

The Rev. Charlie Holt:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Word, and we ask that Your Holy Spirit would illumine our hearts and our minds and the knowledge and love of Your Son, Jesus. May the preaching of Your Word be Your Word for His glory and sake. In Jesus' name, amen. Please.

Well, this is one of the more complex gospel passages to preach. I actually enjoy teaching on this one more than I enjoy preaching on it. It's a, you know, what was the movie, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers? This is One Bride for Seven Brothers.

And it's really dealing actually with the politics of Jesus' day.

Just like we have political parties, Republicans, Democrats, Green Party, socialists, what, we got a bunch of different labels and party affiliations that people align themselves with. But many of these political parties, or all of them I should say, really break down to different visions for the world.

And they fundamentally come down to philosophy and theology. One of the reasons why maybe some of your friends of a different political persuasion make absolutely no sense to you, which is often the case when we think about those who

disagree with us politically, is because they actually see the world differently. They have a different vision. They have a different philosophy. They have a different theology. Well, back in Jesus' day, you had exactly the same thing taking place. You had different political parties that Jesus was interacting with, and we're interacting with Him. So, you had Sadducees, who were very sad, you see.

I'm trying to wake you up.

I'm trying to throw in a dad joke every now and then. But Sadducees, you had the Pharisees, and you had the Herodians, and you had the Essenes, and there were a bunch of different factions and political parties. And all of them had different visions for reality. And essentially, what is God doing in this

world? What is my hope in? What's wrong with the world? How does it get fixed? All of these big first-order questions really were formed and shaped by theological understandings and visions. So, the Sadducees were the elite aristocracy of that day. They were a people that had control and had power in Jerusalem and in the temple arena.

And so, they had a theology that was actually very much informed by that reality in their lives. They put more stock in and hope in this world only, and were very much about preserving their legacy, their control, their power for this life. And so, for them, the vision was all about passing on inherited power, inherited status, and inherited wealth.

The Pharisees were out of power and out of control of the governing parties and officials. And so, they put more hope in the resurrection and the age to come, and that God would one day come and He would set things to rights, and He would take what is currently out of order and upside down and disorganize it and put it in a better, more just, order society. And so, two different visions of reality based on, in a lot of ways, what was going on in their lives in the present.

So, the Sadducees come to Jesus, and they ask Him a question, and it's based in their political philosophy that there is no resurrection, there's no life beyond this life.

And they bring up the whole subject of what is called primogenitor, which is, it's very important for you to have a son.

It's a very patriarchal society back then, and it's a little bit that way even in our day, but it's important to have a son and that that son would carry on the family name and that you would pass on the inheritance and your status and your authority and your power and so on to the son. And so Moses, in the days of old, in his law, Deuteronomy, had a commandment that if a woman married a brother and that brother died without having a child, in order to preserve primogenitor, in order to preserve the family line and the family estate, her brother, his brother was to marry that woman so that, in a sense, he could be a surrogate and help pass on the family line by having children

with her. And so here the Sadducees come to their stumper for Jesus. They're really going to get them.

And what their aim is to actually disprove the resurrection. They want to set that aside.

And so, they ask him this question. They say, "Okay, say there was a woman and she married a brother. He died childless, and then she marries his brother, and then the next brother, and the next brother, all the way to seven brothers.

And they all died childless.

So, here's the reductio ad absurdum is what they're arguing is. They're trying to make a fool out of the concept of the resurrected life.

It's going to be so complex. So, whose wife is this woman going to be in the resurrection? She's going to have seven men that think that she's, their wife.

That's why we can't have resurrection is because it's going to be very complex for these kinds of situations.

And they think that they've got them. Oh, we've got them. Now I want to try to make this a little more applicable to our day by telling a family story from my own family. My grandfather, I've shared this before, was not a believer in God or the future or resurrection.

And he, on his deathbed, was the one who said, I asked him, "Are you looking forward to dying papa?" And he says, "No, there's no future in it," which is kind of atheistic humor, which is not very funny to me, but that was his joke at the end of his life.

And one of the things that he had as a vision for his family is he owned a piece of property, beautiful piece of property on Kingsley Lake. And so, over the end of his life, he had purchased all up and down the road, all the land that was on both sides of the road that led to that piece of property.

And he had five children, and his dream was is that his legacy would be passed on to his family by each one of the heirs getting a section of that real estate, and they would all build family houses there, and it would become this wonderful utopian family complex.

The problem with his philosophy was he did not take into account human sin.

And this is one of the, this is always the problem with utopian philosophies that place way too much weight in this life only.

Is that human relationships, because of sin, will inevitably break down.

They will fall apart. And it's very difficult to pass on large estates like that, because more often than not, the heirs will fight over the resources of the estate, and it's human nature. Not to say, "My relatives are any worse than any of your relatives."

It's just human nature.

And so, part of what Jesus is getting at is that there is more, that our hope is not in this life only. And so, he describes two different ages in his answer to the Pharisees. He says, "In this age, people do get married, and they live their life in that sense."

And so, that's the way that the sons of this age relate to one another. Not saying that's a bad thing at all but just saying that is the order and the reality of this age. But in the age to come, the age of the resurrection, there will be no marriage and giving in marriage. Why?

Because there's no more death.

And so, in that age, we will relate to one another differently than we do in this age. We will relate to one another as angels do who do not die.

And so, the question becomes irrelevant, and Jesus, in a sense, is setting aside their reductio absurdum argument.

Think about that with respect to marriage a little bit.

Marriage is a sacrament of this age, and it has very important purposes. We had a blessing of a marriage last night where we talked about some of those purposes that it's given by God, instituted by God as a way of creating mutual joy in each other's lives, of being a support and help to one another in this crazy and sinful and broken and fallen world with a lot of challenges and difficulties. And so, we make vows that say, "Better and worse, richer for poor, sickness and in health." And so, marriage has really strong societal preservation role.

It has a purpose of procreation. It's through marriage that more children are being brought into the world who are made in the image of God, and so we're replicating the image of God around the planet as we are being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth and subduing it as the way that the Lord puts it.

But when the age to come arrives, marriage will no longer have any of those purposes. It will no longer be relevant for that.

And so, what is temporary for this age will be set aside because in that age, we won't need to be creating new people and having mutual support and help for one another in prosperity and adversity because there won't be any more adversity. There will be no more pain or suffering or death.

And it's hard for us to fathom that, but what Jesus is challenging us to do is to not live for this world only and to not put so much pressure on the relationships that we have, whether those be our marriages or our inheritances and the legacies that we're trying to build up in this worldly world, but to trust that there's a larger vision, a larger plan for what God is doing with us and with creation.

And in many ways, it's actually in orienting ourselves to the age to come and the resurrection and the resurrected life that we find that we are much more valuable than all the things we put so much stock and weight in in this life and in this world. The way Jesus puts it, He says, "In the age to come, we will be sons of God. We will be children of God. We will be sons of the

resurrection, children of the resurrection." In other words, our inheritance, our value, our worth, our dignity, our significance doesn't come because we inherited a piece of property on Kingsley Lake, as wonderful as that is. That was a beautiful vision that my grandfather had. I don't want to make it sound like it was bad. It was a good thing.

But it was penultimate, not ultimate. It was a sign of what heaven could be like if that vision could have materialized, but this world can't bear heaven's weight. It can't bear the resurrected authority and power and glory of eternity. And so, orient your life toward that which is of true value and true worth and true dignity of being a child of the resurrection, a child of God. This is what the Lord is getting at.