

Hebrew Scriptures**Job 19:23-27a**

Job said, "O that my words were written down! O that they were inscribed in a book! O that with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved on a rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

Gospel**Luke 20:27-38**

Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him 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. Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her." Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; 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. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. 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. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive."

God re-members us into resurrection

Every day that we are alive, we are one day closer to the reality of our own death. This is an existential truth. It is a fact of life. It is our mortal nature. It is just the way we are made. We are born, we live, we may or may not give birth to new life, and we die. When human beings become conscious of the overwhelming reality of death, (parents beware, this usually begins around the age of four) we become very concerned about our unknown future in the grave and the losses we will suffer as our loved ones die before us. It is a mystery that we can never fully unravel to satisfy our anxiety. Even Jesus is unable to tell the Sadducees the specifics of life in the resurrection, but he does impress upon them that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for to God, all of us are alive – even in death.

Before we can understand the conversation that Jesus is having in our Gospel reading for today we need a little back-story. The Sadducees were a sect of the first century Jewish community that were closely aligned with the culture surrounding the Temple. They accepted only the 5 scrolls of Moses (the first five books of the bible) and therefore rejected any idea of resurrection or a future life with God like those described by the other scriptures written later by the prophets. During Jesus' lifetime, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were the two main theological voices in the Jewish community. The Pharisees in contrast, *did* believe in the resurrection, they just were not convinced that *Jesus was THE Resurrection*.

Resurrection is very difficult to imagine. We are all acquainted with the irreversible nature of death. In fact, the dead coming back to life in popular culture is usually reserved for horror films and is not the comforting image of our faith. The Greek philosophers dealt with our mortal

nature by insisting on an immortal soul that was not dependant on our physical body and would go on living after our death. The Jews did not believe in a separation of soul and body. Human beings are made up of flesh and spirit and heart and mind, but no part of us can exist without the rest of us. For the Jews, life is a gift from God and we are not able to go on living after that life has ended without God's help.

The resurrection is difficult to imagine because it is all about God's decision to bring all of creation back to life again. For that reason, resurrection is an affirmation of what God has created. When we believe, like the Greek philosophers in an immortal soul just waiting to slough off this mortal coil and move on to something better, we are denying the goodness of our created bodies and the world around us. But Christian belief in the resurrection proclaims the shocking truth that God will bring all of creation into a new life, a born-again life. It will be a new universe that celebrates everything God has made because it is all good.

For the Sadducees, this is too much to believe. And that is why they taunt Jesus with their ridiculous question about the woman who by law marries seven brothers before she dies. They know that Jesus believes that all of creation will be resurrected, so how will this woman and her seven resurrected husbands get along in the life to come? They think that marriage and all the laws of Moses will still hold true in the resurrection.

Jesus has a much more expansive imagination about what God will do in the new heaven and the new earth. God is *not* re-creating us so that we might live mortal lives again and need mortal laws to live by. God is re-creating the world so that we will never die again, so that we will see God face to face and not through a mirror dimly. God is re-creating so that we can live in God's immortal company like angels. We will truly know ourselves to be God's children in the next life and there will be no limit on our ability to love one another and celebrate God's love for us. As Job puts it, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

Jesus is telling the Sadducees and us that God will never forget or let go of anything that God has made. For God, death is not the end. God is more powerful than death, as Paul described in his letter to the Romans, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." God transcends death and re-members us into the resurrection. This metaphor of remembering is incredibly powerful. In Genesis, God creates the whole universe with God's Word. God's says, "Let there be light." And light is called into existence. In the resurrection, imagine God remembering light, remembering you and me and the lives we have lived. As God remembers us, God's memory calls us into being again. God's memory is as powerful as God's word and the memory of God calls us back to life in the new creation. Long after flesh has melted from bone and sinews have let go, long after our memory is lost from among the generations – God remembers, and with that divine memory we are re-membered, put back together into a new creation where we will live in God's divine presence in a new way. This is why God is the God of the living and not the God of the dead. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are remembered by God

and therefore alive. As soon as God re-members us, *we are resurrected* and alive in the new creation.

Jesus invites us to participate in the resurrecting power of remembering every time we celebrate the Eucharist together. When Jesus gathered at the table with his disciples for the last supper they would share, he took the bread and the wine, blessed it, broke it, poured it out and shared it with them asking them to “do this in remembrance of me.” Every time we share this meal, we re-member Jesus in our midst and we stand with God in the new creation. We even ring a bell when those words are spoken to signal that we are standing at the intersection of heaven and earth, the crossroads of this life and the life everlasting. When we share the meal of bread and wine, we participate in the resurrection, eating the bread of heaven and drinking the cup of salvation.

So, I invite you, join with me this morning at the place where heaven and earth meet. Remember your loved ones who have died and know that God re-members them, too. Remember that you are a precious child of God that will be re-membered in the resurrection and when you behold God face to face, we will all be there to celebrate everything that God has made, and it will be so good.