

Scripture:  
Luke 20:27-39

“Well said Jesus, well said!”

The headline at the beginning of Luke 20 in the NIV is --- “The authority of Jesus questioned.”

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And of course this is exactly what happens.

Our passage for today --- represents the third time in Luke 20 alone that Jesus is challenged and questioned.

If ever there was a group of people who wanted to catch someone mid mistake ---- a kind of ----- “Ha --- gotcha” moment --- it was this group of people around Jesus.

And this is a pretty serious cast of characters that are peppering Jesus with questions ---- there are the chief priests --- the teachers of the law ---- the elders ---- the Sadducees ----- the Pharisees ---- and so on --- the whose who in Jewish society --- those in positions of authority ---- the highly respected and looked up to people of the day.

And they weren't there to actually try to learn from Jesus ----- they weren't there to grow in their understanding of the will of God ----- they were there to trick Him --- and tear Him down.

“Tell us by what authority are you doing these things ---- Who gave you this authority they ask?” --- in verse 2 of chapter 20.

And then in verse 20 ----- “Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor.”

And then skipping ahead to verse 26 --- just prior to our passage ---- “They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.”

And then finally the first verse in our passage --- “Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.”

If ever there was a group of people who simply wanted to trap Jesus this was them.

There’s an old expression --- “Sometimes reporters just want headlines and not answers.”

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That’s what’s happening here.

The Sadducees don’t even believe in the resurrection so why would they even bother to ask Jesus questions about it?

If they don’t believe and don’t care to learn why bother asking questions?

The answer of course --- because they simply want to trap Jesus and make Him look bad ----- they’re looking for a detrimental headline about Him.

And if we look closely at the questions they ask --- they are almost childlike --- and infantile.

You know when you give a child an answer and because they don’t like it --- - they come back with another question --- a more detailed one ---- hoping to trip you up and confuse you a bit so maybe they can get what they want.

In my home it might go something like this.

“Daddy can I go on the I-pad now.”

And say my answer is --- “No --- not now.”

I might get something like --- “But why not ---- brother/or sister is on the computer and they didn’t even finish their homework yet --- or --- and they didn’t even clean up their room yet.”

As if that has anything to do with the other one getting on the I-pad.

And you can imagine how it continues on like this --- and then of course the other child eventually pipes in and then it really starts to get interesting.

“But ---- and he said --- she said ---- it isn’t fair!” ----- and so on --- you get the point.

It quickly becomes rather complicated ----- and just as quickly it becomes about something completely unrelated to the initial line of questioning.

Before long ---- because the answer isn’t the desired one ---- there is some weird kind of logic that comes into play --- a kind of desperation.

Well in Luke 20 ----It’s an absurd scenario that the Sadducees pose to Jesus ----- a bit like a child trying to get daddy to let them on the I-pad --- or gaming system --- or whatever it is they desire ----- listen again to the complexity of the question posed to Jesus today ---

“Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. “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 raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?””

Now they are quite right in their deductions ---- in their logic --- they’re trying to follow the letter of the levirate law with regards to marriage.

But why wouldn’t they simply say to Jesus we’re a bit confused or unsure about what happens to marriage relations in the afterlife because as we understand it it may conflict with what Moses taught.

But they don’t because they want to trick Him.

They get all caught up with the levirate marriage system --- that of laws and statutes such that they are unable to contemplate something radically new --- -- the miracle of the resurrection --- and the new reality it ushers in.

What they fail to see is that in light of Christ ----- the whole basis of their concern is moot.

And of course Jesus' answer isn't just clever --- more importantly it shows that the Sadducees solely belong to this age and this world.

God's future --- God's will ---- salvation in Jesus Christ --- the truth and power of the resurrection cannot ever simply be understood as an extension of our present existence.

We cannot take our current lives --- and simply raise them to the nth power and call it heaven.

Resurrection entails transformation.

“There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.” --- Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:40.

In other words --- “There are earthly bodies and there will be heavenly bodies.” ----- and they're not the same thing.

And by extension it's safe to say there are earthly concerns and there will be heavenly concerns ----- and they're not the same thing.

It's as if Jesus says to the Sadducees and the whole group of people who challenged Him --- “Hey folks --- this isn't it ---- there's more to life than just this.....”

That's a big part of what we're celebrating here at the Table today isn't it --- there's more to life than just this.

1 Corinthians 11:26 reminds us ----- “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”

When we do this --- eat and drink in a ceremonial --- sacramental way ---- we proclaim His death until He comes again --- we say --- there is more to life than just this.

There's more than just earth wind and fire --- bodies and mass and entropy and inertia and so on --- there's more than just our earthly existence --- this is but the beginning ---- this is all just the teeniest and tiniest part.

Just as we partake of teeny and tiny parts --- little teeny piece of bread ---- little tiny cup ----- there is so much more --- much larger and wider and more beautiful still to come --- this is all just the small part --- a foretaste of what is to come.

The Sadducees are completely misguided --- they miss the whole point --- they come to Jesus trying to trick Him ----- and in the end they are the ones who come off looking like fools.

I like the way Eugene Peterson translates the end of this passage.

This is how he translates Jesus response to their question ----

“Jesus said, “Marriage is a major preoccupation here, but not there. Those who are included in the resurrection of the dead will no longer be concerned with marriage nor, of course, with death. They will have better things to think about, if you can believe it. All ecstasies and intimacies then will be with God. Even Moses exclaimed about resurrection at the burning bush, saying, ‘God: God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob!’ God isn’t the God of dead men, but of the living. To him all are alive.”

In other words ----- you're whole way of seeing this question is skewed.

They come at from earthly logic --- not transcendent faith.

They come at it --- with pre-resurrection eyes --- not post-resurrection eyes.

They come it from the perspective that Jesus isn't the Christ --- and is but just another itinerant teacher.

They fail completely to understand that in light of Christ everything is made new and transformed.

Again a quote from Corinthians --- this time 2 Corinthians 5:17 --- “Whoever is in Christ is a new creation --- the old is gone and the new is come.”

They see with eyes of the earth only --- and not also with eyes of faith --- not also with eyes opened up by the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

The supreme and beautiful irony of this passage is that in trying to trick Jesus --- and in trying to make Him look stupid and confused.

In trying to strip Him of any authority --- they end up just giving Him more.

Instead of trapping Jesus all they do is ask questions such that in the end Jesus is the only one who comes out as any kind of authoritative figure.

If the Sadducees and Pharisees and chief priests and elders and teachers of the law ----- had of been a little more clever they may have come to Jesus in such a way that at the end of the day they may still have been able to maintain some of their authority and dignity but they don't.

They come at Him all guns a blazin' --- trying and hoping to catch Him off guard.

But they fail.

And because they lived in an honour society --- where just as one gains honour so must another lose it --- they lose honour and they lose authority -- - and Jesus gains it all.

“Well said Jesus --- well said.” ----- is really all they can respond with because He is the one doing the baffling and confusing --- He is the one stripping them of their authority.

“Well said, Jesus.” ----- how many times do you think they said that happily ----- it must have burned them from the inside out ---- to have to say this after trying to burn Him in front of everybody.

As some of you know I love Charlie Brown ---- Charles Schulz is the great theologian of humour if you ask me.

Maybe some of you have seen this one ---- it's a four panel Charlie Brown comic strip -- one of my favourites.

Panel one --- Lucy and her brother Linus looking out the window as it pours rain ---- Lucy says --- “Boy look at it rain ... What if it floods the whole world?”

Panel two --- Linus replies --- “It will never do that ... in the 9th chapter of Genesis God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow...”

Panel three ---- “Lucy replies --- “You’ve taken a great load off my mind...”

Panel four --- Linus’ reply --- “Sound theology has a way of doing that.”

“Sound theology has a way of doing that.”

“Well said, Linus, well said.”

The theology ---- the thinking about God --- the faith seeking understanding ---- that Jesus shares with the Sadducees in Luke 20 leaves the people with a load taken off their mind --- “Well said, Jesus.”---- sound theology has a way doing that.

Jesus always had a way of knowing just what to say and just what to do --- even if it wasn’t always immediately understood or fully appreciated.

Bearing witness ---- testifying to the truth of Jesus Christ is ours to do.

Look at Linus ---- Lucy comes to him with a concern about all the rain and the conversation ends with Lucy at peace because of ----- “sound theology” --- and there are only 4 pieces to their conversation ---- 2 each --- Lucy speaks twice and Linus speaks twice.

Sometimes bearing witness --- sometimes testifying ---- sometimes sharing the Good news of Jesus Christ is simple and straightforward.

“...in the 9th chapter of Genesis God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow...” ----- is all it took for Lucy to say ---- “You’ve taken a great load off my mind...”

“Well said, Linus, well said.”

Jesus always knew what to say.

Maybe just maybe if we can find it in ourselves to give way to Him --- we too can find the right things to say more often.

Imagine they --- the Sadducees come at Him ----- all guns a blazin' ----- ready to trap Jesus and strip Him of the authority he had been gaining through His convincing teaching.

And yet in the end Jesus is the only authoritative figure left standing.

Jesus always pointed --- and spoke about ---- and lived into a future beyond just this --- our earthly existence with all of its earthly concerns.

Instead His focus was on the new heaven and the new earth ---- the new covenant.

In Luke 22 Jesus says ---- “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

The reality of our faith in Jesus Christ is that we know there is more to life than this.

The reality of our faith in Jesus Christ is that what we have set before us is a sign of the new covenant --- a sign of the new life --- the new reality in Christ.

The world can challenge us with many difficult and tricky situations.

Frustration ----- disappointment ---- sadness ---- grief ---- can all too easily become our reality ---- but in the midst of life's challenges ----- is Jesus Christ --- healing --- reconciling ----- redeeming --- always present.

In the midst of life --- just as this Table is set in our midst ---- and in the midst of this world ----- in the midst of it all is Christ saying --- showing --- living out --- all that is right and true and Holy and good.

And sometimes even the least likely of all --- sometimes even those who wish to trick Him --- and strip Him of all dignity and authority and power ---

--- are humbled and brought to their knees ----- and can only respond with -  
 -- “Well said, Jesus.”

If we follow God’s Word ----- and Jesus Christ ---- God’s living Word --- all  
 will be will.

Psalm 119 verses 9-16 reads ----- we heard it as our call to worship today ---

“How can a young person stay on the path of purity?  
 By living according to your word.  
 I seek you with all my heart;  
 do not let me stray from your commands.  
 I have hidden your word in my heart  
 that I might not sin against you.  
 Praise be to you, Lord;  
 teach me your decrees.  
 With my lips I recount  
 all the laws that come from your mouth.  
 I rejoice in following your statutes  
 as one rejoices in great riches.  
 I meditate on your precepts  
 and consider your ways.  
 I delight in your decrees;  
 I will not neglect your word.”

Jesus is God’s living Word ----- and no matter how tricky the situation in life  
 ----- He has something helpful to say.

Even the Sadducees --- after having Jesus open their eyes --- as reluctant as  
 they were to see Him as having any authority can but say --- “Well put,  
 Jesus.”

Jesus is the way --- the truth --- and the life.

He is our prophet --- priest ----- and King.

The one with literally all the answers as the Sadducees found out today in  
 Luke’s gospel.

And as we gather together ---- we do this in remembrance of Him --- until  
He comes again in glory.

Amen.