

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
November 17, 2013**

**"Saints Triumphant"**

**Luke 20:27-38**

**With Eyes on Eternity**

- 1. Unreasonable Reason**
- 2. With Eyes on Eternity**
- 3. This is Now, That is Eternity!**

**Hymns: 549 – 728 –  
Distribution: 417, 551  
Closing: 219**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

<sup>27</sup> Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. <sup>28</sup> "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother."<sup>29</sup> Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. <sup>30</sup> The second <sup>31</sup> and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. <sup>32</sup> Finally, the woman died too. <sup>33</sup> Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.<sup>35</sup> But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage,<sup>36</sup> and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.<sup>37</sup> But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'<sup>38</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

The conversation has been going on for a couple minutes, but at this point, all you're hearing is words. As each one passes in one ear and out the other, there is only one actual thought going on in your head, "What in the world is this person talking about?"

If it has been awhile since you have had the pleasure of a conversation like that, I'd like to introduce you to the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a relatively small, but powerful group inside the Jewish religion. Of their beliefs, the one that they were most known for was their belief that there would be no resurrection. The Sadducees taught that the soul perished along with the body at death. So, people should be concerned with life now, rather than life after death.

With that philosophy on the afterlife, they came to Jesus to have a discussion. Luke records their thoughts for us when he writes: "**Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother.**" <sup>29</sup> Now there were seven brothers. **The first one married a woman and died childless.** <sup>30</sup> **The second** <sup>31</sup> **and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children.** <sup>32</sup> **Finally, the woman died too.** <sup>33</sup> **Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"**

Now if you read through that before, and listened to it again right now, and are still wondering what in the world the Sadducees were getting at exactly, you're actually understanding why their words are recorded in Scripture. As the Sadducees tried to use their human reason to show why life eternal was unlikely, they ended up sounding foolish. Their "proof" scenario was unreasonable and unlikely to happen and, thus, it made very little sense.

That is what happens when a person tries to figure out God and eternity by comparing it to this world. The Sadducees felt that if they were to believe that life in eternity was actually possible, they needed to know how it would work and what it would be like exactly. If they couldn't picture it; if they couldn't know what it was like; then they wouldn't believe in it.

As silly and foolish as the Sadducees sounded, what they were doing isn't that uncommon. They were attempting to look at eternity with eyes still focused on this world.

Today, we have an opportunity to put our eyes on eternity. Saints Triumphant Sunday calls us to consider what heaven will be like. In two of the most beautiful and picturesque sections of Scripture, the prophet Isaiah and the apostle John, in the book of Revelation, actually allow us to see into the glories of heaven.

However, there is a problem that their words and this Sunday bring up. We are asked to look into a place that is beyond our comprehension and understanding. We are asked to consider glories and joy that can't even be imagined by the biggest

imaginations. Heaven is beyond what our heads are able to comprehend.

Yet, what do we often do? Instead of leaving it for what it is, an unimaginable and incomparable future, we look to eternity with earth-shaded glasses on. When we think of heaven, we often make it nothing more than an improved and perfect extension of what we know on this earth. The relationships that we enjoy and treasure here on this earth(?). Those are the ones that we can't wait to experience once again in heaven. The activities that bring us happiness here on earth(?). Those are what we picture ourselves doing in eternity. And looking at heaven with such an earthly perspective really only makes us look as foolish as those Sadducees.

Is that really all that we long for; the good of life now, without any of the bad? Is that really our only comfort; that we can look forward to what we treasure in this life resuming in heaven and lasting forever?

If all we look for in eternity is a better version of earth, we are missing out entirely on what God was doing when he sent his one and only Son into the world to endure punishment and suffer death. God did not send Jesus into the world so that our earthly relationships could continue on and our earthly joys would last forever. And if that is all we are looking for, we must listen closely to Jesus' words spoken in response to the Sadducees.

To people who were foolishly attempting to look at eternity with eyes still focused on earth, Jesus delivered this cutting message: **“The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.<sup>35</sup> But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage,<sup>36</sup> and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.”** What Jesus is saying there is pretty clear: If you are thinking about eternity in heaven, get your eyes off of this life. The things of this world are not of eternity. What we treasure here won't be treasured in heaven. The relationships of this earth are not meant for eternity.

Now, if we're looking at eternity with eyes on earth, that is troubling. In fact, we might wonder how heaven could be filled with joy without those special relationships that mean so much to us here, with no wife, no kids, no family. Perhaps this statement from Jesus even dulls my enthusiasm for heaven, or causes me a bit of sadness, or even fills me with disappointment. If I hold tightly to the relationships of this world, I might even be tempted to follow the Sadducees and wonder if life eternal is something I want. And that is dangerous.

That is why it is so important that when we think about heaven, we only do so with our eyes on eternity. That our earthly relationships and joys will not be the same in heaven is not a cause for sadness, or disappointment, and Jesus tells us why. In heaven for eternity, Jesus says “we are God's children, children of the resurrection.”

That is what God was after when he sent Jesus. He did not make that sacrifice of his Son so that the relationships that we have now could continue forever. He made that sacrifice so that the one relationship that we were missing on this earth; the relationship that was destroyed in this world by sin; the relationship with God our Father would be restored to perfection. That is the beauty of heaven! No longer will we run when our Father comes to speak to us. No longer will we hide from him because of our shame. We will have a perfect relationship with God the Father and it will last forever. And the perfect joy provided by that relationship will make every earthly joy/relationship pale in comparison.

Because of that, we will also have perfect relationships with all of God's children. We will be closely bonded together with every single person who shares heaven with us in eternity. That is impossible to imagine. But you will have a more joyful relationship with every person in heaven than what you currently have with any single person in this world. That is fascinating to think about!

It shows us clearly that when God made the plan of salvation, he had his eyes on eternity. His desire was that all of his children would be with him, united together as one family through Christ, living forever in the glory of heaven.

As we go through this life, may we treasure all of the blessings that God gives us here on this earth. But let us never forget, that as children of God, we have our eyes on a future that cannot be compared to what we have here. Let us walk each day with our eyes on eternity, waiting for that day when we will be united in body and soul with our loving God and Father and all of his children, in perfect joy, forever and ever. Amen.