

Our Opening Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to bring us life in all its fulness; to offer hope beyond the grave. Teach us that death is not the end, but a new beginning- the gateway to life everlasting.

May that confidence shape our attitude not only towards death but towards life also. May we live each day not just in the context of the here and now but of eternity, knowing there is nothing in heaven or earth that shall ever finally be able to separate us from your love.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,.....

Amen

Bible Reading Luke 20:27-38

Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. "Teacher," they said, "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. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too.

Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given

in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age 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. But in the account of the 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.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

The religious authorities in Jesus's time were always looking for ways to question his teachings. They did this by asking trick questions which they hoped Jesus would answer and contradict something he had said, to discredit him in the eyes of his disciples and followers.

The Sadducees were a group of aristocratic high priests who held power in the Temple. They strictly followed the written scriptures but did not believe in eternal life – that is, when a person dies, they live on in heaven with God. Trying to discredit him the Sadducees ask Jesus what they think is a tricky question about a woman whose husband died and then married his seven brothers in turn after each of them died, before finally the woman also died. They ask Jesus the



question – whose wife will she be in heaven?

Jesus answers by first telling the Sadducees that they are thinking about eternal life in the wrong way. Jesus tells them that they are assuming that conventional social arrangements such as marriage legal agreements which are to do with titles and property will be the same in heaven. In Mark's gospel account of this Jesus says to the Sadducees "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?"

I believe the implication of Jesus' words is that when we die and our spirit returns to be with God, we will have a much deeper experience of human relationships which go beyond the social contracts of this world. Life in heaven will be different from life at the present time. As Jesus said of those in eternal life 'they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children.'

I am sometimes asked the question – "what happens when I die? Also "will I see again my wife, husband, partner, friend, sister, brother, relation, loved one who has died?" The fact that gospel writers Luke, Matthew and Mark have all included an account of this encounter Jesus had with the Sadducees tells us that Jesus had an important message to convey to us regarding eternal life which answers this question.

It is my belief that Jesus' message is that when we die, we will not physically see those that have died before us but we will spiritually be 'at one' with God and those that we love. That spiritual connection then will be at a much deeper level than we experience in this life. As Jesus implied it goes beyond marital and family ties and is a depth of greater love.

Jesus went on to talk about Moses who encountered a perpetually burning bush in the Old Testament account. Moses called then on the God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, all people who had died many years before. Understand, Jesus says, that God is the God of the living – they are not dead but alive with God in eternal life.

When we think about those who we love who have died and gone to be with God before us, it is good to remember Jesus' words-

'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.'

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, may new life be born within me this and every day, and may your life-giving hope sustain me through the joys and sorrows of this world, until that time when I pass through the shadow of death into the light of your eternal kingdom.

Amen.

Prayers inspired by 'Prayerfully Yours' by Nick Fawcett.