

Title: Another Jesus Mic Drop
Text: Luke 20:27-40
Theme: The promise of the resurrection
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to help my people believe Jesus so much that their confidence in the resurrection informs how they live today.

Read Text:

This text has 3 parts. 1) The Sadducees confront Jesus to trap him. 2) Jesus corrects them in convincing fashion. 3) The Sadducees are frustrated, but the (Scribes) Pharisees are reluctantly impressed. This sermon follows that structure after an introduction about the Sanhedrin. The intro and point 1 are informative, but points 2 and 3 are what I really want you to take home. In point 2 Jesus corrects the Sadducees, but his correction is a vault of encouragement and theological gold. Then finally in point 3 I want to try to help you see the contrast that our text sets forth which addresses all sorts of heart issues for us.

There's an old joke about the Sadducees that says that they were "sad, you see" because they don't believe in the resurrection. Neither did they believe in angels. The Pharisees were not wonderful people, but they at least believed in a resurrection and in angels.

During the time of Christ, Israel was occupied by Rome who allowed Israel to be governed by her own rulers as long as they paid taxes and kept the peace. (Slide A) The governing body was called the Sanhedrin. For many years, the Sanhedrin was a one-party rule made up of the Jewish land-owners and aristocrats. (Slide B) These men were the Sadducees. They were a closed circle of wealthy families who controlled the office of high priest. Just before the time of Christ, another group started to gain some influence called the Pharisees. (Slide C) The Pharisees represented more of the common man and over time, they began to gain power and representation in the Sanhedrin and became a threat to the Sadducees. The Sadducees still had control of the office of high priest, they still possessed a lot of wealth and influence, but the Pharisees were threatening their power base. There was a lot of bitterness between the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees only accepted the Torah (Law – 1st 5 books of the OT as being authoritative). The Pharisees accepted the entire OT as authoritative. Both sides argued about their respective beliefs and their arguments were bitter and nasty.

(Slide D) To add to the confusion, the Pharisees were divided up into 3 different groups or schools of thought. So, the Pharisees argued amongst themselves. The historian Josephus said that the Sadducees were just not very nice guys, even to one another. They had no personal loyalty. The arguing Pharisees and the mean Sadducees argued amongst themselves. Put them in a room together and give them power. What could go wrong? And Rome had no idea of what any of them were really talking about. This is one of the reasons why the old line says that when you have 3 Jews you have 4 opinions. This played into the hands of Paul. 28 years later, (Acts 23) Paul, who had been a Pharisee, was arrested and brought in for questioning before the Sanhedrin. He knew there were Sadducees and Pharisees who were his jury. So he begins his

defense saying, *“Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”* This starts a food fight in the Sanhedrin. The whole thing became so violent that the Roman tribune sent in a group of soldiers to rescue Paul from being torn apart in the middle of the mayhem. Think of a bar in Columbus or Ann Arbor the night before THE game with 50% Buckeye fans and 50% fans from the other team. You get the picture. The one thing they all agreed on was that they wanted to get rid of Jesus.

Luke wrote in 19.47 that “The chief priests (think Sadducees) and the scribes (think Pharisees) and principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him.” This is repeated in 20.19. And they tried. They sent in undercover followers to trick Jesus who exposed them. This trap they attempted to set was spearheaded by the Pharisees. Now the Sadducees weigh in with apparently their irrefutable argument for why there is no resurrection. They want to trap Jesus AND prove the Pharisees wrong. They are trying to show...

1. How the law creates a “problem” for the resurrection. (27-33)

Every tribe in Israel had its own piece of land, except the Levites. Every tribe also had its own clans and families. Therefore, every family in the tribe had their own piece of land within the allotment to their tribe. Clans, families, names and land all went together. Those tribal allotments were not to be moved. The land and its tribal ownership was an important part of the Law and life of Israel. Most people were people of the land, such as herdsman or farmers. The land was passed down through the males or given to a daughter if there was no son, but the daughter had to marry in the tribe. If a man died and did not have children, his brother, or nearest relative would be expected to marry the widow and have a child with her, so that his name and the land would be protected. (Deut. 25).

The “what-if” scenario involves a large family with 7 sons. The oldest son marries and dies without a child. His brother marries the widow, but dies before they have a child. Then the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and the 7th dies. Last of all the wife, the widow 7x, dies with no heir, no family line to continue, and the land lost to others. But the Sadducees do not focus on that nor on her questionable skills in the kitchen. The Sadducees believed this rule of law but saw it as a reason supporting their unbelief in a resurrection. The law emphasized monogamy in marriage. So, if there is a resurrection, that is an afterlife and this widow goes to “heaven” or wherever the afterlife is, and she has had 7 legitimate, legal husbands here, whose wife will she be then? If there is an afterlife, then how can this woman be monogamous? If she is legitimately married to the others, then someone is going to get cheated out in the afterlife. In other words, you cannot hold to a literal, factual obedience to the law without creating an irreconcilable dilemma in the afterlife. Therefore, the law itself demonstrates the “absurdity” of a resurrection.

The previous challenge to Jesus about whether or not to pay taxes sounds like something from the Pharisee camp. They tap out and in come the Sadducees who had probably used this scenario on the Pharisees who probably did not have a good answer for it. So they were probably trying to trap Jesus and zing the Pharisees in front of the people. Like team members

in Family Feud who say, “ good answer, good answer” these men were likely feeling pretty smug after throwing this theological haymaker at Jesus. Their confidence was short lived.

2. **How the law actually proves the resurrection.** (34-38)

Immediately Jesus refutes them. We’ve seen in a number of situations where Jesus answers a question with a question. Not here. Here he responds immediately and clearly.

A. Life now is not like life to come. (34)

The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. (Not in the next age.)

Life now is not like life to come. There is no marriage in heaven. For some of you that may be sad news, for others perhaps not as much. Marriage is a temporary preview of a permanent reality. Marriage is a movie trailer designed to advertise the real thing. We were not created to be married forever to another person, but to be in a permanent union with God (and with one another). Those who think that the afterlife is simply an extension of this life without the inconveniences, have no clue about heaven. There is no marriage in heaven because there is something even better. The best marriage is not a perfect marriage. But even the best marriage experiences heartache. The best marriage has seasons of struggles, difficulties in having children, raising children, communicating, working through seasons of life, learning about self-centeredness, personality differences, extended family stuff, job, money, house, car, insurance, retirement planning, etc. In heaven, there is none of that. The relationships, hobbies and authority structures here, do not apply there.

But we all hear it. “He’s riding his motorcycle up there right now. She’s shopping at all the outlet stores up there. He’s golfing everyday now!” Heaven is not retirement without doctor appointments. When Jesus said that marriage is for the sons of this age and not the next, he wrecked the argument for the Sadducees. There is no dilemma. Now, their appeal to the law is irrelevant. I will come back to v.36 in a minute. But even though life now is not like the life to come it is not a disappointment because the...

B. Life to come is better. (36)

It will be way better. Look at v.36. There are four related ways that Jesus describes the life to come. This is for those who are considered worthy of the life to come. This is great stuff!

- 1) They cannot die anymore.
- 2) They are equal to angels.
- 3) They are sons of God.
- 4) They are sons of the resurrection.

Those four descriptions are basically saying the same thing. Those who cannot die will be like the angels in that regard. That is not only true, but Jesus put that line in there because the

Sadducees didn't believe in angels, so Jesus told them that they were wrong about that too. Those who are worthy of the life to come will also be sons (heirs) of God, who cannot die and therefore, sons (inheritors) of the resurrection. Their lives are defined by the resurrection and will be alive forevermore. There is no husband/wife marriage since we are all one people of God and there is no need for procreation since we all live forever.

I was putting together some chairs for my patio when my grandson Judah asked me what happened to the other chairs. I explained that they were 25 years old and that the fabric was so thin that when you sat on them, you fell through, so I had to throw them away. He said, so these will last about 25 years and then ... he paused like he was afraid to finish what he was thinking. So, I said, "and by then I will be dead, right?" He was like, "yea, I was thinking that." "Well, it is true. I will probably be dead." But the life to come is not a hologram. It is not less real, less physical, or less tangible. We will, in many ways, be more alive than we are now because (and this is such a massive game-changer) we cannot die anymore. It will be impossible for us to die. There will be no end. No decline, no loss, no stress, no anxiety, no fear, no threats, no jokes about getting old. The fact that we cannot die anymore is a complete game changer. Jesus is the one said this, not to make people feel good, but because he is the resurrection and the life to those who believe in him. He is the guarantee to his promise.

Everything we long to see or do before we die cannot compare to life with God where we cannot die. Everything! Those who die before they get married skip the preview and go directly to the main event. Those who die before they have children, go right to a forever family without struggle. Those who die before they retire or before they see the world, or a certain age, or milestone, go to a life where there is no age and achievements to gain. We think too small about God and therefore we think too small about heaven. The Sadducees did not believe in it, and the Pharisees did not appear to have a right view of it. You will never live with a proper perspective of this life if you don't have a proper view of the one to come. And Jesus also makes it clear that not everyone will attain to that age to come. Only those who are worthy.

C. Heaven is only for those considered worthy (35)

Jesus makes it clear that some qualify for the resurrection. Only those "*who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead*" are the ones who qualify. This phrase, "considered worthy" is used two more times in the NT. Once in Acts 5 where the disciples were beaten for their public defense of Christ and were "*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*" The same idea is repeated in 2 Thess 1.5. The believers in Thessalonica were being persecuted for their belief in Christ, which Paul said, "*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.*" When you put it all together, you see that genuine followers of Christ are those who have renounced their sin and trust in Christ alone for the salvation and claim Christ as their highest allegiance. Genuine believers suffer for this allegiance. But what is an intimidation tactic by the world is a badge of honor to the believer, because being considered worthy of suffering for Christ means that your testimony is making a difference (official and/or personal). (Persecution of leaders in India) If you never experience

rejection because of your faith, it may be that your faith is not very fruitful or noticeable. If your faith is not fruitful or noticeable, it is probably not real. Genuine believers will experience a measure of rejection. We do not ask for it, but it goes with the territory. After all, we follow one who was rejected and died on a cross. What do you think will happen to you if you follow a leader like that? But, the promises for those believers far outweigh any suffering we endure now. But there is another point Jesus makes proving the Sadducees wrong.

D. The Word of God says so. (37-38)

In Exodus 3, God commissions Moses to go back to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses asks God what his name is. God says, "I AM WHO I AM." Tell them, "I AM has sent me to you." The I AM is the "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." Jesus is using a verb tense, the present tense verb of being to make his point. God said to Moses, "I AM the God of Abraham" not "I was the God of Abraham." I am and still am currently the God of Abraham. I am still Abraham's God because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive. God couldn't still be their God if they were not alive. Think about the implications of this:

Jesus is God, the Son and Word of God. Everything that he says is true and authoritative. He does not have to appeal to any other authority to back up what he has just said, and yet he does. Jesus quotes Scripture to the Sadducees. He could have quoted Daniel 12 (read) but since the Sadducees don't accept that book, he quotes from Exodus. This is one of the most insightful and significant statements Christ made. Notice what Jesus does. 1) He quotes the Bible proving that Jesus believes the Bible. He has done this repeatedly throughout his ministry, beginning with his confrontation with Satan. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. If Jesus believes the Bible, we should believe the Bible and are idiots if we don't! The Bible carries the same authority as the words that come from Jesus. If you pick a fight with the Bible you are picking a fight with God and you won't win. 2) He hangs his argument on a verb tense proving that Jesus believes in the truthfulness, integrity and inerrancy of Scripture. We believe the Bible is true in a general sense, and is true in detail!

3. Reluctant praise and the bondage of fear (39-40)

This is the mic drop moment. Instead of stumping Jesus, Jesus stumps the Sadducees. They cannot argue the text. That is exactly what it says. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must still be alive. Of course, the Pharisees are now conflicted. On the one hand Jesus has just proven them right on the resurrection issue. On the other hand, Jesus cannot be trapped. They couldn't trap him and the Sadducees couldn't trap him. All they can say is "Teacher, you have spoken well." It is reluctant praise. "For they no longer dared to ask him any question."

Why not?!? Why do you think that they didn't dare ask him any more questions? They were afraid of him. They were afraid he would prove them wrong and that he was right. Hold the phone! What if they were wrong? What if you are wrong about something? If what we believe is not true, don't you want to know? Don't you really want to know the truth? I do! If I

discovered that the Bible was not true, I would quit this position, immediately. If the Bible is true, it can stand up to scrutiny and challenges. Challenges to the Bible cause me no angst, since it is simply another opportunity to see the integrity of the Bible. People who do not want to know the truth are people who live in fear. Fear is at the core of their being and they use all sorts of things like intimidation, threats, power, positions of influence, appearance to cover it up. These Sadducees had the uniform, the wealth, the reputation, and tried to threaten Jesus with it, like they did everyone else. But they were not nice guys. These guys were actually hollow souls who only had an image to hide behind. Inside they were empty. Therefore, they used fear on others because they were afraid. There is no loyalty with fear.

Contrast that with Jesus. What is at the core of Jesus? Love! The Father, Son and Spirit, love one another and God loves us! The closer you get to God, the more you experience the love, joy, delight and complete satisfaction that God enjoys as God.

When you are in a relationship with a fearful person they often try to make you feel like you don't measure up. You are never good enough. Why do people treat you like that? Why do you treat people like that? Because we fear that we don't measure up, so we project that, or hide that behind ego and bullying. Fear is powerful, but it does not generate loyalty, peace or contentment. Fear is not sticky. Do you want to marry someone full of fear or someone full of love? Do you want to go on vacation with someone full of fear or someone full of love? Do you want to spend eternity with someone full of fear or someone full of love? Better yet, who do you want to spend eternity with, someone full of fear who will forever be consumed by that fear, or someone full of love who rose again from the dead so that you cannot die anymore?

There is no fear in love, perfect love drives out fear.