

## ***“Teacher of Life”***

The Sadducees come to Jesus (here in our text) and call Him “Teacher” – but they are not there to learn anything from Jesus. They’ve come to discredit Him. To do away with Him. To Jesus Him out of their lives.

Already in Luke’s Gospel we’ve learned that they are part of the religious establishment of Israel that is trying to kill Jesus. They are literally – “those who speak against the resurrection.” They do not believe in the resurrection of the dead – but as we see – it is not beneath them to use God’s Word against Him – for their own purposes.

The Epistle lesson warns us of such evil. Through His servant the Apostle Paul, God says – do not be “quickly shaken in mind or alarmed ... let no one deceive you in any way.” A rebellion is coming, He warns – the “man of lawlessness ... the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself ... proclaiming himself to be God.”

Already in Jesus’ day this “mystery of lawlessness” was at work – and as the Lord promises – Jesus will “kill [the man of lawlessness] with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming ...”

Enter the Sadducees. Jesus knows who they are, what they believe, and what they are trying to do – and yet, what great patience He shows with them. He lets them ramble on with their deceptive words – He lets them set their trap – spreading God’s Word as bait. What irony!

The Sadducees were devoted to the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of Moses in the Old Testament. For them, that was all the Scripture you needed. In Deuteronomy, there is this teaching that said – if an Israelite man died without a child – then his brother was to take his wife in order to produce an heir for his deceased brother.

All of this has to do with their inheritance in the Promised Land – which is connected with the promise of salvation through the Promised Messiah. But the Sadducees don’t care about that – they are using this Word of God against Him!

They cook up this hypothetical situation where a man dies without a child – and each of his seven brothers take his wife, one after another – but they all die without producing an offspring, an heir. And then the trap question – “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?”

Remember, they don't believe in the resurrection in the first place – and ironically, they are standing before Jesus who is “the resurrection and the life.” They not only deny the resurrection – they deny Jesus!

They are not there for a lesson, but Jesus teaches them anyway. Since they're devoted to the Pentateuch – how about this from Exodus 3? “In the passage about the bush, where [Moses] calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now HE is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him.”

When the Lord speaks to Moses from the burning bush – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are long dead. But, their God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are NOT DEAD – they are alive!

And here is the kicker! Jesus is the God who appears to Moses in the burning bush! This is the Son of God who has come in the flesh – the One standing before them. Like Moses, the Sadducees are standing on holy ground.

When Jesus puts the Sadducees in their place – the scribes are right there saying “bravo Jesus” – “Teacher, you have spoken well.” But don't be fooled – the scribes don't believe that Jesus is the Savior any more than the Sadducees do.

As a matter of fact – even though they were constantly butting heads with the Sadducees – they will join forces with them in the attempt to get rid of Jesus, to get this man out of their lives, once and for all.

Now, what does this mean for us? With these words, we see that the “man of lawlessness ... the son of destruction” is not only alive and well in the days of Jesus and Paul – but we are warned about his deceiving and deadly work today.

When God's Word, His truth, is attacked – it is Christ who is being attacked. When God's Word, His truths, are banished from the public square – it is Jesus who is being thrown out. When Christians are persecuted, and put to death like our fellow Christians in Nigeria – it is Christ they are persecuting.

When we hear of such persecution, the usual suspects come to mind – the atheists, Boko Haram (the Muslims), the ACLU, some university professors, along with a whole host of others. But the lies of a false preacher who comes wearing vestments and a collar are just as deadly. The goal of all these attacks are the same – to destroy the Kingdom of God and all who live in it – including you.

So, do not dismiss false teachings as “no big deal” – for they all lead away from Christ – who alone is our life and salvation. Denying Christ's Body and Blood is given and received in the Lord's Supper is denying Christ. Turning Baptism into a work that man does to show God his faithfulness – turns God's life-giving grace into a fruitless work. To dismiss the Absolution the Pastor speaks to you is to shut your ears to the living voice of Christ who comes to raise you from the dead by forgiving all your sin.

Jesus is the God of the living, not the dead. He comes to remove your death by removing your sin. Deny your sin, and there is no life. Reject His free forgiveness – and your sin remains with you.

In the person of His Son, Jesus Christ – God has come to teach you and to rule and reign over you with His life-giving forgiveness. By the “breath of His mouth” – Jesus who lives and reigns – destroys all who seek to separate you from God – while breathing into you the very breath of life.

O Lord, grant us your Holy Spirit, that we might have ears to hear your Word and believe – and live, with you – now, and eternally. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.