

“Faith Worthy of Living”

Scripture: Luke 20:27-40

Graphic: marriage,

Key Verses: 20:35 ...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.

Theme: There is hope in the bodily resurrection, as exhibited in Jesus’ resurrection. To be worthy of that promise, have faith in Jesus’ atonement and salvation.

1) Introduction

- a) Define WORTHY:
 - i) having adequate or great merit, character, or value.
 - ii) of commendable excellence or merit; deserving: a book worthy of praise; a person worthy to lead.
- b) Forms of the Greek word for WORTHY appear some 48 times in the New Revised Standard translation of the Bible...so it’s a significant concept according to the writers and to Jesus.
- c) And in three of those appearances in the NT, the word WORTHY is connected to hardship, testing, persecution, or some form of suffering in the name of Jesus or for the salvation he offers.
- d) This morning, Jesus challenges us to be people who are WORTHY of the kingdom of heaven and worthy of bodily resurrection.
- e) Those who are deserving of the kingdom...children of God...people of great merit, character, and value, who are eligible for bodily resurrection when Jesus returns.
- f) But what does it mean to be worthy, as a person? Our cars and houses and bank accounts, for some of us, have worth. That’s based on the fact that someone else would see the worth in them. But are we like cars or boats or money? What gives us WORTH?
- g) And what promises can we live into NOW as those who are worthy, and what promises are we to WAIT FOR in the age to come...
- h) Let’s turn in our Bibles to Luke chapter 20, starting in verse 27...
- i) Let’s pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 20:27-28a

- i) Oh boy!!! You know, I get really excited when I read stuff like that, because if you read enough of the gospels, you know that when someone asks Jesus a question, the ANSWER is going to be transformational! Sometimes he even sticks it to the one asking the question...and don't you just LOVE IT when Jesus doesn't play nice?
- ii) Anyway, in THIS case, these guys – the religious leaders – known as the Sadducees came to Jesus one day while he was hanging out in Jerusalem. Now, since last week, Jesus has moved from Jericho into Jerusalem, and this encounter takes place right before Jesus was abused and murdered...
- iii) And as these crowds are gathered around him, and Jesus is teaching and preaching and telling his disciples that he is on his way to the Cross, Jesus gets cornered by these religious elite – the Sadducees.
- iv) Here's some background – the Sadducees were one of the two main religious and political parties among the Jews of the day. The OTHER party was the Pharisees, which we tend to hear MORE about than the Sadducees.
- v) The Sadducees had a few distinctive beliefs that set them apart from the Pharisees, having to do with the authority of the written scriptures, the existence of angels and spirits, and some other things. But one of the main ones was the fact that they didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead...and the Pharisees did. And Jesus obviously did – I'm not sure if that makes Jesus a Pharisee, but at least they agreed on that! But this idea of resurrection, for Luke now writing the gospel after Jesus was raised from the dead, is VERY IMPORTANT. In fact, without the empty tomb, we are a people who remain destined for death in the cold grave. But because of it, we have hope.
- vi) And so, the Sadducees – you know, according to Luke, 'those who say there is no resurrection' (just to set the stage), came to Jesus and asked him this question...

b) Read verses 20:28b-32 + 33

- i) (after verse 32) And so here's the question...

- ii) OK! So...huh?
- iii) These guys, who don't believe in life after death, came to Jesus and asked him about marriage in the afterlife, right? Trick question!
- iv) Specifically, they asked him about Levirate marriage in the afterlife, which is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, which was the Jewish law and custom.
- v) Basically, if the Taylor family was living all together in the same household (which wouldn't be good, but which was common in those days), and my brother Chris got married (which he did), and then he died (which he didn't), then I (if I wasn't already married, which I am) would be expected to marry my sister-in-law. Yikes!
- vi) The REASON why this was the law was to preserve the assets within the family. Because if my sister-in-law went and married someone from the Osborne, part of the assets from the Taylor family would go to the Osbornes and we would not be as wealthy. Maybe Stacy's Michigan State flag could go to them...they'd like that.
- vii) So these Sadducees pose this hypothetical, almost silly scenario to Jesus: what if I had seven brothers and we all died after having married my sister-in-law, whose wife was she in the resurrection?
- viii) Not only is this a silly question because it takes this Levirate marriage thing to the extreme, but it's a silly question because the ones ASKING the question don't even believe in the RESURRECTION!
- ix) And so, this is a not-so-veiled attempt to see what Jesus is made of...who he really is...what he really believes...
- x) There are many times as a pastor that I'll have someone come to me (not in this church, of course), and ask me a question that seems rather curious. And when I was younger, I would try to answer the question they posed. And it never seems to satisfy them...
- xi) What I learned, and this is something I think we all learn, is that the question being asked is not really what the person was trying to find out. The problem being posed was just the presenting issue...and what I learned is that the presenting issue often is not the REAL issue. If someone asks your shirt and where you got it...many times it's because

they either really like and want to buy one, or they know where NOT to shop.

xii) For these Sadducees, the question they asked about marriage in the resurrection must have seemed so RIDICULOUS to Jesus! But Jesus has such clarity and such wisdom by the power of the Holy Spirit, that He sees RIGHT THROUGH the question and understands what they are truly asking, which is, “Come on, Jesus, you don’t REALLY believe in the resurrection of the dead, do you?” “You aren’t really saying that you are going to rise again from the grave, are you?”

xiii) And Jesus is like, Yes! But His answer isn’t just yes or no...his answer is huge compared to their puny little question...

c) Read verses 20:34-35

i) Marriage is a thing for THIS AGE, he says. Basically, a man and a woman who are mortal now, marry and are given in marriage.

ii) But that’s not going to be the case, and hear this, IN THE AGE TO COME.

iii) Marriage is something that was established by God at creation (go back to Genesis 2 and look it up later). Marriage has been part of all cultures throughout all time.

iv) Now, when we read the account of how God created a woman to be with the man, we know that it was because Adam couldn’t hack it on his own (or something like that, right?). Eve was a helpmate to Adam...a partner in life. And they would’ve only needed each other and a few more people and they would have been able to rule the world forever.

v) But what happened? Sin! They sinned and because of that sin, they began a slow process of death. At first, that death came after a long while...but gradually, physical death came sooner and sooner. What’s the average lifespan now, like 75 years...as opposed to 800 years then.

vi) And because of that, marriage takes on a new purpose and goal – not primarily companionship, practically, but reproduction. If we’re dying at a faster rate and God commanded us to be fruitful and multiply, then reproduction becomes more important to sustain the human population.

vii) But here's the good news! Here's the whole point of Jesus' answer: Death is not the final say for those who are living eternal life! (repeat). And when Jesus returns, there will be no more death, or crying, or pain...the old order has passed away and the new has come.

viii) And if there is no death in the age to come, then there will be no need for procreation. And if there will be no need for procreation, then there will be no REAL need for marriage as we know it, because no one will die! And even if marriage were still as it was at creation, mainly for companionship, we STILL wouldn't need it in the new reality of the kingdom of earth because we will be intimately connected to each other and to God, worshipping and praising Him together.

ix) Jesus says...

d) Read verses 20:36

i) We don't BECOME angels when we die (to dispel a myth)...but we will be LIKE angels – we will exist in a spiritually-aware state with all the saints and the angels, in the presence of God. And we will be children of God, because we are children of the resurrection – the bodily resurrection.

ii) Let me take a moment here to talk a little about the resurrection. At Easter time, it's all about Jesus being raised from the dead – physically rising in bodily form from the cold, dark grave and physically walking around. And people could touch him in this glorified state – the disciples and others saw Him and touched him. Yet, in this glorified state, he could do things like walk through walls and appear/disappear.

iii) Have you ever truly taken time to think about what that means to YOU? I think the general perception in our quasi-Christian culture is that when we die we will spend some long period of time walking on clouds with wings and such.

iv) Proly not! Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead is OUR promise that the SAME THING is our existence IN THE AGE TO COME. Our hope as Christians is that THIS MORTAL BODY, which right now has all these aches and pains, imperfections and troubles, will be the body that gets raised from the grave when Jesus returns, if I die before that. THIS MORTAL BODY! So get used to me, 'cause I'm sticking around with you **forever!**

v) Yet, because we know that Jesus' body was healed from the brutal and bloody beating it will take just a few days after he is talking to these Sadducees, we ALSO know, that the bodies of those who have put their faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, will be healed and glorified. No more diabetes...no more missing limbs...no more heart problems or back problems...no more high blood pressure...no more cancer...no more!

vi) No more death! Awesome good news!!

vii) Amen!

viii) And to take it home, Jesus, says in verse 37...

e) Read verses 37-38

i) God is the God of the living, not the dead. If we have a God, and that God is eternal, and we are promised eternal life in Him, then he is the God of the living and not the dead.

ii) Guys like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who MOSES HAD A DIRECT CONVERSATION WITH GOD ABOUT!!!! – we know these guys are still living because God promised them, that because of their faith, he would give them life as a reward.

iii) And the same goes for you and for me. Because of our faith in God, through the blood of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit, we too can have that eternal life by way of the resurrection of the physical bodies we now inhabit.

iv) The other side of that coin is that those who choose to reject the God of life, also choose to reject the eternal life that comes with Him, and choose to accept the fact that the end of the life of their physical body is the end of them...and they die a second death apart from the God of life. And God grieves that choice...and so do we.

f) Read verses 39-40

i) Jesus puts them in their place and they have nothing else to say...

3) Application

a) And after all this talk about eternal life and resurrection and Jesus' return in the age to come, am I in or am I not?

- b) Am I considered by Jesus to counted in the set of people who are worthy of the age to come? Am I deserving of the kingdom...am I a child of God...am I a person of great merit, character, and value, who is eligible for bodily resurrection when Jesus returns?
- c) And so many times, we look at our broken lives and our sin, and the conclusion we make when we're at our best is, "I hope so." And the conclusion we come to when we are at our sinful worst it, "Probably not!"
- d) But just like marriage has become God's holy and pragmatic answer to keeping us sexually pure and sustaining human life on earth in this age, Jesus Christ is God's holy and pragmatic answer to keeping us pure and sustaining human life in the age to come.
- e) And when we consider OUR worthiness to be eligible for eternal life, we know that we fall short. When we consider our worthiness to be able to truly deal with our sin, we fall short.
- f) And when we are incomplete in marriage, our spouse completes us. And because we are incomplete in salvation, Jesus Christ is the one that completes us.
- g) Being worthy of resurrection and eternal life is what Jesus Christ makes us when we put our faith in him...faith worthy of living.
- h) And if you're struggling with this life and the physical limitations, disease, and hardship caused by it, then here are three promises that we have to carry us through to be worthy until the end.
 - i) #1 The physical struggles of THIS LIFE are fleeting. This life is temporary and fragile. Be renewed in the midst of your difficulties, knowing that the trials and disease of this life is fleeting.
 - ii) #2 We will have glorified bodies in the life to come. I knew a Christian woman who dealt with the effects of polio her whole life. Before she died she told me that she couldn't wait to walk again when her body was restored. Live into the hope of a glorified body.
 - iii) #3 Because of Jesus, we don't have to wait to celebrate our resurrection from the dead. In fact, Christ has already raised you from the dead if you have put your trust and faith in him. He died our death and rose again to show us the way to eternal life. Celebrate your future resurrection by living life today!

4) Conclusion

- a) Jesus tried to tell the Sadducees and all those who would listen that what he offered them was not a set of rules, but the freedom eternal life.
- b) He did that by allowing his body to be broken and his blood to be shed on the cross.
- c) If you stop for one minute and focus your eyes on the cross behind me, you can almost see him there...bruised and broken, hurting and defeated.
- d) You can almost hear his cries for mercy from the Father who had to walk away in that moment because His Son was taking all the punishment for my sin and your sin.
- e) You can feel the heart of a mother and brothers who watched this unfold without being able to help or heal.
- f) You are worthy of the kingdom of heaven because of that man on the cross. You are worthy of eternal life because that man died the way he did for you. You are worthy of resurrection because just after he did that for you, he went to the grave so you don't have to.
- g) This morning, that man Jesus is with us. His table is set before us. His life is poured out amongst us and in us.
- h) When we celebrate Holy Communion, we give thanks for what he did. We remember what he did that makes us worthy. But most of all, we receive God's grace and mercy in this public sign of our desire to be one with Christ forever.
- i) When you come this morning, come to the cross. But don't stay there too long...your faith in him has made you worthy of living now and forever.
- j) Let's pray...