

Pentecost 24 11/10/19
St. Luke 20:27-40 C

“HE IS NOT GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT OF THE LIVING, FOR ALL LIVE TO HIM”.

“I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you (Ge 22:5).” Those are the words of Abraham. God appeared to Abraham several times over the course of many years to tell him he would be the father of a great nation; his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands upon the seashore. But, no child was born to Abraham and Sarah. That is until he was 100 years old and Isaac is born. About 14 years go by, and the day comes when God instructs Father Abraham to kill him, to sacrifice his only-begotten Son that he loved. As we looked at in Bible class last week, Abraham and Isaac journeyed to the place of sacrifice, and Abraham instructed his servant, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” Did you catch those words? “I **and the boy**.” Abraham was about to sacrifice his only-begotten son, and yet he says, “I and the boy” will come again. What does this mean? It means that Abraham believed that if he killed the son he loved, God would raise him from the dead. Always remembering that Scripture interprets Scripture, the 11th chapter of Hebrews reads, “By faith Abraham, when he tested, offered up Isaac...He considered that God was able even to raise him **from the dead** (v. 19)”.

As we approach the end of the Church Year, the focus of our worship is the 2nd Coming of Christ. On that great day, when Jesus comes again in glory, He will raise our bodies from the dust of the earth and re-unite them with our eternal souls. The Bible teaches us that the same bodies that have died will be made alive again.

Our Gospel lesson for this Sunday begins with a question. The Sadducees, who the Evangelist Luke teaches us did not believe in the resurrection of the body, came to Jesus with a question, which seems to be about marriage. But, in reality, it is not about marriage. They came with cold and calculated motives to trap Jesus, to show that He was wrong and that they were correct in teaching that there is no resurrection of the body.

The Sadducees questioned Jesus about marriage, where the brother of a man who dies childless must marry his dead brother's wife in order to provide a son to keep the family name alive. This is what the Old Testament taught. But, Jesus did not fall into their trap. He went right to the root of Sadducees' unbelief. Jesus uses their question as an opportunity to teach the doctrine of the resurrection.

The Sadducees didn't get it! They were equating this age with the age to come. God established marriage so that humanity would not be alone, that we would multiply and fill the earth. But, in the age to come, there will be no marriage. They didn't get it, because they did not believe in the resurrection. They only believed in the here and now!

What about you Dear Saint of God? Does the resurrection of the body seem too difficult for you to believe today? The Lord's return reminds us how fleeting and temporary this earthly life is. We are strangers here; our citizenship is in heaven. Yet, in the death of our sin, do we forget that this earthly life is temporary? Like the Sadducees, we cannot conceive of life in any other way than we know it now, today. We look for meaning and purpose only in the pleasure and treasure of the here and now. That is our nature.

But, try as we might, we cannot ignore the truth of earthly life -- there is only a step between you and death at this very moment. The Bible says,

“the wages of sin is death” (Ro 6). Dust you are and, because of sin, to the dust you shall return.

But, the Bible teaches us that God’s answer to death is life, eternal life, in the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

To teach the doctrine of the resurrection, Jesus refers to the Old Testament; specifically, our Old Testament lesson for today. At the burning bush, God tells Moses that He is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to show that the patriarchs, who had all died hundreds of years before, were still alive with God. Jesus is teaching that God is the God of the living and not the dead, because all believers live in Him, today and for all eternity.

We learn of the resurrection of the body from Job’s most wondrous confession. In the midst of all Job’s sorrows and struggles, his hope was the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold...My heart faints within me” (Job 19).

That means for us, Dear Saints, that with our human, physical eyes -- eyes that on this side of heaven sometimes fill with tears -- we will see Jesus.

The New Testament teaches us the resurrection of the body.

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (Lk 9:22),” Jesus said. Every time Jesus tells us He would be crucified and die for our sin and our salvation, He promised us the 3rd day, He would rise. Yes, He was crucified and died for our sin, so that we would be forgiven; but He was also raised to life again the 3rd day, to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light (cf. 2 Tm 1:10).

The Easter resurrection of Christ means that you will rise to eternal life. In our lesson, Jesus says, “[God] is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him.” God is God of the living, because in Christ we are alive today and forever.

We have been made alive forever in Christ in the new birth of our baptism. St. Paul writes,

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death...if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Ro 6:3,5).

We still think of death as something in the future. But to God, our death is in the past. The Christian faith and life is not “I will die”, but “I have died.” At our baptism, we died and rose to a new life in Christ. Now and forever, we live and move and have our being in Christ.

Yes, because of sin, one day, we will breath our last and our eternal souls will depart our mortal bodies. This is what death is. At the very moment our eternal soul departs our body, it is immediately with Christ in heaven.

But, we must ever remember that God never created the body and soul to be apart. On the last day, the day Christ returns, all the dead will rise, body and soul reunited. The unbelievers will rise to eternal death, that is, the shame and torment of hell forever. Believers will rise with glorified bodies and enter into the full enjoyment of being with Jesus forever.

We will be forever in heaven with the Lord. This past week, I posted a quote on the church’s Facebook page from the author JRR Tolkien, “The birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus means that one day everything sad will come untrue.” Think of that joy for a moment, Dear Child of God. No

more worry, fear, and regret. No more wars and rumors of wars. No more murders, vandalism, gossip, and hatred. No more needles, medicine, and medical appointment. No more pain, sadness, loneliness. No more death. How our hearts yearn within us!