

Sermon Luke 20:27-40 25th S of Pent All Saints Day

Sermon: 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – All Saints

Text: Luke 20:27-40 (v. 38)

Theme: The resurrection of the dead

Goal: To comfort all with the assurance of the resurrection, because Jesus gives us a life that never ends.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: All Saints Day doesn't refer only to the named and known saints like St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Thomas and others. It refers to all who were sanctified (were made saints) by the blood of Jesus and are now with God in eternity. This means: We remember all our beloved ones who departed in the true faith in Jesus.

How is their life at the other side, in heaven? What do they do or what don't they do? Our text opens a little window to show inside of heaven and Jesus comments just a little detail of their lives.

I – To deny the resurrection is to deny the Christian faith

The Sadducees, who brought this strange story to Jesus of a woman who had been the wife of seven brothers, were a religious group inside the Jew people who accepted only the first Five Books of Moses, who denied the resurrection of the body, and who were materialists. What mattered to them was only this life. There is no life after death. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” was their way of life (1 Corinthians 15:32).

This belief, mixed with some pagans believes who didn't believe in a life after death either, caused a big problem in the church in Corinth. The longest chapter in 1 Corinthians (58 verses) is dedicated by Paul to explain and to defend the resurrection of the body. Beginning with the resurrection of Christ, which cannot be denied due to a long list of witnesses mentioned by Paul, he argues

that our resurrection cannot be denied either. To deny the resurrection of the body is to deny the Christian faith. Paul wrote: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

There is life after death and there is resurrection of the body. When we die, our body remains here and will decompose or will be turned in ashes; but the souls of the faithful Christians are collected by the holy angels and are taken to heaven, to be with God, waiting for the resurrection of the body at the end of the ages.

Jesus reaffirmed the eternal life of those who passed away when He quoted the Old Testament and replied to the Sadducees: “But in the account of the burning bush (who was our Old Testament reading for today), 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.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.” With this, Jesus attested that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive with God. They died and their bodies were buried in the Holy Land; but their souls are alive in heaven.

## II – The Holy Christian Church – The communion of Saints

We confess in the Apostles’ Creed: *I believe in the Holy Christian Church – the Communion of Saints.* This Communion of Saints begins here and continues in eternity. We are still saints and sinners as long as we live: Saints, because Jesus forgives us and we are free from sin and guilt; sinners, because we still have our old nature and we are tempted. Luther explained in the Small catechism: *In this Christian Church, He (the Holy Spirit) daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.* But once we

pass this life and enter eternity, sin remains in the past, and those blessed once are saints forever because God cleansed them from all unrighteousness.

When we sing the *Sanctus* in the Holy Communion liturgy, we sing it *with angels and archangels and with all the hosts of heaven*. These *hosts of heaven* are those who are in heaven waiting for the resurrection of their body, serving God day and night.

What are they doing there? We can only think in a human level. Therefore the non-sense question raised by the Sadducees about the woman who had been married to seven brothers: “Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

What will we do up in heaven? Will we have a job? Will we only sing and praise God there? ... Is this not boring?

Don't worry about how it will be in heaven. Paul wrote: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). We cannot imagine how it will be; but it will be awesome... of course it will! And Jesus replied to the Sadducees: “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.”

God has bigger plans for us than we can imagine. Just trust and follow Jesus. You will reach the Father's house and everything past will be past. We will enjoy a new earth and a new heaven!

II – The resurrection of the body

We also confess in the Apostles' Creed: *I believe in the resurrection of the body.* Luther explained: *On the Last Day, He (the Holy Spirit) will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.*

When we bury someone, the Liturgy for a Christian Burial says: *We now commit this body to its resting place: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subdue all things to Himself. May God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.*

I repeat the words of Jesus in our text: “But in the account of the burning 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.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”

Conclusion: The celebration of All Saints Day lifts our eyes up to God's promises and to *the life of the world to come* (Nicene Creed), in a lovely remembrance of our departed beloved once and of all saints who have gone before us. The little window to heaven that Jesus opened for a while in our text doesn't give us all the answers we wish to know; but it encourages us that there is a life after death, that Jesus opened the way to reach eternal life through His death and resurrection, and that He prepares us in this journey to remain steadfast in the true way, talking to us in His Word, feeding us with His body and Blood in the Holy Communion, and taking us by our hand till we reach the goal. Amen.