

Proper 27c 2019
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC
November 10, 2019
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Job 19:23-27a Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21 2 Thess 2:1-5, 13-17 Luke 20:27-38

In approximately the year 50 in Jerusalem, some Christians got together and made a big decision. The letter reporting the decision to new converts to Christianity said that their unanimous decision was made because it “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.”

Fast forward to the year 2019, in Greenville, SC: some Episcopalian Christians got together and addressed the business of the church in Upper South Carolina. We made decisions based on “ayes” and “nays,” “yes” and “no” voting cards, and application of Roberts Rules of Order. This was the 79th Convention of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina; through councils, now usually called conventions, we are connected to the very first leaders of the church and the Council of Jerusalem. Our diocesan convention, held Friday and yesterday, is the modern version of that day in Jerusalem, the first council of a fledgling church. I hope that our decisions, which seemed good to us, also seemed good to the Holy Spirit. As the opportunity arises, I encourage you to represent The Church of the Redeemer at an annual convention. Look also at becoming part of the broader church by standing for election for one of the decision-making bodies of the diocese. We have the ability to have voice and vote in matters of our faith beyond Sunday morning and our parish. By coming forward to serve in one of these committees, you will meet some saints who are also being the church beyond their local parishes. We meet, do business, pray, worship, and gather with one another, experiencing and living into being the church! Ask Jack Blackburn, Annette Burdette, Phyllis Webb or me about the ways in which annual convention impacts our walk as disciples of Jesus.

Disciples of Jesus. All kinds of people were following Jesus on his walk to our salvation. Jesus was attracting vast crowds, making statements about earthly life: who to follow, who to worship; leaders of the time, religious and of the Roman Empire, perceived him as a threat to faith and to the empire. Jesus was quite a rabble-rouser! Luke shares with us today a third encounter in which the authorities try to trick Jesus; was he a follower of the Laws of Moses?

Today’s encounter is with the Sadducees, a group of devout religious people who found only the first five books of the bible, the “Pentateuch,” to be authoritative. Moses, who said nothing about resurrection, affirmed their belief that there is no

resurrection, not just for Jesus, but for anyone. There is irony in the timing of this encounter: Jesus is on his way to be crucified; on his way, as we know, not only to his death but to his resurrection.

In any case, the Sadducees present an over-the-top, exaggerated question: if a woman becomes a widow seven times, and each time the law is followed, meaning that

- The woman becomes a widow;
- Levirate law states that the brother-in-law marries the widow in order to continue the family name, lineage, and honor.
- Link to today: we want to leave a legacy, something of ourselves for future generations.

A seven-time scenario is ridiculous, and they all know it. The question would be impossible for Jesus to answer, and would embarrass him. Which of the seven husbands would she be married to in heaven, in resurrected life?

Jesus, as he often does, turns the argument upside down. His words about there not being marriage in heaven are a bit confusing, if not downright troubling. When we are in love with our spouse, we want to be with that person forever! Jesus is saying that there will be no need of marriage of heaven: that continuing the family line, passing along legacies and honor are unnecessary, irrelevant.

1) things will not be the same on heaven as they are on earth: not the “same old, same old. Our message from that? We are thinking way too small.

Unimaginable joy and light

Earthly rules that oppress us will not have power

God does and will do more than we can ask or imagine

We do not know what heaven will be like

Some form of body

With the scars of this life

We will be with our loved ones, all of them

Jesus does not play into the Sadducees', or our, attempts to trick him

2) Jesus uses the Pentateuch, the Sadducees' biblical authority, to make his case:

Moses and the burning bush

Moses sees Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, dead, but alive in God:

This is a God of the living – if Moses saw them, are they not somehow alive?

Human distinctions do not matter to God: we are all alive! Whether in this world or in resurrection

Our application:

Take any and every question to Jesus
He will answer it
Might use authority and systems that we understand
Not to trick us
But to expand our vision, our imaginings, our hopes
Immeasurable love!
New life! Baptism, death

3) We cannot trick Jesus! His message is not on the surface – God sees the desires
of our heart
And changes them in the ways that only God can.

... back to Redeemer:
Be not afraid
Draw near to God
Be a bold disciple
If not confident in our earthly life
Confident that God has life for us,
Now
And forever.

During Convention we reaffirmed our baptismal vows, recommitting ourselves to
life in the risen Christ.

We ended with a song of our commitment to God, in whatever shape it takes in our
life:

Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in endless praise.
...
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee....