

Advent Devotional December 3, 2020

Scripture

Luke 20:27-40

27 Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him 28 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. 29 Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; 30 then the second 31 and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. 32 Finally the woman also died. 33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her." 34 Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; 35 but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. 36 Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. 37 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. 38 Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive." 39 Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." 40 For they no longer dared to ask him another question.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Richard W. Wingfield '02/'13

Have you ever been drawn into a useless conversation? You saw where the conversation was headed and had no intention to get involved, yet you were put on the spot and forced to reply. And you knew you needed to be clear in responding lest your words be misconstrued and used against you.

Jesus shows the importance of seeing past people's clever but narrow logical and cultural limits. The Sadducees, because of their dogmata, used a fictitious plot within the levirate marriage system of the Law to draw Jesus into a theological debate about the resurrection. Indeed, it was important to them. Their small arguments and literal interpretation of the Law kept their world in order. Nevertheless, their thoughts revealed assumptions that limited God's power and denied God's word.

Ironically, Jesus uses their own argument to debunk their logic. He lifts them from the human web of their theological concepts to a cosmic vision. Don't think of heaven in terms of earthly limits. What's really important is not a specific ideology but a living reality. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, for to Him all are alive.

How often do we pigeonhole and confine God to a narrow construct? We see every day how God is used to justify certain social, political, and theological positions. We easily develop our private hypotheses regarding the world or the church. We major on minor things, minor on the major things, and miss the important, needful thing.

It's easy to waste time on petty debates that cause needless divisions, whether at a family get together or on a social media platform. Biblical witness warns against this (2 Tim. 2:23). Besides, God is beyond all that. We are invited to imagine God. Imagine God beyond our finite imaginations. Imagine God beyond our often-faulty assumptions. Imagine God who is beyond what even our minds can possibly conceive (Isa. 55:8-9). Imagine the God who will bring life, energy, meaning, and substance to the reality we find ourselves in.

God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.

Prayer

God, help us to move beyond our selfish thinking and petty arguments so we can gain a heavenly perspective. Help us to seek those things which are above, not things of the earth. Plant our feet on higher ground. Amen.