

The Third Sunday before Advent

The Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Principal Service readings

Job 19.23-27a Job expresses trust in a 'living Defender'
Psalm 17.1-9 [or 17.1-8] The plea of the upright
2 Thessalonians 2.1-5,13-17 God chose you as the first fruits for salvation
Luke 20.27-38 No marrying in heaven; God of the living

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The resurrection of the dead

²⁷ Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus, and asked him a question, ²⁸ 'Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; ³⁰ then the second ³¹ and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. ³² Finally the woman also died. ³³ In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.'

³⁴ Jesus said to them, 'Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶ Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷ And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.'

Comments and Questions

The Sadducees were one of the Jewish religious groups that Jesus encountered – they were the conservative fundamentalists of their day. They believed only in the written scriptures. One of the beliefs that they held which distinguished them from another group, the Pharisees, was lack of belief in life after death.

The Sadducees refer to the law of Moses – Deuteronomy 5.25, which says that if a husband dies leaving his widow childless, his brother should marry her to try to ensure heirs for him. The same law can also be found in the legal codes of the Assyrians and the Hittites. Why would such a law have been written?

Jesus obviously has some ideas about how people live in the age of resurrection. However, his statements don't seem to elicit any curiosity from his opponents. Jesus expresses his faith in the living God. HE points out that when Moses encountered the Lord in the burning bush he referred to God as the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. Abraham and Isaac both died long ago, hence there must be life after death. Jesus shows in his attitude that he is living towards a different reality, a fuller reality, the kingdom of God.

Quotations

1

If we only had eyes to see and ears to hear and wits to understand, we would know that the Kingdom of God in the sense of holiness, goodness, beauty is as close as breathing and is crying out to born both within ourselves and within the world; we would know that the Kingdom of God is what we all of us hunger for above all other things even when we don't know its name or realize that it's what we're starving to death for. The Kingdom of God is where our best dreams come from and our truest prayers. We glimpse it at those moments when we find ourselves being better than we are and wiser than we know. We catch sight of it when at some moment of crisis a strength seems to come to us that is greater than

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our own strength. The Kingdom of God is where we belong. It is home, and whether we realize it or not, I think we are all of us homesick for it.

Frederick Buechner, 1926–

2

The liturgy of the Eucharist is best understood as a journey or procession. It is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom. We use the word 'dimension' because it seems the best way to indicate the manner of our sacramental entrance into the risen life of Christ. Color transparencies 'come alive' when viewed in three dimensions instead of two. The presence of the added dimension allows us to see much better the actual reality of what has been photographed. In very much the same way, though of course any analogy is condemned to fail, our entrance into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the ultimate reality of life. It is not an escape from the world, rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.

For the life of the world: sacraments and Orthodoxy / Alexander Schmemmann,

Related topics

For further study:

Resurrection of the just; eschatology; soteriology; scripture interpretation; life after death

Closing Prayer

God of all the living,
in the resurrection of Christ Jesus
you have given us the life
which even death cannot destroy.

Remember your unshakeable promise
and strengthen us to live in this world
as your new creation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.