That is why we celebrate God's Life, God's Resurrection at our funerals, because if anyone is found to be worthy of eternal Life it is because God made that person worthy! And so we give Him all the honour and Glory and praise and pray to Him, that He will keep us amongst the people of His promise. **Amen.**
- *The Lord keep you always in this true Faith, in Jesus' name. Amen.*