

Sermon: 22nd Sunday after Pentecost (C) 11/9/25

Peace, Danville Pr. Lucy Kolin, preacher

Texts: Job 19:23-27a, Luke 20:27-38

Back in September when Pr. Steve asked me to preside and preach on this Sunday – the first Sunday after his departure and the Sunday before Pastor Diane begins serving as our bridge pastor, I simply looked at my calendar, saw I was available, and said, “Yes.” I am glad to be useful and always glad when my service as presider and preacher means a Sunday spent with my **own** congregation.

And **then** last week I actually read the gospel appointed for today and said, “O Lord, what have I gotten myself into?” But I had said yes and I’m the preacher you’ve got today, so I prayed the Holy Spirit would show me the way to saying something meaningful and full of grace today. After you hear the sermon, you can tell me whether I listened to the Spirit and translated her direction in a way that is helpful today.

The first reading from Job is quite familiar, especially if you’re a fan of Handel’s Messiah. But today I’m going to focus on the reading from Luke, because, frankly, it seems a little weird **and** because I think it’s the best place to find meaning and hope for this in-between time in which we find ourselves.

The story opens with some Sadducees, one of the “parties” of the Jews, posing a question to Jesus, a question that wasn’t intended to be sincere, but rather to get Jesus to say something that would reveal that he wasn’t a good Jew or a good theologian...and so could and should be dismissed.

They tell Jesus a story of a woman who had married a man, only to have him die without their having children. The man had seven brothers, who were still alive. So, according to tradition, she was married – I don’t think she had any options! – to **another** of the brothers. But then **he** died, again before they had any children. And so the pattern continued, until all the brothers were dead...and before any children came from the marriages. Never in the story is there any sympathy or compassion for the woman or any question of a different scenario for her. The **only** question this group of Sadducees wants Jesus to address is this: In the resurrection, whose wife will the woman be? This question was meant as a trap for Jesus. And it was **ironic**, because, you see, the Sadducees as a group didn’t actually believe in a resurrection. So they devised a story and a question which -- if Jesus dared to answer it -- would reveal his proclamation of a resurrection of the dead as both bogus and silly.

But, as we've seen before, Jesus knows what's behind their question. And he goes back to scripture and the story of Moses, indeed, to the time when Moses encountered God in the burning bush and heard Yahweh declare Yahweh's self as the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of Isaac and Rebekah, and the God of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel. He says that in God, even **beyond** death, the ancestors and each one of **us** who dies on earth is alive in God...that's the beautiful good news of the resurrection Jesus has won for **us all**. And **that** means the **old** orders of earth no longer apply. Even though we die physically, we are alive to God and live a **new** life in God's new world. The old rules or customs of this world, even the **religious** world, no longer apply. God, in Jesus Christ has done a **new** thing...just as he promised. There is no room to apply the old rules, whether just or unjust...there is **only** room for newness of life.

As we know from the **rest** of the story of Jesus, the Sadducees, along with many others, didn't want to hear this...weren't open to this being **Good News**, because they needed to be right...even if it meant implying that God was wrong.

Today, one short week after Pastor Steve completed his pastorate here at Peace, you may think I'm going to point the finger at any of us who are feeling at sea and wish we could go back to a week ago or who wish Pr. Diane, our bridge pastor, would have showed up today so we could pretend there was a seamless bridge and we didn't have to face our uncertainty and sadness, or work through the process of calling a new pastor...a process that won't be instant, though it also won't be eternal.

I understand and share your grief and your anxiety and your wish that we could jump quickly to the next pastorate. But, of course, we can't. It wouldn't be healthy, it wouldn't be right, and it isn't possible. Pr. Diane will be here to provide stability in this in-between-time and to provide care and lead a healthy process. And **I'll** be here, too, as one of you and also available to listen and pray with you.

If we learned anything from Pastor Steve, it's this...God has created us for life and for love. And the power of love means resurrection begins **now**, not just at the hour of our physical death. Our lives are **always** being resurrected, even and especially in those moments when we feel stripped of what and who we counted on...other than God. Resurrection is what God works in us **daily**, so that we can be renewed in faith and love, not just for God, not just for our church community, but for all God's creation.

So today, our first Sunday without Pr. Steve as our pastor, we are not shepherd-less. The great Good Shepherd is with us still, and through the Word and the Communion is reminding us that whatever our feelings, whether we feel lost...or found, we are **all** alive **in God and to God**. Resurrection continues!...even though we may not always be able to recognize or see it...just like the first disciples. Peace Lutheran Church will never stop being resurrected, because God won't stop unleashing resurrection.

But how does today's strange little gospel story help us to believe that and live that? Let's see. In that story, Jesus rescues the woman from being just a means to an end. She, like **every** person created by God, is meant for fullness of life, for creativity that isn't confined within the boundaries of procreation and housekeeping. She – like **all** of us – is meant to grow in love and to be creative in serving God and neighbor, daily living into the fullness of life intended for **every** child of God.

That's what resurrection means. It's not just a **someday** reality; it's an **every-day** reality. Because God is the God of the dead **and** of the living. Both the living and the dead are in God's presence. God – and God's love and faithfulness -- are with us **always**, before our birth, in this life, and after death in a **new** life with God and all the saints. Apparently, Jesus felt the details of the next life are not that important. What **is** important, what **does** matter is God's fidelity and enduring love. God is alive, God is faithful, God's love never ends, and we are alive in God, in this life and beyond.

So, if that's true...and Jesus says it **is!** – how then shall we live...**now**? Or as the poet Mary Oliver wrote,* “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”* If resurrection has **already** begun, how will that free us to live our lives differently... how does that free us to live life as Peace Lutheran Church differently? How then shall we spend our lives...our time...our money...our energy? How does that free us to embrace our relationships with creation, with human beings in our neighborhood and all around the world? Because, as our Native American siblings remind us, they are **all** our relations. Because they are all created by God and beloved by God...despite what some would have us believe.

I want to close with **another** poem by Steve Garnaas-Holmes based on today's gospel. It sounds a lot about what we've come to know and believe here at Peace. May it encourage you to keep on keeping on being people whose peace comes from knowing what Christ has won for us through the cross and resurrection: life now and forever with God and **all** whom God loves.

They asked, in the resurrection
 Whose wife will she be?
 Jesus says: No one's.
 We are all children of the resurrection,
 Children of God – siblings.
 What that means for us after we die,
 We'll have to see.
 But even now we are siblings,
 All one, which the first resealing will reveal.
 In the Real Life, masked by this one,
 We are not divided by families,
 Even marriage, but united:
 Married to everyone, to all Creation.
 We are to love, honor, and cherish
 No one any less than our beloved Spouse.
 Stand among trees and say, "We are kin."
 Go to a river and greet your sister.
 Behold the crowd on the street
 And declare, "I am yours."
 Thus will you know a bit of the
 Mystery of resurrection.

May we open ourselves to allowing the beautiful mystery of the resurrection
 that is ours even now to unfold among us, to knit us together with all whom God has
 made, and to become our calling, our hope, our confidence, our joy, and an amazing
 adventure! Amen.

*"The Summer Day" by Mary Oliver