

Speaker 1: [00:01](#) Well, I want to invite you to turn with me to Luke chapter 20 in the Pew pocket Bibles in front of you this morning there where we will find the lectionary text for this morning. And I was uh, came to the realization this week in preparing for this sermon that I have never in over 25 years of ministry preached on this text before. It is, as you will hear a bit of an interesting text. It raises all sorts of questions and it's one, two that needs a little bit of introduction to help set the context so we can fully understand what we're about to encounter where we pick up the story. In Luke's gospel, Jesus is already in Jerusalem just a few days before the Passover, which means it's just a few days before his arrest and eventual trial. In other words, Jesus, his time with us is coming to an end. Our time with Jesus is short and precious.

Speaker 1: [01:01](#) Now, you may remember that when he arrived in Jerusalem that that multitudes of people greeted him there. They waved Palm branches and they shouted. Bless of the here is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now we remember and re-enact that every year on Palm Sunday. And when he enters the city, he goes straight to the temple. You go straight to the temple, not to worship, not to pay homage, but to drive those who are selling sacrifices off of its premises and for the rest of the time there for the rest of his life. Essentially, he takes up residence in the temple teaching day in and day out while his opponents look for the opportunity and the means by which to kill him. Now, there was a group of Jews called the Sadducees and they were similar to but yet rivals of the Pharisees. And even though the Sadducees were rivals to the Pharisees, which was a, uh, another sect of religious leaders of the day, they were United, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees in their opposition to Jesus.

Speaker 1: [02:14](#) Now, the main difference though, between those two sacks were theological. The Sadducees you see recognized only the first five books of the Bible. What we oftentimes refer to as the Torah, the books of Moses as being authoritative. And because in the tour in those first five books of the Bible, it never mentions the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection. That's going to be an important part. So just hang on for just a minute. The Sadducees filled various social and political and religious roles, but most importantly they were the ones that maintained the temple. And remember that Jesus had just a scene in the temple. He had driven out the money changers and essentially attacking the sacrificial practices. And so no wonder they didn't like him. So like I said, they began to look for a reason and an opportunity to get rid of

him and then began by trying to goad him into an argument to try and discredit him, to get him to say something that is heretical.

Speaker 1: [03:25](#) And they do this by bringing up this law that comes from Deuteronomy 25 and that law takes issue with what is known as the lever, right marriage. Now the term from the Latin lever, which means brother-in-law, and this law sought to ensure the preservation of one's family names by stipulating get this, that a man should marry the childless widow of his brother. Are you with me? So if my brother's wife dies and they have no children, I am bound. I'm obligated to marry her and to care for her. Now trying to go to him into this argument, they ask him a hypothetical question that has to do with this law regarding level, right marriage.

Speaker 2: [04:16](#) Our gospel lesson two this morning is from Luke 20 verses 27 to 38 some Sadducees. Those who say there is no resurrection came to him and 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. Now there were seven brothers, the first married and died childless, and then the second and the third married her. And so in the same way, all seven died childless. Finally, the the woman also died in the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will be the womb? Will the woman be for the seven had married her? Jesus said to them, those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead, neither married nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore because they are like angels and are children of God being children of the resurrection. And 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. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living for to him, all of them are a lie here ends the reading the word

Speaker 1: [05:58](#) of God for the people of God. So do you see now why I have never preached on this text in 25 years of ministry? What is going on here? I have to be honest with you that I almost called in sick this morning, but I didn't think that would go over too well. So here are the Sadducees. One of the powerful parties in the Jewish religious hierarchy, these learned men who are members of the branch of Judaism that doesn't believe in resurrection. After [inaudible] death, they've wanted to trap Jesus. They think maybe they can get him to say something

heretical. And so they asked him this question about marriage and resurrection. If one of seven brothers marries this woman, he has no children, and then he dies. And as you know, they say the custom. The law was for one of his brothers to marry that widow to make sure that she's cared for. We all know this, right? And then the same thing happens to him. No children and death. Now all seven brothers married this widow in all met with the same fate. You guessed it, no children death. And this seven time widow eventually dies herself and now comes the perplexing question in heaven. Whose wife of the seven is she?

Speaker 1: [07:28](#)

Now Jesus reflects for a moment before answering. Now I have to say that if I were Jesus, I would have begun my answer by saying, you know, you would have thought by the time the fourth brother dies that the rest of them would've thought twice before marrying her. Now, I said that at the nine o'clock service and after the service someone come up and said, I just want to be clear, there's not a woman alive that would marry seven different men. It's hard enough to train just the one, but instead he reminds them that God is the God of the living and not the dead. He's basically saying our concern should be about the living and not the dead. Now, let me back up a little bit because I want to focus more on the Sadducees question more than Jesus's answer because here they are. They're standing before Jesus, the anointed one. Some thought that he was the next Moses. There were others that thought that he was Elijah and most most were coming to see and to believe that he was indeed the Messiah.

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That's the best question that they can ask. That's the best that they can do. Now there's an old Jewish saying that says, rake the muck this way. Rake the muck. That way it's still muck. Meanwhile, the saying says we could be stringing pearls for heaven. I love that rake the muck rake the muck, but it's still muck. Meanwhile, we could be stringing pearls for heaven. Isn't that great because we could be stringing pearls for heaven, but instead we are continually raking the muck. In other words, how much time do we spend? How much energy do we waste majoring in the minors, focusing on our attention on things that ultimately aren't that big of deal? How much of our energy and time and our efforts do we give to things, to questions that ultimately aren't that important? How much time do we spend playing word games?

Speaker 1: [10:00](#)

How much time do we waste staring at our phones instead of looking around and seeing the Christ that is right in front of us? I think all too often that we follow in the footsteps of the

Sadducees and we get caught up in silly questions and trivial issues and in theological debates on things that ultimately may not make that big a difference and in the process we miss out on the bigger message, the true meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, this summer I read a book by Sal Bello. It's a novel and I read it with my book group and thank God we got together at the end to talk about it because full transparency, I didn't get it. It's a classic. I didn't, it went right over my head. I don't know exactly what I was reading, but there was one part, there was one part where the main character said I had boasted how I had loved reality but unreality, unreality. That has been my scheme for a troubled life.

Speaker 1: [11:13](#)

I wonder, I wonder if we are honest with ourselves if that's not our scheme as well. We avoid the reality of questions that ultimately really matter and pay attention to things that don't call Bart. The great 20th century theologian once said, the Bible gives to every person and to every era answers to their questions as they deserve. We shall always find in it as much as we seek and no more we shall find in the Bible every answer to the question that we deserve and we find it as much as we seek, but yet no more. In other words, in other words, church, if if we ask small questions, we'll only get small answers. I think in some ways that are small questions or the one of the ways that we keep Jesus at arms length, it's one of the ways that we play trivial pursuit because maybe we're afraid that if we engage with Jesus, if we encounter the living Christ, that's going to cause us to change the way in which we live.

Speaker 1: [12:33](#)

It's going to require us to reformulate the way in which we see the world and it's just easier, isn't it? If we just stay the way we are, we do that with other people, don't we? I would say that we do almost all the time. We, we like to argue, we like to debate. We like to discriminate so that we know who's on our side. We like to surround ourselves with people who think like we do, who believe like we do, who cheer for the same team, who worship, who vote the same way that we do. In some ways it's part of the way that we keep ourselves safe because if we can surround ourselves with people that are just like us and if we can watch the news that reinforces our own biases, then we never need to be challenged. We never need to consider that. Maybe there's another way to look at things.

Speaker 1: [13:35](#)

Maybe even we may not be right now. It's pretty clear to me that Jesus has no time and the gospels for those who merely want to play games, Jesus has no patience for those who want to trick him or use him to prove how smart or righteous or

perfect they are. Usually those who waste his time, they don't come off very well either. In fact, if right after this exchange, if we were to keep reading a couple of verses that says, and they know no longer dare to ask him any more questions, but on the other hand, Jesus always had time for questions that are real. You always had time for those who were stringing pearls for heaven because it's those questions, those questions that are deep in our hearts that lead us into a deeper relationship with them. Jesus always had time for questions like, can you heal my child? I have a demon that torments me and I can't find any rest. Can you? Can you help me?

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I've lost my way in the circle of life. Can you, can you help bring me back, point me in the right direction. No one will come close to me because they say that I'm unclean and you really love someone like me. You see, when people offer these types of questions to Jesus, that the answer that he gives is not some silly slogan or soundbite. None of the answer that Jesus gives in those moments is himself and when the Sadducees and the Pharisees asked Jesus they're trick questions, they, they oftentimes would get parables, those stories that would leave them scratching their heads, that that puzzle their minds that invite them to look at the world in a new way. But when women and men bring Jesus their deepest yearnings, he doesn't just talk to them, engages with them. When genuine people come to him with genuine questions, he didn't.

Speaker 1: [15:53](#)

Oftentimes it didn't say anything. Instead, he would simply touch them, counter them, he would relate with them, and when he saw that they were sincere, they he would, he would invite them to journey with him. Now you've heard me say that the Latin root of the word question means to seek. It's where we get the word quest and to ask a real question, genuine, sincere, honest, heartfelt question is to enter on a journey. And yet Jesus gets exasperated with the Sadducees because they aren't willing to leave the station. They have no interest at all and seeing things a new way, they just want to play word games. It just want to stay right where they are believing right, what they believe. They may be right, they may be wrong, but the truth is they're just wasting their lives. They're just raking the muck. Do you remember real keys book letters to a young poet?

Speaker 1: [17:04](#)

Fascinating book. If you've not read it, I encourage you. There's, there's this aspiring poet from America who writes this famous poem, real key in Germany with questions about what it means to write poetry and they began a relationship, a connection.

They begin to be pen pals over the next five years and in one of his replies, one of the letters to the young poet, real key rights, love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a foreign language. Live the questions. Now, real key says, because perhaps then someday far in the future, you will gradually live your way into the answer. Love the questions now gradually you will live your way into the answer. Some of you remember Scott Cole, glacier senior ministry here a number of years ago.

Speaker 1: [18:05](#)

He said in one of his books, faith, authentic faith is not so much about collecting answers as it is discovering the essence of spiritual courage and maybe Christian should be defined not by what we know but by whom we know not by the answers that we can give, but by the questions we are courageous enough to ask our deepest questions. Don't have simple answers. Instead they are doors to walk through and that's why Jesus says I am the way because with him, through him we live our way into the answers we so desperately seek and so as a community the faith that lists among its core values, things like curiosity, vulnerability. Maybe we need to bring our deepest questions to Jesus. Questions for which we desperately want answers, questions like, does God love me as I am?

Speaker 1: [19:09](#)

Are we alone? Is the life that I am living the life that wants to live? You see the Sadducees, they can't ask these questions because they think they already know the answers, but real genuine, authentic questions are doorways to the journey towards new life. We bring these questions to Jesus because we believe that he is the way to new life that he invites us to see and to think of a new world, a world in which the old rules don't apply. Jesus was constantly inviting us to see the world in a new way. It's only invites the Sadducees to lay aside their simplistic questions and to think of a new world in which the living and the dead are connected. And in the same way Jesus invites us to set aside our simplistic questions that we tend to ask one another. Those questions that we ask each other.

Speaker 1: [20:24](#)

You see, we are living in a world, are we not? We are living in a time where we are more fragmented when we are more divided than in any other time in our memory and aren't we dying? Aren't we dying as a nation, as a culture for a new way of living, art our souls desperate for new way of moving in this world, a way in which the wholeness that God intends for our lives is truly known. It's truly discovered is truly experienced a way in which we are more connected with each other in a way in which we are more connected with the divine. And so church may we

lay aside our silly questions, our trivial pursuits may we live in to the questions that God may do a new thing in us and through us a new thing in this world.