**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**6th November 2022**

**Luke 20:27-38**

**Gathering**

There is always a moment of resurrection

A renewal

A hope

A possibility

A way of living now

That is beyond death

And corruption

And bondage

This is who we are today

Resurrection people

Newly alive

With hope for the world

Let us gather

And worship

With the one who shapes the dawn

And calls us into it

**Welcome**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and for making this space in your day for us… thank you!…

Sometimes our story feels rather irrelevant… completely unconnected with the world as it is today… But such passages were very relevant in their day... debating hot topics of the time… but which our time have moved on from… Yet items still there… the Word of God…

We have such a passage today… or so it feels… How might we hear it again… and what is the greater truth… that speaks into our world… beyond the local details of the conversation between Jesus and the Sadducees… deep in debate about Levirate marriage and resurrection… Don’t worry… that will be explained too… but where is the Good News?…

**Prayer**

Loving God

Gracious God

Companion on the way

May we find ourselves a community here

Each in our own places

Yet connected by stories

And faith

And the possibility all this might be real

Such is our hope

May we know that between us

We create the Body of Christ

The community of love

Shared

Daily

Hopefully

And even when we don’t get it right

And even when we feel we have failed

May we know that love

That renews and redeems

That brings new chances and fresh days in which to live

And touch the kingdom

With possibility and grace

In this time together

May we know we are never alone

But connected by the stories we tell

And the prayers we make

That in the telling and praying

We share one common God

Who is ever present

And always open to us

And you are that God

That moment

That source

That ground of our being

That brings life and love

Truth and justice

To our words

And our world

And we give thanks

Loving God

May we simply rest in that presence now

That thanksgiving

That hope

That love

And know you will never let us go

Hear us as we share the Lord’s Prayer

**Scripture Background**

Here’s a passage that feels like a moment in time… but from another time… 2000 years ago… an argument over an issue that isn’t relevant to us today… The Sadducees… a group of religious leaders that didn’t believe in the resurrection… The Pharisees did… Resurrection was a fairly new concept… growing up over the period of time after the Old Testament canon closed…

The Sadducees hung onto the old faith… as it were… and tried to ridicule anyone who went for this new concept of resurrection… So, they created hypothetical situations that got more and more ridiculous…

Here they’ve created a situation based on an old rule of Levirate marriage which is where a woman is passed on to the next brother in a family if her own husband died… It was a way of making sure the woman and her children were not destitute… The Sadducees concoct this situation where one brother dies, and the woman is passed on and then that brother dies and so she is passed on… through all seven brothers… The question the Sadducees pose to Jesus is… “So who is it she finds herself married to in the resurrection?”…

Here’s the passage in Luke 20…

**Scripture Reading**

**27**Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him **28**and asked him a question, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man[b] shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. **29**Now there were seven brothers; the first married and died childless; **30**then the second **31**and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. **32**Finally the woman also died. **33**In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.’

**34**Jesus said to them, ‘Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; **35**but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. **36**Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. **37**And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. **38**Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’ **39**Then some of the scribes answered, ‘Teacher, you have spoken well.’ **40**For they no longer dared to ask him another question.

**Reflection**

It’s the relevance of the church that is always a crucial issue… how can we preach or live or invite the gospel so that it is relevant… Easy to do with moral stories… but with passages that simply illustrate a debate between two opposing sides… on an issue of their day rather than ours… that’s not so easy… It’s hardly feels relevant to us... so it’s going to make no inroads to those beyond our walls…

But… focusing less on the details and rather look at the bigger truth in such passages might be a way forward… Jesus and the Sadducees are having an argument… Nothing unusual… Sadducees didn’t believe in resurrection… so they offer a convoluted hypothetical situation… and present it in order to show how ridiculous the idea of resurrection is…

A woman goes through seven husbands… Under Levirate law… after the first brother dies… the next has to marry her… and so on until they run out of brothers… If you believe in resurrection… who will she be married to in the next life?…

It’s a trick question… though for many of us in our community… this feels a real question… for many reasons… from remarriage to the ending of abusive relationships when a spouse dies… You don’t want that resurrected… My response would be… are we imaging heaven is going to be like earth…

I’d bet it isn’t anywhere near our experience of the way we relate to people here… The Sadducees had built a question on completely incorrect principles… But… there we go… sliding into irrelevance…

What is more relevant is in two things…

One is the example of how a religious culture can treat certain folk… This passage is about women… Levirate marriage was there to protect women… a family was your welfare system… well and good… but it’s the idea of an ill-conceived religious law where women become family heirlooms… passed on from one husband to the next…

But if we have learned something about that… we often we replace one group with another… to be on the receiving end of our misogyny… prejudice… fear… conceit… in the name of religion…

Thank goodness for those contemporary prophets who keep challenging us… keep making us aware of how religion can demean folk… abuse them… silence others… It is a difficult and costly thing to be affirming of folk ‘not like us’… That’s the other side of religion… where we free people… love the unloved… lift up the least… affirm those ‘not like us’…

It would be good to think Jesus is doing just that with the Sadducees… a man not completely of his time… who recognised much of what we think in our religion is temporary… He was pointing them… pushing them to think bigger…

And that is the second point… faith evolves… How we read the bible in one era… does not always fit a different era… As people of faith, we sit with some things more lightly than others… acknowledging religious understanding and experience and culture is always evolving…

It is a dangerous thing… then to approach the bible with the attitude that "God said it; I believe it; that settles it”… If that is the case, then the fact that "God said it" is in the past tense… That means God could be retired or dead with nothing more to say about a subject…

None of us imagine that to be true… surely… God is still speaking… And if that is how we approach scripture… and such passages as this… we can hear them as a moment in time… an illustration of where one group were at a single point in history… Jesus… does try and goad them on… because the word of God is living… always turning towards justice… and hope… and grace… and relevance…

That is still the opportunity we have in our communities… to tell the bigger evolving story of God… the attempt to hear and tell again our scriptures… so that they offer life and freedom to all who hear… rather than limiting folk… using them for prejudice… and thus reducing God to quiet irrelevance…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

We pray for peace and truth and hope

And we pray for them with words as well as our lives

May we live towards peace in Ukraine

Living towards those neighbours who know fear and worry

Those in Iran protesting

Those in Tigray in conflict

Hear us

May we live towards justice for all

Living towards those who are hungry in Somalia

In Yemen and too many places

Where hunger is allowed

Hear us

May we live towards those coping firsthand

With climate change and bad policy

For COP27 and for all those whose land is burned

And no longer brings life

Where island nations are flooded out of existence

And seasons are confused and animals with them

Hear us

May we live towards our neighbours

Those we share our lives with

Those who are our family and friends

Those who are ill mentally and physically

Those anxious, worried, fearful

Those who feel loss and grief and pain

Those who need community again

Hear us

Loving God

Hear all our prayers

Those spoken and those left unsaid

Hear us all

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**