

Reflection November 9th, 2025 based on Luke 20:27-38

Regardless of which news you watch on TV, or listen to on the radio, or read in the media, I think it's fair for me to say each journalist is looking for the 'gotcha' question from the person they're interviewing. They want one that will open up pandora's box and make the guest feel like they've fallen into the grip of their interviewer. Not a very nice place to be I imagine – the journalist wants to hear a new story line if you like; maybe even new words to an old tune.

This is one thing that I hear within Luke's passage for today. Luke provides us with a fascinating interaction between Jesus and as Mike McKinley in his commentary calls the 'rationalist' thinking Sadducees, shedding light on philosophical thoughts of life, relationships, and the essence of existence beyond death. I found this reading right on queue considering our All-Saints service last week. The Sadducee's encounter occurs amidst the religious and cultural beliefs of their time – first century Judea, particularly addressing the varying perspectives regarding resurrection and what happens when we take our final breath in our physical bodies.

For the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection and believed only in the Torah's teaching, their inquiry wasn't just mere curiosity but a challenge to Jesus' authority and understanding of God's plan for us.

They pose to Jesus a hypothetical scenario involving a woman married to seven brothers in succession, each dying without leaving her children. Their intention wasn't pure and caring, its exaggeration and pointedness was designed to show the absurdity of the resurrection belief, questioning its logic. Their question isn't just about the woman's marital status in her eternal existence; it's a

deeper effort to maintain their understanding of the levirate custom to marriage law and the relationship dictated within it. To the Sadducees life is confined to earthly relationships and obligations, framed by their interpretation of the Old Testament. They believed that these connections defined the people's experience, and so, they were dubious to any thought or philosophical idea that could transcend these boundaries.

Christ's response is to redirect their focus from earthly relationships to a deeper and divine understanding. He places an emphasis that life after death goes way above, transcending any limitations and earthly scenarios or theories. Jesus asserts, "The children of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." Here, Jesus declares a fundamental truth about eternal life: which isn't bound by the social structures or the familial ties that govern our existence. Instead, it offers a new understanding of belonging and kinship which is firmly rooted in being children of God.

When Jesus says that with the resurrection people are like angels and are God's beloved children, he's affirming a radical redefinition of relationships. The implication of which can't be missed; earthly bonds, while meaningful, don't carry over into the divine realm in the same way. In the resurrection, one's identity is transformed; it's reshaped by our relationship with God rather than earthly relationships. Jesus' response not only addresses the Sadducee's query it also reframes their entire understanding of existence, urging them to consider a reality where divine kinship supersedes our earthly systems.

Jesus doesn't stop there though, he goes on to argue and recall God's declaration to Moses at the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This declaration is soaked with meaning; it asserts God's enduring relationship with these patriarchs long after their deaths are recorded. Jesus is reminding us through Luke, that God is a God of the living, not of the dead. (remembering that we are promised eternal life) Jesus is telling us the patriarchs exist in a continuum of life that continues beyond the earthly constraints. The Sadducees' disbelief in resurrection clashes with the living God's promises – God who speaks in the present tense, signifying that life persists beyond death, however it takes on a different form.

When we think about it, Luke's words compel us to contemplate our own understandings of relationships in the context of faith and our eternal life. In a world that often prioritises tangible and measurable concepts of love and companionship, Jesus' teachings invite us to think more intentionally about the essence of our existence as God's children. The relationships that we create and nurture no matter how significant are forever changed when we look at them through the lens of eternity.

So, this makes me ask the question: what does it mean to be in relationship with others if the essence of those relationships is challenged by our beliefs about eternity? It summons up the idea that love, connection, and family aren't just limited to a biological or social ties. These connections can expand and include a not just those we know who are living, but also the broader communion of saints and believers who have come before and those who are yet to come.

Luke leaves us with a passage that speaks to us about a deep theological truth that resonates with hope, especially in times of grief and loss of someone whom we love dearly and deeply. Understanding that while death is the end of our earthly life, it's the new beginning of our eternal life. It could be heard of as time for a new song to be sung, for comfort and peace to be known through the love, grace and peace of the resurrected Christ Jesus. God's promise of resurrection assures us that God's promise is real as we move into a different relationship with God beyond this life.

The conversation between Jesus and the Sadducees serves as an explanation on what's at the core of our faith regarding life after death. It pushes us to envision and expand our concept of relationships founded in faith in the risen Christ Jesus, rather than being limited or narrowed by what others say they ought to be and with whom they ought to be.

Jesus' teachings radically redefine familial ties, encouraging us to embrace a divine kinship that's a reality in the context of God's eternal love and promise- a love that transcends the grace and redefines the very nature of life itself giving us many reasons to continue to joyfully sing new songs with the Prophets, the Patriarchs, the Psalmist, the Gospel writers, the Disciples through the ages, the Saints of Old, and us the Living Saints of 2025 who are learning to sing new songs without fear but with love in our hearts.

Amen