

FAITH @ HOME

Week of November 10, 2019

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Luke 20:27-38

REFLECT: Do you like riddles? Some people enjoy brain teasers or games like “twenty questions.” Others feel these questions are tricks, or a mean-spirited way to play “gotcha” at someone’s expense. In this reading, the Sadducees try to trap Jesus with their questions about what happens after we die.

It’s important to ask questions and seek answers. God wants us to use our gifts of curiosity and reasoning to figure out tough problems. But the Sadducees weren’t actually trying to get an answer from Jesus. They just wanted to stump him, catch him in an inconsistency, or make him look bad.

Jesus was wise, and knew how to answer their question—by not answering it at all! Jesus is clear: life after death is different from the life we live right now. Applying earthly rules to heavenly things will not bring us closer to, or help our understanding of God. We are children of God, and children of the Resurrection.

RESPOND: We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. All living things grow old and die; this is sad and difficult, no matter your age. But we are Easter people: we believe in eternal life in Christ. After a death, we might say “May they rest in peace, and rise in glory.” In the Jewish tradition, people say “May their memory be a blessing.” Take a moment to sit quietly as a family, pray, and remember people or pets who are no longer living, but whose memories still bless you. Say their names out loud. Share stories about them. If there is a grave, columbarium, or special tree, make a plan to go and visit. We do not know exactly what happens when we die. But we know that God is with us.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: AMANDA WISCHKAEMPER



Amanda Wischkaemper is devoted to telling and hearing stories, building relationships, and finding reasons to laugh. She is a professional actor, dialect coach, theatre educator, and dog-person. In her 13th year of Episcopal Children’s Formation, she currently serves as Director of Children’s Ministry at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, alongside her Music Director husband (Mark), and turbo-toddler (Abby).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Job 19:23-27a

REFLECT: The story of Job describes a good man tested by God. It may seem unfair that bad things happen to good people, but that's exactly what happened to Job. His friends thought that he must have done terrible things to be treated so badly by God, and in this passage, he pleads for people to understand that his troubles are not a result of his actions.

We have all had days when everything seems to be going wrong. On days like these, it's hard to think about how much God loves you. Job describes a God who loves him and will welcome him into heaven because he has withstood the tests. The reality is that God doesn't need to test us, he already loves us.

RESPOND: Each of us is unique, and God knows us in every way, so be yourself! We can't control what other people think about us, but we can be true to ourselves. Use paint pens or sharpies to decorate a rock that describes you in some way. The decorated rocks can be used as a centerpiece for the table. Or, make a family album with a page created by each family member. Share what you think and be proud of the special person God created you to be.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa Puccio is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew's. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Luke 20:27-38

REFLECT: Do you ever think about what happens after we die? The Sadducees in this reading don't believe in the resurrection. They are not really concerned with what happens after we die, but they want to trap Jesus so they ask him a convoluted question—almost a riddle. Jesus answers, but not with a definitive answer. He turns the question around to stress that we should be less worried about what happens and how after we die and more worried about how we live now.

Jesus seems to be saying, "You're missing the point. Live for now, live lives of loving me and loving your neighbor, and let me worry about the rest. Stop spending so much time trying to figure out what happens, who's in and who's out, and love each other unconditionally as I have loved you."

RESPOND: We live in a world that thrives on power, knowledge, and having all the answers. Trusting God sometimes means living with the unknown and with mystery. And, truthfully, we are curious. The problem is when that curiosity, the need for answers, stops us from living into the people God calls us to be here and now. Take some time and share with one another questions you have about life after death—the resurrected life. (I used to have a notebook of questions I wanted added to my casket when I die.) Get them out and maybe even laugh about them together, and then let them go. Pray that God helps you live now, in the present, as fully and completely as you can as you grow into the person God created you to be.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog thesixdoyles.blogspot.com.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 20:27-38

REFLECT: If seven is the perfect number, then the widow in today's Gospel, must by the account of the Sadducees, have finally hit the perfect marriage with brother number seven. But much like the illusion of a perfect marriage, Jesus seems to be saying, "Marriage in heaven isn't a thing. You've got your eyes on the wrong prize, friends."

The Sadducees of this story wanted to disprove the resurrection, so they try to trip up Jesus with a head game. But Jesus was wise to their shenanigans; the presenting question, about which brother the widow would be married to in the resurrection, wasn't at the heart of what they were truly asking after all.

At the center of their questions lies a myriad of fear and doubt: "Is this all stuff and nonsense? Or are you who you say you are? Because we've been waiting a long time for the Messiah, and up to this point, no dice. So, prove with your words that there is something to this God we serve with our lips. Prove by your very existence that there is more to this life than living and dying."

Isn't that the cry of our hearts as well, to know beyond our doubt that God is real? That we will move from this life to glory, and that those we love will be there too? While our lives are far from perfect, does God's love reaches beyond our physical selves and long to connect with us beyond the grave?

RESPOND: I have a running list of Sadducee questions myself, queries I plan on spending eternity mulling over with God. I've got them written in a journal, and though I am sure the journal won't make it to the other side with me, the work of acknowledging my fears and doubts is no loss. It gives me space to breathe, to think, to ponder, and ultimately to release these questions to the holy mystery of God. Doubt is a good and healthy thing because it invites us to dig deeper to work for our faith. Do you have a list of doubts? Is there room in your faith for doubt?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KARIANN LESSNER



KariAnn Lessner has led youth and children's ministries in The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Texas for over twenty years. Currently the Minister for Children and Families at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, she loves serving as a summer camp session director at Camp Allen and is a frequent speaker to women's groups throughout Texas. In addition, she produces the podcast "You Brew You," where she sits down with folks to share what God is brewing in their lives in the hopes that each person is infused with grace and courage by the other's faith. She enjoys spending time with her family, hammocking, reading, and sipping sun tea in the great outdoors.

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