

Resurrection resurrected? - Shawn Evelyn 11.10.19

Where do we begin. Today's Gospel brings a lot to us but to lay a foundation to it all, I would have to say, Happy week after All Saints. When we look at what All Saints represents, in remembering those Saints who have gone before us, knowing that they are always with us, and knowing that we will join them and when we do we are made whole, and understanding this is the gift of resurrection, because in resurrection, no one ever really dies. Understanding that this Gospel is addressing the topic of resurrection, is key for us. Also, what is important is how we interpret the law.

Before I go forward, I want to say that we should all follow the law. If you go out and get arrested for something because you heard a sermon from Shawn at St. Paul and the Redeemer saying "I can do what I want," I will refuse to pay your bail and deny it wholeheartedly. How we interpret the law does not mean we discern and rationalize what we feel should be followed. But let me shed some light on the magic that is Illinois. In Decatur Illinois, it is illegal to drive a car without a steering wheel, In Galesburg Illinois, it is illegal to keep a smelly dog, in Keniworth Illinois, a rooster must step back 300 ft. from any residence if he wishes to crow, Mispronouncing Joliet is a misdemeanor in Joliet, and my favorite, in Chicago, it is forbidden to fish while sitting on the neck of a giraffe. Let me remind you, I am not telling you what laws to follow and what laws not to follow, I am also not picking on Illinois, every place that has people have laws that sound as funny.

Here's another knee slapper, 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; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally, the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her." This maybe the funniest law heard today. But, in context, this law was made as a way to take care of widows who generally had little rights and were not afforded to live without hardship. This law, found in

Deuteronomy, 25.5-10, attempted to make things easier for them. Let us not pass up the fact that this law is antiquated, and had its place in context even if we may not agree with it.

Marriage has come a long way, and it is wrong to think of anyone as property. If someone is married and is widowed they are free to choose what to do with their life and that is even if someone wishes to marry at all.

Let's keep in mind, this is all a joke. The laws that we heard and this overly complicated marriage scenario is a test for Jesus by the Saducees. Here in Luke Jesus is doing big things in Jerusalem, garnering a lot of attention, teaching with authority, and he is having his authority questioned not by the Pharisees, but the Saducees who are the more conservative group who lives strictly by the Pentateuch, the Torah, or as we know it, the first 5 books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. With that said, there is no direct mention of resurrection in those texts, so they tried to create an academic argument where they would make Jesus look like a fool. They came into the conversation not knowing or believing in resurrection already and to them what they thought Jesus was teaching about was immortality.

They are right about one thing, there is no such thing as immortality, what they failed to realize is that resurrection is not immortality, resurrection is different. In resurrection there is a new life, where after we leave our earthly bodies and are joined with Christ in the Kingdom of God. What happens to us while we are living will not matter after we die. It's similar to when you hear, the scripture from Matthew that says, don't store up treasures on Earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves can break in and steal, but store up treasures in heaven for where your treasure is, your heart will be also (Matthew 6.19-21). Jesus responds to the group by saying, with resurrection, there is no marriage, there is no death, but people are like angels and are children of God. Here Jesus lets them know we will all be the same. Our status and rank will not be important. We will be joined in an everlasting life, not a continued life of immortality, but a life that is not bound to the limits of this world, a life that is not bound by death. As Anglicans, we believe we are a people of resurrection and we will be joined with all the

Saints, those gone before us, our families, friends, neighbors, and those whom we have yet to meet in what Paul calls the great cloud of witnesses. To add more weight to the discussion, Jesus also refers to the scripture, since that is what the Sadducees know, and goes back to the Torah to cite what Moses confirmed by bringing up that Moses encountered God, not the God of the dead, but the God of Abraham, the God of Issac, the God of Jacob, and if we are their descendents and they live through us and we in them, then God is not dead and neither are they.

This Gospel shows us an example where both law and scripture are used as tools for arguments, weapons to make oneself look better and to harm others. Religion, unfortunately has been known to do this in the past and even now we find plenty of examples of it. I'm sure many of you have even experienced someone questioning you, how you live, who you love, your authority, or even try to use scripture or laws against you. As we gear up for the winter I can never forget the question, "if Global Warming exists, why is it so cold outside?" When we look at laws, data, and even scripture, we have to look at its contextual framework and we are called to be careful of how we interpret it. Let us remember that Christ came not to take away the law, but to give us an important one, one that stands above all others, Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love each other as yourself. If we look to the cross and what it represents we can find comfort in knowing that Christ suffered and died for us, but it is through the resurrection, that Christ destroyed death and rose again, so that we can be joined with all Saints not in immortality, but in everlasting life. Amen.