

Reflection: “We are a Resurrection People!”

Scripture: Luke 20: 27-38

In our Gospel reading this morning the Sadducees, members of the Jewish high-priestly family, who do **not** believe in resurrection, accosted Jesus, probably in the Temple. They set him up with a trick question: “whose wife will the woman be?”. It’s a trick question because they invite Jesus into the no-win territory between themselves, the Sadducees who don’t believe in resurrection at all, because it is not discussed in the Torah, and the Pharisees who do – but who cannot imagine a woman having seven husbands – though they would not have difficulty with a man having seven wives!

They call him “Teacher” but they really have no respect for him and are just trying to trap him so they can denounce him and silence him.

Jesus sidesteps the trap without difficulty. Marriage, apparently, will not be an issue in the afterlife, for those who are worthy of a place in that age will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

Jesus uses this opportunity to teach something about “that age” and the resurrection from the dead that people clearly do not understand. What he says is that those who reach this stage cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God.

This is a difficult teaching for some of us. Where marriage has been a happy situation, then we might hope to meet our beloved partner on the other side, and continue with our valued relationship. What Jesus is saying quite clearly is that things will be different. They will be wonderful – but different – and one of the things that will be

different is how we relate to one another. Paul says in 1st Corinthians 15: 42-44: *What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. **It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.*** And earlier in 1st Corinthians (13:12), Paul had described resurrection life as a mystery that we could understand only by divine revelation: *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

A child of five or six finds his parents displays of affection “Yucky” – until he reaches puberty and begins to see the world differently! So with us. We can have no experience of the resurrection life – until we get there – so it is difficult for us to imagine. What we do have are wonderful descriptions of a very different, very special kind of life with God and with Jesus that help us to know that this will be good!

Jesus shows the Sadducees that Moses did indeed speak of resurrection when, in the story about the bush he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He goes on to say that: *Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.*

We know that Jesus is alive in God, and lives in us by the Spirit. We know that he was obedient to God, that he poured himself out, a living sacrifice for all humanity, and that his teachings are as a light in the darkness of our ignorance. He came to show us the way back to eternal life with God and the saints who have gone before.

Jesus also told us that he who would save his life shall lose it. If we hang on to this life too tightly we will miss the opportunity to move

to the next level. It's scary isn't it? It's like having one foot on the wharf and one foot in the boat – which way shall I jump? If we hang on to the wharf and the boat moves away, we will fall in the water, and never know if the adventure on the boat might have been better.

So life on this plane for Jesus was sacrificial. Can we think of some other kinds of living in this world that have sacrificial aspects? On this the Sunday before Remembrance Day, we are reminded that over 100,000 men and women of the Canadian armed forces lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War, and in more recent conflicts around the world. More than a million and a half Canadians have served and are serving our country in this way.

On November 11, this Thursday, we will gather at the Legion to honour these men and women who give what they have, their skills and their lives to defend the values we hold dear: peace, freedom, democracy, and human rights. With all this in mind, as well as our discussion of resurrection and life after death, I would like us to listen to “In Flanders Fields” with fresh ears. This poem was written by Lt.Col. John McCrae in 1915.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

I love the last verse. There is the call to continue – to catch the torch and hold it high. We must not break faith with those who have given themselves in self-sacrificial love for the betterment of all of us. My friends, the Living God moves and works among us all. We are all called to catch that torch and hold it high. We are all called to be a light unto the darkness.

Death is not victorious as long as we pick up the task that is before us. Death is not victorious when we die to our self-serving earthly lives and are born as spiritual beings given new life in Christ. Death is never victorious when we die as Paul did, able to say that we have won the race, fought the good fight, and can step fully and without reservation into that boat that will take us to the next adventure, to eternal life as spiritual beings. For like the angels, we will be immortal children of God, being children of the resurrection.

And as for our fallen comrades, Laurence Binyon said it best in his poem “Ode of Remembrance” when he said:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

Let us have a moment of silence before we go on this morning, in honour of those who gave their lives that we might live in peace.