

You are God's children; you are children of the resurrection. Amen.

An old king lays on his deathbed. He turns to his son and says, "I am about to go the way of all the earth. So be strong and walk in [God's] ways" (1 Kings 2:2-3). For dying King David, the only thing that matters is his God.

When Martin Luther dies, he is not afraid. You can tell by the way he talks. In his last moments, he keeps repeating: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son." For dying Luther, the one thing needed is his God.

When you die, what will matter? What's the only thing you need? Death brings an end to so much, it separates you from so much – except this: death cannot separate you from God, because he is not the God of the dead, he is **the God of the living**.

It's Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus will die in three days, but right now he's at the temple, teaching: **Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question (20:27).**

The Sadducees are a religious group within Judaism, and they hate Jesus, because Jesus doesn't teach what the Sadducees believe. They are skeptical of what they cannot see and deny the existence of angels, life after death, and the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8).

The Sadducees want to discredit Jesus and embarrass him. So, from their earth-only mindset, they try to trap him with a question: **"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother" (20:28).**

The set-up is straight out of Scripture. God's Old Testament law says that if a man died with no children, his brother had the responsibility to marry the widow and have a child with her (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). If the law sounds strange, remember that it is from a time before welfare and social security. This law provided for widows and guaranteed someone to continue the family line and keep the family property.

But the Sadducees use it to make the resurrection and life after death look ridiculous: **"Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. ³⁰The second ³¹ and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. ³²Finally, the woman died too. ³³Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" (20:29-33).**

The trap is set, and it's pretty good. Jesus can't say, "Well, guys, Moses is dumb." On the other hand, if the resurrection is real, then the brothers are going to fight over their wife on Judgment Day, and that's beyond dumb. So, maybe, there isn't a resurrection at all. Maybe, the Sadducees are right.

Have you had that argument with yourself? "Resurrection? Really? Come on! That's ridiculous." It's easy for Sadducee-like thoughts to grow in your heart, especially when death grabs someone close. From our point of view, there is no resurrection because we've never seen one.

The only thing we can see is that someone breathes his last and that's it. And it hurts. It's painful. You wish you could have them back, and that's when your sinful nature sounds a lot like a Sadducee.

"I went to dad's funeral. He didn't sit up in the casket. I've never seen a dead man walk out of the cemetery. If God really is love, why doesn't he bring them back to life now? Why doesn't he let me see the resurrection now? If God wants to prove this resurrection thing, he should do it my way! Maybe there is no resurrection. Maybe there is no hope. Maybe there is no God."

But Jesus knows about the trap set by your inner-Sadducee, and only he can disarm it: **Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage" (20:34-35).**

Did you catch the contrast? This age. The age to come. Skeptics think only in terms of this earthly age. But that eternal age is not like this one.

This age has marriage. We walk down aisles, cut cakes, and promise to be faithful as long as we both shall live. But not in that age. After the Last Day, there will be no marriage. The perfect fellowship of God's family will be much greater than the joys of marriage in this age of death.

Speaking of death, in that age, **"they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection" (20:36).**

In this age our bodies fall apart. That's why birthdays lose their appeal after a few dozen. I'm an old man now and my body is noticeably decaying. And some of you are thinking, "Don't whine, bro! Just wait until you enjoy arthritis, cancer, walkers, wheelchairs, and pills." In this age, we decay. We die.

But not in that age. No more sin that causes decay. No more suffering that ends in death. No more mourning because of death. No more crying for lost loved ones! (Revelation 21:4) We will be like the angels – perfect and glorious forever.

We will be children of the resurrection. And the body that Jesus resurrects will not be like the body that's buried. Saint Paul says that this body is like a seed (1 Corinthians 15:37). Seeds are not much to look at. Small. Hard. Insignificant. But seeds turn into big, beautiful plants.

"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42). When Jesus comes back, he will raise and glorify your body. No pills. No prescriptions. No pain. Everything about every part of your body will be perfect.

"Oh, but Pastor, I'm not worthy of that." Exactly. You and I are born sinful; dead to anything that pleases God, and every second we're alive stacks up more evidence of that. But the question is not, "Am I worthy?" According to Jesus the question is, "Does God consider me worthy?"

Jesus says this is for **"those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come"** (20:35). Who could possibly be worthy of that? Only those that God has made worthy by the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. Only those who have defeated sin by the cross of Jesus and defeated death by the resurrection of Jesus and defeated the devil by the obedience of Jesus.

And, through faith in Jesus, that is exactly what you are! By his amazing grace, God has promised that eternal age not to a select few, but to all who believe in his Son (John 3:16). This is not for those whose goodness has made them worthy, but those who trust that Jesus' goodness is all they need. That's you!

You are God's child. Take that truth with you to your deathbed. Paste it on your memory board. Carve it into your tombstone. You will rise from death. Not because of anything you have done, but because of who God is. He is **the God of the living**.

"But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' ³⁸ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive" (20:37-38).

When Moses was at the burning bush, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for centuries. So if the Sadducees are right and you end when you die, then God's relationship with them should be over, right? But God identifies himself as their God!

Death claimed their bodies, but never touched their souls. Their bodies will sleep in the earth until the resurrection of the dead, then their dust will spring to life and be reunited with their souls. The same goes for you. How can you be sure?

Because Jesus rose first (1 Corinthians 15:20). After Jesus' resurrection, these same Sadducees are told, "Christ has risen." And they can't disprove it; they can only disbelieve it. They make up a story that his body was stolen (Matthew 28:11-15). They could have stopped Christianity in its tracks by busting out Jesus' corpse and putting it on display.

But they couldn't. Because God raised Jesus from the dead. The empty tomb is rock solid evidence of Jesus' resurrection. And it is rock solid evidence that our God **is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive (20:38).**

From our point of view, we live and we die. It looks like we exist and then cease to exist. But that is not God's point of view. He is not the God of the dead. He is **the God of the living**. And that means that all who believe in Christ never truly die, **for to him all are alive (20:38).**

Unbelievers are dead spiritually (Ephesians 2:1), and when they die physically, they enter eternal death in hell. He is not their God.

But Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all who share their faith are spiritually alive, and when they die physically they begin eternal life. Jesus promises: "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26).

Physical death does not end your relationship with God. Death only confirms your relationship with God. Do you believe that Jesus is your Savior? Then death is not the end of life. It's just the beginning of a better life, a perfect life, eternal life. God **is not the God of the dead, but of the living (20:38).**

Sisters and brothers, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys, right now God is the God of your departed ancestors, forefathers, and family who believed. Right now they live in his presence. Right now they see his face, always (Revelation 22:4).

So fill in the blank with the name of your loved one who died in the Lord – God is the God of grandpa, of grandma, of your son, your husband, your sister, your brother, your friend. He is **the God of the living**.

God with his children forever – it doesn't get any better than that! Death may take you away from this life, but nothing, not even death, can take you away from him. Amen.