

Hold Fast To The Sure Hope Of The Resurrection.

Text: Matt 22:23-33

Suggested Hymns:
409, 151, 543, 97, 103

- 1) Because It Is Founded On The Word Of God
- 2) Because Without This Hope,
Life Is A Dismal And Dreary Path
- 3) Because The Resurrection To Eternal Life
Brightens Our Path And Gives True Comfort
In The Hour Of Death

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 22:23–33, ²³ *The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁴ saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.*

²⁵ *Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. ²⁷ Last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.”*

²⁹ *Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

On the same day that Jesus had just silenced the Pharisees the Sadducees came to Christ. They were hoping to outdo their old rivals, anxious to try their skill, against Jesus. Although they were bitter opponents otherwise, in their enmity against Jesus the Sadducees are ready to

make a common cause with the Pharisees. They tried to entangle Christ and ridicule His teachings.

By misusing the Scriptures¹ they tried to show the absurdity of the resurrection from the dead. The enemies felt sure that Jesus would be compelled to retract His teachings and admit that there can be no resurrection.

But the Lord answers, *You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.* He goes on to give indisputable proof for the doctrine of the resurrection and then explains the condition of the perfected saints in heaven.

Since this touches an important doctrine of our Christian faith and has such a bearing on our happiness, we ought to welcome the opportunity to become strengthened in *our sure hope of the resurrection.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Hold Fast To The Sure Hope Of The Resurrection Because It Is Founded On The Word Of God

It is a sure hope, founded on the Word of God. The Lord cites the proof in our text. The Sadducees did not raise the question of the resurrection openly. They tried to veil their real purpose. But Jesus detected their cunning ways.

The Sadducees had quoted the case of the woman in support of their idea. Jesus penetrated their scheme and made a reply to their denial. The command of Moses is written in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, ⁵ *“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.*

⁶ *And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.*

This text does not necessitate the conclusion which the Sadducees had drawn. After the Lord had called attention to their error and their ignorance of Scripture, He said, *“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.* ³⁰ *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.*

In heaven relationships will be different since there will be no necessity of propagating the human race. The laws of marriage will not apply in heaven.

Likewise we read in Luke 20:35–36, ³⁵ *But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;* ³⁶ *nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.*

Now note the evidence which Christ produced to prove the resurrection, ³¹ *But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,* ³² *‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”*

Who would imagine that the Lord could prove the resurrection from these words? But the proof is there, and His bitter enemies could not deny that He was right. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then they must exist. Death did not destroy them. The believers of old are not dead in the sight of God. And God will reveal this on the Last Day by raising them from the dead and giving them eternal life. The Sadducees were silenced. They had to admit that they did not know the Scriptures.

The Lord was telling Moses and us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still very much alive. We acknowledge that fact every time we join with angels and archangels and with *all the company of heaven* to laud and magnify the glorious name of our God. You hear these wonderful words in every Worship Service with Holy Communion.

The Christian should never allow his faith in the resurrection to be shaken. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.² Our sure hope has a sure foundation. Reply to those who deny the resurrection with these words of Jesus, *“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”*³

2. Hold Fast To The Sure Hope Of The Resurrection

Because Without This Hope, Life Is A Dismal And Dreary Path.

The Sadducees were true representatives of the children of this world. The worldly minded person seeks his heaven here on earth. The only maxim that he knows is *“Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”*

There are many people who deny all spiritual existence, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection after death. But their own conscience condemns

them. Surely those people are to be pitied who have no higher and nobler purpose in life. Think of their disappointments. After their slavish toil and mad chase after the vanities of this life they have never found true happiness. If you want a recipe for a miserable existence, then fix your heart on the things of this world.

Rather Scripture tells us in Matthew 6:32–33, ³² *For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

What will the poor worldly minded person do in the time of trouble and sorrow? He has no comfort in the hour of trial and sufferings. He cannot say, as the Scriptures say in Romans 8:18, ¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

He may argue, “*You must accept what Fate has in store for you. You must yield to the inevitable.*” What comfort is there in that thought? If we could look into the hearts of those who deny the resurrection, we would soon notice that they have no rest or peace. There is no anchor for the soul. That explains their futile efforts to drown their sorrows in the cup of pleasure.

Picture the deplorable condition of those unfortunate people when they must depart this life. Passing through the valley of the shadow of death, they see no ray of light. There is nothing to which they can cling, because they must leave their earthly possessions behind. The world sings the praises of the man who has gained wealth and fame. But Scripture says in Matthew 16:26, ²⁶ *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

The hymnist writes,⁴

After the joys of earth,
After its songs of mirth,
After its hours of light,
After its dreams so bright,
What then? Only an empty name,
Only a weary frame, only a conscious smart (stinging pain),

Only an aching heart!

Then a sad farewell to a world loved too well — then the judgement, then the last hope gone, and then all the woes that dwell in an eternal hell.

Without the hope of a resurrection-life, this life is a dark and dreary path and will finally end in utter despair and eternal misery.

**3. Hold Fast To The Sure Hope Of The Resurrection
Because The Resurrection To Eternal Life Brightens Our Path
And Gives True Comfort In The Hour Of Death.**

Here on earth Christians are still hedged in by many limitations. The same burdens and sorrows depress us. Scripture says in Acts 14:22 that *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”* We know that the treasures and pleasures of this world do not satisfy. We are reminded every day of the fact that our years are like a tale that is quickly told.

How can people live from day to day without the hope which our Christian faith offers? Our true home is above, in the heavenly mansions which Christ has prepared. The path of a believer leads through cross to crown, through death to life. We have the only powerful God, who can lead us safely, until we have reached the coveted goal.

We read in Job 19:23–25, ²³ *“Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! ²⁴ That they were engraved on a rock With an iron pen and lead, forever! ²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth.*

We may suffer a sad bereavement in our home. If our loved ones have fallen asleep in Jesus’ arms, they are not dead. We read in Revelation 14:13, ¹³ *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”* They are safe in the hands of the all-powerful God. Sooner or later our last hour shall also come.

So let us thank God that He has given us this hope in Christ Jesus, who says in John 11:25, *“I am the resurrection and the life.*

When a believer must bid farewell to the scenes of this life, he can join in that hymn of triumph, *“Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:54–57, ⁵⁴ *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

⁵⁵ *“O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory,” comes from Isaiah 25:8, ⁸ *He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.* God’s people have always believed in the resurrection.

Such faith conquers the woes of life, as we learn in 1 John 5:4, ⁴ *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.*

The preciousness of faith in Jesus Christ and the resurrection is emphasised in Philippians 3:8–11, ⁸ *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

¹⁰ *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Yes, the living God is the God of all the living. We are included among those who are truly alive because in Holy Baptism *“He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*⁵ That is why those who are born twice die only once, while those who are born only once die twice. So as the baptized children of God, we joyfully confess in the Apostles’ Creed, *“I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”*

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁶

The strife is o’er, the battle done;

Now is the Victor's triumph won;
O let the song of praise be sung. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and
minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Deut. 25:5

² Job 19; Dan. 12; John 5:28; 1 Cor. 15

³ See 1 Cor. 15:12-26

⁴ What Then?, Jerome McCauley

⁵ 1 Peter 1:3

⁶ Hymn 97