

The Threat of Life (lesson 6)

The God of the Living

Text: Luke 20:27-38

Sense of Smell

Introduction: Unique to us- but the people in the gospel story could smell the danger in Jesus.

1. All they had to do was sniff the air around him – and notice the people who traveled with him to sense that he was threat.
2. These people around Jesus (his critics)- their lives were arranged the best way it could have been.
3. Jesus came into their midst as a threat of newness & deep change & transformation.
4. Everywhere Jesus went his words and life caused newness to emerge.
 - Jesus caused old things to just drop off and die!
 - He even at times dismissed some of the things that people most treasured. (ouch)

The Threatened

- A. Luke 20 highlights those who had the most to lose
 - Teachers • Priests • Elders • Pharisees
 1. They come to him to quiz & trick him (show he's crazy/irrelevant or **dangerous to the system**)
 2. V. 2 they ask him about his authority v. 22 is it proper to obey Roman law?
(Jesus answers in a most unexpected way)
- B. Today's lesson though highlights those who seemed to be threatened & frightened most by Jesus. (Because Jesus spoke of the resurrection)
 1. These are the big dudes (the downtown priests who were cozy with the bigwigs of their day.
 2. These are people with power! (they know how to get things done)
 3. They realistically live in this world, because this is the only world there is.
 4. For these people, it's as good as it will ever be, so we must keep it and maintain it
 - They certainly don't want change (at least not the change that Jesus offers)
 - This is because they notice the people, the ones they try to keep in their place, are getting a little brave around Jesus.

The Cleverness

- A. A frontal attack would show their own fear and expose their interests
 1. So they take the high road... as the protectors of the Torah (Law of Moses)
 2. They don't want to show that Jesus is their enemy... oh no!
 3. They want to show that Jesus is the enemy of the Bible, of the tradition and of Moses
 - This would show them to be the biblical ones
- B. So they ask him about the Bible
 1. They know the dangerous sounds he's making about transformation and all that...
 - So they're asking "you're not going to change everything, are you?" (Dt. 25)
 2. How odd that in light of all the questions about life and faith and power around them that they would find such a marginal issue for the oppressed Jews of the 1st. century
"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 have children for his brother"

- The intension of this Law was to protect the family line and the tribes.
- It was intended to strengthen the family (odd to us, but relevant to them)

Watch what they do:

1. They take the passage well beyond its real intent.
 - These Sadducees are the main voice in Judea that does not believe in resurrection.
 - They do not believe that God can do a new thing.
 - They think their old rules will cover all possibilities and that anything that goes against their rules cannot be.
 - This law of theirs is more precious to them than this new emergent life that Jesus speaks of.

So they ask, who's wife will this woman be in the resurrection?

- This resurrection stuff really makes the Law unworkable for these guys... so as far as they're concerned, Jesus is now trapped!

Jesus

- He doesn't want to violate the Bible
 - But he does know that God will do a new thing!
2. This is an ugly trap of religious tradition-- (causes conflict with God's power)
 - Surely God will do nothing that runs beyond our tight religious control...
 3. This is where the Sadducees live-- they sense that this resurrection business is dangerous stuff.

Watch Jesus

1. His answer is far more dangerous than they could have imagined.
 - Jesus brings it back to Moses (the burning bush)
 - Jesus says that Moses believed in the resurrection because Moses heard God say that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. Jesus is saying that I can play this silly bible game too, but I'll out bible you!
 - We don't want to fall into the trap of the bible game, because we know that it's easy to quote the bible almost anyway we want.
3. So Jesus refuses to make this discussion the woman and the seven brothers.
4. So he shifts out of this discussion and says let me tell you something about God!
 - v. 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."**
 - Jesus is saying that God is the power of life in the midst of a world bent on death.

And it kills the entire discussion! (and the teachers even say Amen!)

-And they dared to ask him no more questions.

So What

- A. It's here that Jesus hits the main truth of God.
 - God wills life! •God has power for life! •God will work life among us!
- B. And now we find ourselves at the main truth of our own life.
 - That the God of life wills life for us!
 1. Jesus refuses to let the resurrection be taken off only into the future.
 - No! The God of the living concerns us here and now.
- C. This is no doubt a hard word for the Sadducees and no doubt for those who want to control God with their little truths about what God will and will not do!

Conclusion:

- A. We have a choice to respond this morning
 - 1. We can be like the Sadducees (threatened by the God of life) who no doubt went home grumbling and looking for another day to trap Jesus
 - 2. Or we can respond in thanksgiving and delight.
- B. The Scripture reading: 1 Chron. 29:11-13 is a great model for responding to the God of life.
 - 1. David is an amazing model of faith for us.
 - Talk about a person who had it wrong many times-- yet many times David is portrayed as one who could:
 - Trust •Repent •Risk •Change
 - 2. At the end of David's life we find him as a man with expressive praise to God.
 - David invites the whole assembly to join him in this praise.
 - David's words are reflective of a man who willingly hands his life over to God.

1 Chron. 29:11-13

Yours, O LORD , is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
Yours, O LORD , is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.
12 Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.
In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.
13 Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name.

- C. The power of God is not a threat---but invitation. Not danger--but possibility
- D. So what will it be?
 - 1. Speechless like the Sadducees- plotting how to stay in control for one more day?
 - 2. Or speechless in amazement like David, able only to praise because of the God of life?

The God of the living affirms to us that God has not yet quit and that God will have his way!

And... we are on our way with God, rejoicing, praising!

Prayer

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978-256-8901

February 27, 2005