

## Christ gives us the victory over death

Bible reference for sermon: Luke 20:27-38

*<sup>36</sup>Indeed, they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup>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. <sup>38</sup>Now he is God not of the dead but of the living, for to him all of them are alive."*

How did today's gospel reading sit with you as you heard it? One of the things Pastor Sue and I do as we prepare for weekly worship is to dwell in the Word together. When I read and heard this reading, I found it hard. Did you?

My mind immediately went to worrying if I'll know people in heaven who I love. There will be no marriage in heaven Jesus tells the Sadducees and us. If there's no marriage, will we know people? Will I still love and be loved by Sue? My dad died when I was a little boy and I hope that in heaven I will know him and worship with the heavenly hosts and maybe even get to know him. Will I be able to do this and will I still love and be loved by the people I love on earth?

Where did your mind take you as you heard it?

Did it raise for you the death of someone you've loved deeply, and the deep grief associated with death?

A spouse or partner?

A child?

A parent or sibling or dear friend?

I know some of your losses and griefs. I've seen some of your pain. But I know there may be other griefs that you carry close to your heart and which prompt questions for you about heaven.

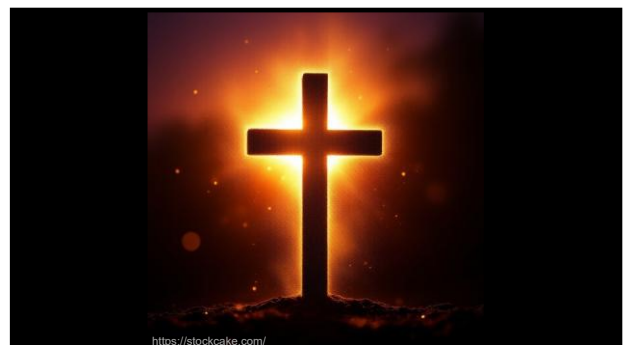
I've heard people talk about loved ones being reunited in heaven. For example, "Now mum and dad are back together enjoying an eternal cuppa at God's table."

Will we know one another in heaven or is Jesus saying there will be no relationships?

We'll briefly explore this question in a few minutes.

But before we do, it's vital to recognise what's actually going on here and how all of this connects for us today.

The cross and death of Jesus loom. Were in chapter 20 of Luke and in chapter 22 we will hear of the Last Supper.





He's in the temple teaching and the start of the chapter tells us that the chief priests and scribes and elders (the leading Pharisees and Sadducees; the Jewish leaders from the Sanhedrin are listening).

So, understand the connection between who is asking the question, what they are trying to do and the cross.

In verse 20 we hear "So they watched him (Jesus) and sent spies who pretended to be honest in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over (shorthand to have him crucified for made up crimes) to the governor."

This is a stitch up! A set up. Our text with the Sadducees seeking to trap Jesus follows a failed attempt by the Pharisees to do the same just before it.

Here the Sadducees try to discredit Jesus' authority as a teacher by asking him what they think is a smart trick question about the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection from the dead, nor in angels. They made up the majority of the Sanhedrin and it won't be long before Jesus will stand before the Sanhedrin to be falsely accused of all manner of made up crimes against God and the state.

They try to trick Jesus with a question about marriage as taught by Moses. If a man and woman married, and the man died before having a child, specifically a son to carry on the name and family and so to legally protect property and wealth, then the man's next brother was obliged to marry the widow. The Sadducees set up a silly scenario of this occurring 7 times. Whose wife is she at the resurrection? And all they're trying to do is to discredit Jesus and the teaching that there is a resurrection from the dead.

Jesus doesn't play their game. He addresses the promise of God in the resurrection. Marriage is a wonderful gift from God for some people in this life. But as wonderful as love is in this life, at the resurrection in the eternal life to come it will be even more amazing Jesus says. People of faith who accept the promises of God of eternal life in Jesus will be like the like the angels of heaven (and the Sadducees didn't believe in angels either) and they will know perfect love eternally

*"they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection."*

In other words, they will know perfect love eternally and Jesus uses Moses and the burning bush (an Old Testament story



*"they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection."*

which the Sadducees knew well) to drive home his point.

Moses calls God the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. All of these were long dead and buried. But Jesus says God is their God now. He is thus the God of the living, not of the dead. And all who are faithful are alive.

Now. The Sadducees are stumped. They can't argue that God is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Dumbfounded. The so-called wisdom of humans cannot fathom the fullness of the mind of God. For the mind and mission of God is to give life...life eternal. And this will come through the death of God for all humans on the cross.

Good news!

And its news to be trusted. Its news to be received as a gift. This account also reminds me to trust what God says in Scripture about heaven. And to trust that God has me and my loved ones and you and yours in his sure hands. There are some things my mind on earth will not be able to comprehend. Even AI can't answer it. My call and yours is to trust... to trust the One who promises.

Will I even know the people I love on earth? This is one of those texts which Pastor Sue talked about on Father's Day as an OUCH text. We may not necessarily like the idea that there's no marriage in heaven.

Our only guide for seeking answers to such questions lies with God the promiser and what God says in Scripture. What does God say? And what doesn't God say? Let's be clear.

Jesus says is that there will be no marriage in heaven. Marriage is a blessing from God for this earthly life so much so that it reflects the spiritual union of Christ with his bride, the church (us as Scripture tells us). It is a gift from God of love for this life to be enjoyed and to invest in.

But we also need to be clear what Jesus and Scripture don't say. They don't say that:

1. We won't know people in heaven
2. We won't love and be loved by people in heaven
3. We won't be reunited with loved ones in heaven

Scripture particularly in the final chapters of the book of Revelation speaks of new, restored and perfect creation. Does this also include new and perfect relationships with people I know and love? There is no verse in the Bible that straight out says "you will know each other in heaven" So what do we make of this? Death and grief are terrible ouches in our lives.

Our relationships on earth may mean more to us than anything else apart from our relationship with Christ.

I don't want to lose those dearest to me. I want to be where they are, and I want them to be where I am.

Can you and I trust Christ and what he promises?

Jesus own death beckoned and his beloved disciples would be grieving his death. The place that Jesus speaks these words is in the Upper room on the night of his Last Supper and betrayal. Just as I want to be with the people I love dearly so does Jesus.

*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. — John 14:3*

He wanted his friends to be with Him, near Him, with Him forever. A couple of hours later, Jesus prayed a most deep prayer just before His arrest.

*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.  
- John 14:3*

*“Father, He said, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am”.  
John 17:24*

*“Father, He said, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am”. — John 17:24*

Jesus wants you and me and all people to be with him and I think its fair to say that as he speaks and prays on the night before his death he wanted His friends and family to be with him in

eternity, where He was, so that he, Jesus true human and yet God could continue to enjoy their fellowship and love. Jesus Christ feels as we do about our dearest ones.

That’s the beauty for me of the story of God who becomes human and promises to be with us always. These passages in John 14 and John 17 clearly imply that one of the greatest joys of Heaven will be Jesus’ gift of our everlasting reunion with those of faith we love.

Mum and dad having that cuppa as they are reunited.

Meeting and getting to know that person who died way too early and was taken from me way too early and who I never got to know.

The person I loved in life with all of me  
So, I look forward to seeing my loved ones of faith including my dad eternally in heaven holding on to the promises of God and leaving the rest to God for me

**Amen.**



Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>