

The Power of God
Matthew 22:23-33

May 21, 2017

23 The same day some Sadducees came to him, saying there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, 24 "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies childless, his brother shall marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.' 25 Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died childless, leaving the widow to his brother. 26 The second did the same, so also the third, down to the seventh. 27 Last of all, the woman herself died. 28 In the resurrection, then, whose wife of the seven will she be? For all of them had married her." 29 Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the crowd heard it, they were astounded at his teaching.

Today we will continue the valuable lessons that Jesus taught during passion week. As you know Jesus is in Jerusalem and is about to be killed. Matthew reveals that the religious leaders engage in multiple antagonistic attacks on Jesus. All of the religious leaders need the support of the people. Their fear is that they are losing their influence on the crowds whom are astonished at the teaching of Jesus. The fact that Jesus was winning the crowds threatened the religious establishment.

Matthew reveals the final controversy Jesus had with the religious leaders. When the authority of Jesus is questioned he tells the parable of two sons. This, by the way, is a brilliant response to his being challenged. The father is more pleased with son that repented. Jesus also tells the parable of some wicked tenants where the owner replaces the irresponsible tenants. And Jesus tells the parable of a wedding feast where the people that were originally invited rejected the invitation so the king decides to invite everyone else. These are stinging lessons of reality that are applicable to the divine and the opponents of Jesus.

The Pharisees and the Herodians then try to trap Jesus about issues concerning the law and taxation. The Pharisees are legalistic and follow a very strict, hypocritical, observance of the law. They try to trap Jesus by putting him in a position where they can use his answer against him regardless of which answer he chooses to give. If he supports paying taxes he will lose support of the people. If he supports a position that is against paying taxes then he will be supporting a position that goes against the law. So, Jesus gives the famous lesson on giving to the emperor that which belongs to the emperor and give to God that which belongs to God. This is a brilliant move on his part leaving the opponents of Jesus unable to trap him. The Scripture simply tells us that they went away. The scribes, Pharisees, high priests, and Herodians have all been out to get Jesus throughout his entire public ministry. But the ministry of Jesus is one of divine power, profound insight, salvation for humanity, and love. Throughout his ministry there has been a lot of obstruction but no one has been able to stop Jesus.

Today's Scripture the Sadducees come up to Jesus on the same day that the Pharisees and Herodians tried to trap him on the law and taxation. The commentaries are pretty much in agreement that this occurred on Tuesday of Passion Week. The Sadducees are worldly and political but they deny the concept of resurrection. None of the questions that Jesus is challenged with are sincere, they are all designed to trap him or judge him. In today's society the scenario would not be applicable. In our society it would seem kind of funny. If a man dies and there is no son the widow is taken in by a brother in order to grant him a son. Notice that the objective is not

to care for the widow but to grant a son for the male decedent. In that society the man controls the woman and her sexuality for the wants and the needs of the man. This custom is based on Levite law which became an important tradition. The rational is a continued family line into the future. The assumption is that one's life continues after death in the lives of the descendents. If a man dies without any offspring then it is considered an incomplete life. So, the question is that there are seven brothers and each one married her, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? They were sincere within the framework of their perspective. They saw absolutely nothing wrong with their lien of questioning. The scenario is if a man dies then the widow is cared for by the son. However, they were insincere in their motives, their question is an antagonistic as the Pharisees and Herodians. The Sadducees deny resurrection. Their goal is to publicly display the absurdity of the idea of resurrection. They wanted to show how ridiculous it is for tangled human relationships to be magically restored in a future life.

The Sadducees were misled on two fundamental points. They do not know the Scripture or the power of God. Affirmation of the resurrection is based on faith in the power of God. What is at stake here is a proper interpretation of the Scripture. In Exodus 3:6 God is talking to Moses and announces "I am God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The interpretation is that these Bible ancestors are dead and buried but God refers to them as if they are living. Jesus' answer is you do not know. It is not about marriage at all, marriage is one of the things of this earth. When people die they will be like angels in heaven. Besides, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The interpretation of Exodus 3:6 is that God is the God of the living.

To put this in contemporary context an example might be you or a church member comes to the preacher or a church leader and asks a question. "My husband died ten years ago and I have since remarried. When I do and go to heaven whose wife will I be?" That is a very good question that is probably on the minds of many people. The answer is neither. Here you might want to throw through your hands up and stop me because when you dream of heaven there is mom and dad, grandparents, aunts and uncles that you miss, and even pets. But Jesus said "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven."

The primary concern is a correct interpretation of the Scripture. It all boils down to the same problem - the will of God versus the will of humanity. We have free agency and with free agency comes a diversity of ideas. God did not set a high standard that cannot be reached or set laws that we cannot keep. God did not set us up for failure or condemnation. God set up the law based on love and mercy. Take a good look at Jesus and you will see that the motive is love. The opponents of Jesus all had one goal and that was to stop Jesus. They all had one problem and was Jealousy. And it was all based on a skewed doctrine whereupon the scribes, Pharisees, high priests, Herodians, Sanhedrin and Sadducees all own a doctrine that displaced the will of God. That was Jesus' major problem. The religious establishment followed a doctrine that displaced the will of God.

God is not about their doctrine. God is about love. Jesus went to Jerusalem deliberately. He let himself be challenged by the religious leaders. One man single handedly stood up to a religious establishment that followed a doctrine that displaced the will of God. One man named Jesus demonstrated the power of God on the cross. One man named Jesus demonstrates the love of God by offering himself as a sacrifice for all of us.