

Mark 12: 18-27

18 Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, ¹⁹Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. ²⁰There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; ²¹and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; ²²none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. ²³In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her.'

24 Jesus said to them, 'Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? ²⁷He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.'

Meditation: Now it's the turn of the Sadducees to test Jesus. The question is about the resurrection of the dead and the afterlife. The Sadducees do not believe in a resurrection of the dead (there is no mention of it in the Pentateuch - the first five books of the bible). And they give reasons why such a belief would be problematic (whose wife will she be in heaven?). Jesus' response reflects his understanding of how differently things operate in the dimension called heaven than they do on earth. We can't judge things as simply continuations of what happens here and now. Moreover, Jesus argues that even in the first five books of Moses, God is revealed as a God of those who live beyond the time of their earthly existence and the space of their earthly sojourn.

What's also fascinating is that life after death is spoken of in various ways by Jesus and in the New Testament as a whole. It is like a great feast, like a gathering in the heavenly court, comforted and refreshed. It is like a kingdom fellowship surrounded by the intimacy of family all around bonded by love. Heaven is also an interim time until the 'resurrection of the dead' and when heaven and earth will become one (the Lord's prayer: Thy kingdom come... on earth as it is in heaven).

With the large numbers of dead and dying due to the pandemic, and with potential death of many more millions because basic human needs around the world are being neglected, is there any comfort in being granted an imagination of faith as Christians in life beyond what we know here and now?

Prayer: Grant us faith, O God, faith in the resurrection of the dead, faith in the dimension of life and reality called 'heaven', faith that our lives and loves here and now are not terminated after we take our last breaths. Grant us faith that our struggles for justice and our commitments to love here and now will matter beyond our lifespan. Grant us faith that people are accountable for what they do here and now. Grant us faith that there is forgiveness and mercy for all our imperfections, and that our failed

potential to be and do as you have created us will somehow find fulfillment in eternal communion with you. Grant us faith, O God... Amen.

