

The Rev. Charlie Holt:

Let us pray, Heavenly Father, we thank you and bless you for the gift of your word. We ask that you would inspire and illumine our hearts in the knowledge and love of your son, Jesus. May the preaching of your word be your word for his glory. Amen. Please.

Thank you.

You've probably heard of the, I think it was a book or was it a movie, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers? Was that a book? It was a movie, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers? This is, the gospel passage is one bride for seven brothers.

It's a little more complex.

And Jesus is interacting with a group of people called Sadducees and they are a political party. Just like we have political parties, and, in our day, we have the Republicans and the Democrats and so on. Well, back then they had, they're named political parties as well. One of the things about politics and political ideology is it is always informed by both our personal, practical realities of the way our lives fit in to day-to-day life. But it is also connected up to our theological vision for the world.

And so, theology actually directly impacts politics.

It's not always just about practicalities.

And you see this, especially with the Sadducees, where they had a particular vision for the world and their vision was about this world only. In other words, they did not believe that there was any more after people died.

And that informed and instructed their ideology for politics. The Pharisees, for example, did have a view of the afterlife. They believed that there was more to come after death and that in that day, in the day of the resurrection, God would take and he would take all the injustices of this age and this world, and he would set them to rights. And so, their way of relating to the world and to the power structures that be was very different as Pharisees

than it was as Sadducees. And there were other political parties too. There were Herodians that were really compromises and in league with the Romans. And so, they were the Roman party. And then there were Essenes who just wanted to absent themselves from all society and went off into the desert and had their own way of looking at things.

And so, all of them interacted with Jesus and they had to come to grips with who is this one who is claiming to be God in the flesh and announcing that he is the Jewish Messiah.

And they were measuring him against their own political ideologies. And that's what you're reading about here with the Sadducees interacting with Jesus. And it explicitly says they do not believe in the resurrection. And this gets into their question with Jesus. They're gonna do and press in the media. They call them gotcha questions.

You know those where the media just kind of sets up a politician or some community leader and they ask him a question because they wanna get him and show some sound bite and make him look stupid or foolish. And so that's what they're trying to do with Jesus. They're trying to do a gotcha on him. So, they say, you believe in the law of Moses, right?

Yes, we got him. So, then they ask a question about a seemingly obscure law of Moses that has to do with the issue of primogenitor. Didn't know we were talking about that today, did you?

Primogenitor has to do with your estate and your inheritance.

And when you die without an heir,

and particularly without a male heir, then your family name and your family line can end.

And so, if you are living for this world and this life only,

then your legacy is very much wrapped up in your progeny, your children, and particularly the ones that are bearing your name. And so, you're passing on

your estate. Now the Sadducees were the aristocrats. They were the wealthy elites of that society during that day. And they liked the way things were. And they had control and they had power and they were very blessed in this life only. And they were very concerned about making sure that their wealth and their inheritance were passed on to the next line. And so, they paid attention to those laws in Moses where Moses said, "If one of your people dies "without a child, his wife should be married "to the next brother in line." And that brother becomes what was known as a kinsman redeemer. He would redeem the name of his brother by having children with that woman,

that wife to his brother's widow, and the family line could continue. So, they remind Jesus of the law and then they ask him this very strange scenario. So, the woman's married to the first brother and he dies without children and then the next one dies without children, and they make it really extreme. Seven men for one bride. Oh, my goodness.

It's like Henry VIII in reverse.

(Congregation Laughing)

And so, the question, and here's the gotcha question.

So, Jesus, you believe in all this resurrection from the dead stuff, and I think we're gonna really mess them up here with this.

Whose wife will she be in the resurrection? She's had seven husbands, so which one of the husbands does she going to belong to if you believe in this resurrection stuff? Now we've got them.

It's called *reductio absurdum* is the logical argument which is we're gonna make a fool out of you by the way that you're gonna have to answer this logical dilemma.

And Jesus replies in a way that really unlocks their bad ideology which is leading to their political position actually.

I wanna give an example from myself personally about a sadducean way of looking at life.

My grandfather, I've told you about him before, he was an atheist and, on his deathbed, this is the part I shared with you before, is I had asked him whether he was afraid of dying and he said no, I'm not afraid of dying. And then I thought well maybe he's given his life to the Lord and he's looking forward to dying and so I followed up with the next question, pop are you looking forward to dying? And he said no, there's no future in it. And that's atheist humor by the way. And my grandfather was always a jokester even on his deathbed, he was a jokester and that was his way of dealing with death. He's like it ends, as soon as your life is over it ends. Well he had a vision for his family that was very much a sadducean kind of way of looking at things where he had a house on Kingsley Lake, it was right on the lake, it was a nice piece of property and so over time towards the end of his life he had acquired property on both sides of the road leading up to that particular homestead. And he had five children and my aunts and uncles and my mother and his desire was is that everybody would inherit these pieces of property and they would build homes for generations along this road and all have access to Kingsley Lake

as a great big, glorious family compound.

And from a utopian way of looking at things this sounds really wonderful, I mean you could totally see how he could have that vision and this is the way that he would pass on his legacy and all of his hard work of his life was through doing this thing that would have family perpetuity for all on end. But the problem with utopian visions, and this is true not just of sadducees but anyone who has a utopian vision about this world only is it doesn't take into account human sin.

And my family is just as sinful as y'all's families are and when it came time for the inheritance and all of that vision to take place, it all fell apart as it so often does when anybody tries to do these kinds of things. And the reason why is because people are selfish

and we have ways of interacting that are representative of our sin nature and the fall.

And so, a utopian vision is very hard to accomplish in this life only. And this is what Jesus is getting at with the sadducees.

He says, sorry.

He says, "Those in this age marry and are given in marriage.

But in the age to come,

things are gonna be ordered differently.

And if we will orient our lives toward the resurrection, we won't be relating to one another in marital relationships. We will be relating to one another like the angels do. And there's a reason why, because we will not die.

We will be living as sons of God, children of the resurrection."

And here is a fundamental challenge to all of us.

How are, how, I'll make it personal and then I'll point my fingers at you. How am I living my life?

Am I living my life for this world only? Am I building up my own kingdom and my own legacy and my own heritage?

And or am I oriented towards eternal life

and the resurrected life? Do I place all of my eggs and all of my value in this one basket of this life only?

Or do I see the weight of glory and the value of the resurrection and find my identity as a son of God and a son of the resurrection?

This is the mirror that Jesus is putting up in front of the face of the Sadducees.

And of course, they don't like to hear it because they're invested in their, this world only way of living and their political ideology.

But nevertheless, Jesus puts the mirror up and challenges not just them, but all of us to ask ourselves the question, where are we investing our sense of worth and our sense of value? And part of what he's getting at with the Sadducees, and this is why they were Sad, you see,

I just had to throw that in there for Keith Dahl. He loves these kind of dad jokes. He loves the groaners, I know he does.

But if you put so much weight in things like marriage,

your inheritance, your legacy in this world and this life,

inevitably you will meet heartache and disappointment because the things of this age are temporary and they're finite and they are fallible and very often tainted by the corruption of human sin. And they cannot bear the weight of that type of faith and commitment.

And this is what Jesus is hoping and trying to get across to those of us who call ourselves his disciples.

Is that the value, the worth, the glory is not in that which is temporary and finite and limited.

as wonderful as it can be. And there are so many wonderful things about things like marriage and children and building up a family and a home and a community. I mean, what my grandfather was trying to do was a place to create wonderful memories for his family. It was a glorious dream and a wonderful vision. And I don't think there's anything bad about any of it, but it couldn't bear the weight that he had put in it to be the thing that would carry his legacy. It couldn't bear the weight to carry his progeny, his name.

No, only the resurrected life can do that, and only our faith and our hope and our trust in the Lord. And so, you know, again, where do I put my value? But the question is, where do you? Where is your heart? Are you living only for this life only? Or have you placed your hope and your faith in the age to come as well? Amen.