

Pentecost 25, 10/11/2013, Holy Trinity

Luke 20: 27-40

How typical this morning's Gospel is of Jesus!

His is presented with a conundrum by members of a Jewish sect known as Sadducees and Jesus answers with a conundrum of his own.

He is given a riddle concerning a woman who marries seven times to seven brothers in succession.

Each brother dies leaving her a widow without children.

Such an arrangement was to care for the woman at a time when there were no welfare payments from the government.

Sex was also very much part of the marriage to produce heirs to the family's wealth.

The Sadducees were the priests and aristocrats of Jewish society who married only within the extended family.

They were conservative in their theology confining their theology to the first five books of what we now know as the Old Testament.

And because they could not see any reference to resurrection or to angels in the five books they did not believe in resurrection or in angels.

This meant that they were in constant conflict with the Pharisees and with Jesus for whom resurrection was real.

Hence they wanted to know: In the resurrection, whose wife will the woman be?"

They were mocking Jesus making out that he was an oddball teacher away from the true faith according to their theology.

Eternal life is a silly and unworkable idea according to the Sadducees.

Jesus' reply is sharp: "God is not God of the dead but of the living."

If God is God of the living, then that care must extend to God's care for the dying and for those who have died in a way that cannot regard them as dead.

Jesus is operating with a theology of God that says that even in death God is with us and therefore we must be with God.

Even when we die we still exist for resurrection: we will be raised to life.

Where does this lead us to-day?

The fundamental claims of Christianity especially in belief in resurrection, heaven with God – hell without God and love – love God and love your neighbour still do not make any sense – especially when compared with the values of the secular world.

According to the values of the secular world, many people are obsessed with power, prestige, wealth, possessions and control.

We live in a culture that says this is my home, my money, my life and I can do what I like with these things.

I can care for or neglect the upkeep of my home.

I can use my money any way I like.

I can abuse or care for my body and mind anyway I like and I should have a right to end my life any time I like.

Yet Jesus shows us the way of truth, the way of hope, the way of love.

We are children of the resurrection who are aware that we do not know it all, who do not have control and who are not in charge.

We are children of the resurrection who have already entered the journey of eternal life, who face life with its deathly issues and struggles in the here and now as though we do not fear death but face it with hope of resurrection.

The whole darn thing is a mystery and we live in that mystery with the love of God, faith and hope of resurrection to eternal life.