

PSALM 98 AND LUKE 20:27-38

THERE IS AN OLD SAYING: "THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND."

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL READING WE FIND THAT FOR ONE BRIEF SHINNING MOMENT IN TIME- JESUS AND THE PHARISEES WERE FRIENDS.

THIS CAME ABOUT WHEN JESUS WAS ABLE TO BEAT THE SADDUCEES AT THEIR OWN GAME. THE PHARISEES ENDED UP ON JESUS' SIDE BECAUSE THEY AND THE SADDUCEES WERE NEARLY BITTER ENEMIES.

BUT BEFORE WE LOOK INTO JUST WHY AND HOW JESUS DEFEATED THE ENEMIES OF THE PHARISEES- A LITTLE BACKGROUND MIGHT BE HELPFUL.

LAST WEEK WE LOOKED AT THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN JESUS AND THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR OF JERICO, A MAN NAMED ZACCHEAUS, WHOM THE SAVIOR BEFRIENDED.

MUCH HAS HAPPENED IN THE LIFE OF JESUS SINCE THAT DAY. LET US REVIEW THE MAJOR EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE.

THE LORD MADE HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM ON THE BACK OF A DONKEY, LAMENTED OVER THE CITY, AND OVER TURNED THE TABLES OF THE MONEY CHANGERS IN THE TEMPLE.

HE THEN BEGAN TO TEACH IN THE TEMPLE EVERY DAY, AND PEOPLE WERE BEING DRAWN TO HIS TEACHINGS.

HIS SUCCESS HOWEVER ALSO DREW THE ATTENTION OF HIS OPPONENTS, WHO STROVE TO DISCREDIT HIM, EVEN AS THEY PLANNED HIS DEATH.

CHAPTER 20 OPENS WITH A SERIES OF VERBAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN JESUS AND HIS ENEMIES. FIRST HE IS ASKED BY WHAT AUTHORITY DOES HE TEACH, AND PERFORM MIRACLES?

BUT JESUS REPLIES THAT HE WILL ONLY ANSWER- IF THEY FIRST TELL HIM BY WHAT AUTHORITY DID JOHN BAPTIZE PEOPLE- WAS HIS BAPTISM OF HEAVENLY OR HUMAN ORIGIN?

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS REPLIED THEY DID NOT KNOW, AND SO JESUS REFUSED TO ANSWER THE QUESTION.

BUT THEN, THEY ATTEMPTED TO GET THE SAVIOR INTO TROUBLE WITH EITHER ROME OR THE PEOPLE BY ASKING IF A GOOD JEW OUGHT TO PAY TAXES?

AS YOU MAY RECALL, THE LORD RESPONDED BY HOLDING UP A ROMAN COIN AND SAYING: "GIVE TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S AND GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S."

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING IS THE THIRD CHALLENGE JEWISH AUTHORITIES ISSUED TO JESUS, AND THIS TIME A GROUP CALLED THE SADDUCEES ASKED THE QUESTION.

THIS WAS A SMALL GROUP WITHIN JUDAISM MADE UP OF THE ARISTOCRATIC AND HIGH PRIESTLY CLASSES.

ONE ANCIENT JEWISH HISTORIAN WROTE THAT THEY WERE SO CONTRARY THEY OFTEN LOOKED DOWN ON ONE ANOTHER.

BUT THEY ESPECIALLY CLASHED WITH THE PHARISEES, BECAUSE THEY WERE IN A KIND OF THEOLOGICAL WAR WITH THEM.

THE SADDUCEES ONLY ACCEPTED AS SACRED SCRIPTURE THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, AND DEUTERONOMY.

THESE BOOKS ARE ALSO KNOWN AS THE TORAH- THE LAW OF MOSES, BECAUSE GOD GAVE THE RULES AND REGULATIONS CONTAINED IN THEM TO ISRAEL THROUGH MOSES.

THE PHARISEES, ON THE OTHER HAND, BELIEVED THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS AND THE OTHER WRITINGS FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE SCRIPTURE EQUAL TO THE LAW.

AND THEY BELIEVED AS WELL, GOD SPOKE THROUGH THE ORAL TRADITIONS.

BUT THE SADDUCEES DID NOT. NOR DID THEY BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL, IN AN AFTER-LIFE, RESURRECTION, OR IN ANGELS AND DEMONS. THEY SAID THERE WAS NO PROOF OF THOSE THINGS OR BEINGS IN THE LAW.

THE TWO GROUPS OFTEN DEBATED AND ATTEMPTED TO CONVERT ONE ANOTHER TO THEIR OWN THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF SCRIPTURE AND OTHER MATTERS OF FAITH.

THE SADDUCEES HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CONSISTENTLY MADE THE PHARISEES LOOK FOOLISH WITH THE KIND OF QUESTION THEY ASKED OF JESUS.

THE PROBLEM WAS THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ANSWER ACCORDING TO THE SADDUCEES RULES, OR SO THEY THOUGHT.

THE QUESTION, ACCORDING TO THE SADDUCEES PROVED THERE WAS NO RESURRECTION BECAUSE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DECIDE TO WHICH HUSBAND THE WOMAN WOULD BELONG.

BIBLICAL SCHOLARS HAVE SURMISED THE QUESTION ABOUT MARRIAGE WAS OFTEN USED TO SILENCE PHARISEES. THE PREMISE BEHIND THE CHALLENGE JESUS WAS GIVEN WAS FOUND IN GOD'S LAW.

THE LAW COMMANDED THE BROTHER OF A MAN WHO WAS MARRIED AND DIED WITHOUT CHILDREN: TO MARRY HIS BROTHER'S WIDOW AND HAVE ONE CHILD WITH HER TO CARRY ON THE DEAD BROTHER'S LEGACY.

THIS LAW IS RECORDED IN DEUTERONOMY 25. HOWEVER THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE OF SCRIPTURE THAT THE LAW WAS BROADLY FOLLOWED.

THE SADDUCEES' HOWEVER MAINTAINED IT WAS APPROPRIATE TO ASK THE QUESTION BECAUSE THE LAW WAS IN THEIR VIEW, TECHNICALLY STILL IN EFFECT, EVEN IF IT WAS NO LONGER FOLLOWED BY THE MAJORITY OF JEWS.

IN THE PAST THEY MANAGED TO STUMP THE PHARISEES WHO COULD NOT WITH ANY AUTHORITY SAY TO WHICH MAN THE WOMAN WOULD BELONG IN THE RESURRECTION.

THE SADDUCEES HOPED TO CAPTURE AND THUS HUMILIATE JESUS WITH THE SAME KIND OF TRAP THAT WORKED SO WELL AGAINST THE PHARISEES.

NOTICE THAT JESUS ANSWERED THEM IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AGREE WITH THE PREMISE THAT THE QUESTION WAS A RIDICULOUS ONE.

WHILE HIS ANSWER SHOWS THE QUESTION WAS FOOLISH, IT WAS NOT SO BECAUSE THERE IS NO RESURRECTION, AS THE SADDUCEES MAINTAIN.

INSTEAD JESUS TAUGHT IT WAS A FOOLISH QUESTION BECAUSE LIFE IN HEAVEN IS SO VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM LIFE ON EARTH THE QUESTION IS IRRELEVANT.

HIS ANSWER SUGGESTS THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE NEXT LIFE IS MERELY A CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT ONE, HAVE NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE POWER OR VISION OF THE LORD THEIR GOD.

FOR EXAMPLE: MARRIAGE JESUS SAID IS NECESSARY FOR EARTHLY LIFE AND THE ORDERING OF HUMAN SOCIETY. HOWEVER, IN HEAVEN ALL EARTHLY RELATIONSHIPS ARE CHANGED, BECAUSE HUMAN BEINGS ARE CHANGED.

THIS WAS MOST LIKELY AN UNPOPULAR CONCEPT, SINCE HISTORY INDICATES MOST CULTURES- THAT BELIEVED IN AN AFTER-LIFE, THOUGHT IT WAS A CONTINUATION OF LIFE ON EARTH.

FOR EXAMPLE- WE FIND IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN BURIALS EVIDENCE THEY BELIEVED ONE WHO WAS A SLAVE OR ROYALTY ON EARTH, KEPT THE SAME STATUS IN THE NEXT LIFE.

THUS REPRESENTATIONS OF THE THINGS PEOPLE NEEDED TO MAINTAIN THE SAME LIFE STYLE AFTER DEATH, WERE PLACED IN TOMBS.

OTHER CULTURES HAVE SIMILAR PRACTICES OF PLACING IN THE GRAVE OF THE DECEASED THE TOOLS OR MATERIAL ITEMS THEY WOULD NEED IN THE AFTER-LIFE.

JESUS WAS SAYING- THE BELIEF THAT LIFE IN HEAVEN, OR AT THE RESURRECTION WILL BE BUSINESS AS USUAL IS INCORRECT.

INSTEAD HE TELLS US THAT THE THINGS WE NEEDED TO THRIVE ON EARTH WILL NOT BE NECESSARY IN HEAVEN. BUT THE LORD WAS NOT SAYING WE WILL NO LONGER HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LOVED ONES WE SHARE ETERNITY WITH, BUT RATHER OUR RELATIONSHIPS WILL BE DIFFERENT.

THE APOSTLE PAUL CONFIRMS JESUS' TEACHING ON THIS MATTER IN HIS LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS, WHERE HE EXPLAINS WE WILL BE CHANGED AFTER WE DIE.

IN **1 CORINTHIANS 15** HE WRITES ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY: "WHAT I AM SAYING BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS THIS, FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, NOR DOES THE PERISHABLE INHERIT THE IMPERISHABLE...."

PAUL'S WORDS OF COURSE, WERE NOT YET WRITTEN WHEN JESUS RESPONDED TO THE SADDUCEES' CHALLENGE, SINCE HE HAD NOT YET DIED AND RISEN.

SO LET US NOW RETURN TO THE TEXT AND FIND OUT HOW ELSE JESUS ARGUED IN FAVOR OF THE EXISTENCE OF BOTH LIFE AFTER DEATH, AND THE RESURRECTION.

LOOK AT HOW CLEVER JESUS WAS. HE RESPONDED USING THE SADDUCEES' OWN SOURCES.

SINCE THEY ACCEPTED ONLY THE BOOKS OF THE LAW AS TRUE SCRIPTURE, JESUS, OFFERED THEM EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXTS THEY ACCEPTED.

AND, WE SHOULD NOTE, THE SAVIOR DID NOT PICK AN OBSCURE PASSAGE, BUT LIFTED UP ONE OF THE MOST SACRED PARTS OF THE JEWISH SCRIPTURE AS PROOF OF LIFE AFTER DEATH.

HE REMINDED THE SADDUCEES ABOUT THE PIVOTAL EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL. IT IS WHEN GOD SPOKE TO MOSES FROM A BURNING BUSH, AS RECORDED IN EXODUS CHAPTER THREE.

MOSES SEES THE BUSH BURNING AND TURNS ASIDE. GOD CALLS TO HIM FROM THE MIDST OF THE FLAMES AND TELLS MOSES WHO HE IS- PROCLAIMING:

"I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, THE GOD OF JACOB."

GOD SPEAKS OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MOSES' ANCESTORS IN THE PRESENT TENSE.

BY DOING SO, IT SUGGESTS THAT EVEN THOUGH ALL THOSE NAMED WERE ALREADY DEAD, FOR GOD THEY WERE ALIVE. DO YOU SEE WHAT JESUS WAS TELLING THE SADDUCEES ABOUT THEIR ERROR?

HE WAS SAYING THAT THEIR OWN SCRIPTURES, IF THEY HAD READ AND UNDERSTOOD THEM CORRECTLY, GAVE ABSOLUTE PROOF OF ETERNAL LIFE..

GOD, JESUS CLAIMED, WOULD NOT HAVE SPOKEN OF ABRAHAM AND THE OTHERS IN THE PRESENT TENSE IF THEY HAD NOT STILL BEEN ALIVE.

THUS FROM THE VERY MOUTH OF THE LORD GOD, AS HEARD BY MOSES, THERE IS A LIFE BEYOND THIS ONE, AND A CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

TO THE SADDUCEES JESUS EXPLAINED IT THIS WAY: "NOW GOD IS GOD NOT OF THE DEAD, BUT OF THE LIVING, FOR TO HIM ALL ARE ALIVE."

THUS CHRIST MET THE SADDUCEES ON THEIR OWN GROUND AND DEMONSTRATED TO THEM THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE TEXTS THEY HELD SACRED.

BUT WHAT, YOU MAY WONDER, DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH US?

FROM JESUS' RESPONSE THERE IS ONE LESSON WE CAN TAKE FROM LUKE 20 AND APPLY IN OUR OWN LIVES.

THE APPLICATION INVOLVES US MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE IN THEIR FAITH, AND SEEKING TO SHOW THEM WHERE THEY MIGHT NEED TO GO.

JESUS, IN ESSENCE SHOWED RESPECT FOR THE SADDUCEES. HE DID NOT MOCK, OR CONDEMN THEM FOR THEIR NARROW MINDED VIEW OF SCRIPTURE.

INSTEAD HE ACCEPTED THEIR POSITION, YET ALSO GAVE THEM REASON TO QUESTION THE PREMISE THAT THERE IS NO SOUL OR LIFE AFTER DEATH.

HE USED ONLY THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE THEY HELD TO BE TRUE SCRIPTURE TO SHOW THEM ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD IS A POSSIBILITY

IN THIS WAY HE SUGGESTED THEIR INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE WAS INCOMPLETE AND INCORRECT.

WE DO NOT KNOW IF HE WAS ABLE TO CONVINCED MANY OR ANY OF THE SADDUCEES TO RETHINK THEIR VIEWS, BUT HE CERTAINLY GAVE THEM FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

PERHAPS THERE ARE TEACHINGS IN SCRIPTURE, OR HOW TO LIVE AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS, WE TOO NEED TO RETHINK AND PRAY ABOUT.

INDEED, JESUS, MAY HAVE BEEN SPEAKING HERE, NOT ONLY TO THE JEWISH LEADERSHIP, BUT ALSO TO HIS CHURCH.

HIS CHALLENGE FOR US IS TO BE OPEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INSTRUCTION AND INSPIRATION, RATHER THAN TO BE SO SET IN OUR WAYS OR OUR OPINIONS, THAT WE CLOSE OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TO GOD'S WISDOM AND WILL.

LET US PRAY:

HEAVENLY FATHER, WE PRAISE YOU BECAUSE, THROUGH YOUR SON JESUS CHRIST AND THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, YOU HAVE GIVEN US FORGIVENESS, FAITH, AND THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

WE ASK THAT YOU WILL STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH AND HOPE IN YOU. EMPOWER, WE PRAY, US TO LIVE AS CHRIST'S FAITHFUL DISCIPLES.

MAY WE CONTINUE TO GROW IN LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING UNTIL YOU CALL US TO TAKE THE PLACE CHRIST HAS PREPARED FOR US IN YOUR KINGDOM. AMEN

Sermon Summary-Luke 20:27-38

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