

Year C – 22nd Sunday after Pentecost; Lectionary 32 – November 9, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

Job 19:23-27a

Psalm 17:1-9

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-38

Grace and peace to you from God and the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus Christ, in whose promise of eternal life we trust. Amen.

A mailbox... should not leak.

And while this is true, it was not my first thought on a certain day, many years ago, when our mail carrier brought our outgoing mail back into the church.

The mail was soaking wet... dripping water everywhere. He'd brought it back to us because he couldn't mail it in such a water-logged state.

It seemed that there was a hole at the top of the mailbox, and during the long, torrential rainstorm we'd just had, the water had dripped into the box from the top, but had no way of exiting the otherwise secure box...

So, when the mail carrier opened the box... the water poured out... along with our letters.

Most of the mail just needed to be laid out to dry... but included in the stack was a letter that I'd written to a member whose husband had just died.

It was a consoling letter... one that I had written from my heart...

acknowledging her sorrow and sharing that space with her, so she wouldn't feel so alone. She was important to me, and I shared her grief.

Except now... my letter was no longer a letter, but an abstract puddle of blue ink... like a watercolor painting... with only the hint that there had once been words on that page.

I was upset. Understandably, I think.

But then... a man who happened to observe this exchange, and my now-erased letter, started criticizing my choice of pens.

Clearly, I should have used a ball-point pen because then it would only need to dry out... obviously, I hadn't thought this through when I'd written in a gel pen, or whatever it was I used.

He carried on like that... on and on... and I just stared at him... because... like my now soggy letter... I had no words.

Until I did... Mailboxes should not leak. ...he stopped talking after that.

We could have debated all day about the best pens for writing, but *the pen was not the point*... that thinking was too small... mailboxes should not leak.

I admit, I was annoyed... but I know I have fallen into the trap of narrow thinking before. It's human. And in our gospel today, that kind of narrow thinking is what has the Sadducees stuck.

Now, of course, they don't think they are stuck... they think they've landed Jesus in the perfect rhetorical trap.

They are angry at Jesus, and probably a little afraid of him... I mean... he showed up at the temple and started flipping tables and driving out the merchants, causing a huge disruption... and then every day he was teaching there...

and every day, they were looking for a way to kill him... but they knew they needed to be cautious because the people were so spellbound by his teaching.

So, they kept trying to trap him... to trick him into saying something that would turn the people against him... and today, we heard their attempt to trap him with a debate on the resurrection.

You see, the Sadducees only acknowledge the Torah as authoritative – that’s the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures... Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – and they don’t believe in resurrection.

So, their example of the childless woman being married to each of the seven brothers, *and still dying childless*, for them, proves that the idea of resurrection is ridiculous...

Because if resurrection were really a thing... then whose wife would she be? To which man would she belong? Which man in the afterlife gets to claim her as his property?

The practice of a widow marrying the next brother was an ancient patriarchal custom known as levirate marriage. If a man died childless, his brother would marry his widow and have children with her, and the firstborn son would be counted as the dead man’s child and carry on his name.

It is true... that in a culture where a woman had almost no rights, this practice helped to ensure her protection and future... but it did so by effectively treating her as property, passed from brother to brother.

The Sadducees think they’ve trapped Jesus... because, if resurrection is a thing, then which man gets to claim this woman as his property? When they all have an equal claim, whose wife will she be?

Jesus shuts down their narrow thinking... she won’t *belong* to any man... because she already *belongs to God*... for she is already, and always has been, claimed as a beloved child of the one who created her in love.

Unlike her earthly life... her vulnerable, earthly life that is dependent on men... her resurrection does not rely on who she is to others... it’s only about who she is to God.

So, Jesus responds to the Sadducees using the Torah as his evidence... that Moses himself experienced evidence of the resurrection... when God said I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” ...not I WAS, but I AM...

“...for to God, all of them are alive.” ...alive in the presence of God.

Resurrection is not about a continuation of earthly life... It's not just... *more life* in the same roles we played on earth... that is narrow thinking... it's too restrictive... and it misses the point.

Resurrection is ultimately a promise... that after we die, we will rest in the presence of God.

And the truth is... the finer details of our resurrection will remain a mystery until we get there... but the promise of God with us... is assured.

From Job, we hear... for I know that my redeemer lives... and after I am gone, I know that I will again see God. (*paraphrased*)

And from 2 Thessalonians, we hear that God chose you... and called to you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord. (*paraphrased*)

God chose you... you are already God's beloved.

And from our Psalm, we hear this language of *being known* by God... “Show me your marvelous lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at your right hand... *Keep* me as the apple of your eye, and hide me under the shadow of your wings...”

You are fully known by God, who loves you just as you are... and God's promise to us is that we will eternally rest in that love, because... God is love.

Even so... as I think about the resurrection, and about God's incredible and wondrous love... I think about the people here on Earth, in my life, whom I love.

I am very fortunate to live thousands of years after the time of levirate marriage, and I am certain that my husband does not consider me his property...

Without getting too mushy, we might say we belong to each other... a belonging that has grown through decades of mutual love and respect.

And so, because God is love... and God is very clear throughout scriptures that God is on the side of love... then I anticipate that, of all the emotions... the love we have shared on earth will be with us in our eternal life.

This is my hope... of course... and I know I share that hope with so many others. And given the larger picture of God's relationship with us, and what we know of God, I don't think we'll be disappointed.

I think love will persist.

But I also suspect that being in God's loving presence when all else of my earthly life has fallen away... will be even more than I can imagine with my limited, human perspective. And... I'm ok with letting that be a surprise.

But truthfully, we know that *God is with us now*... so thinking about the resurrection, and of the promise that we will be in God's presence after we die, is still thinking too narrowly.

Resurrection is something that we can only know through hope and faith in the *living* God... and the *living* God... is the one who meets us in the baptismal waters... and in the shared meal of bread and wine.

The *living* God is the one who is faithful and true... and is continually inviting us back into a shared relationship.

The living God meets us in our joy and celebrates with us... and the living God meets us in our sorrow, and ministers to us through the consolation and compassion of our community.

Our *living* God... is not waiting until after we die to be with us!

We are in God's loving presence now, just as we will rest eternally in God's loving presence in the resurrection.

And yes, the promise of resurrection matters because it reveals and reminds us of our primary identity as God's beloved children... and that God will never let us go.

But the afterlife is not the point... because the heart of resurrection is the same now as it is in our eternal life with God.

The heart of resurrection... is God's promise to be with us always... now and forever... no matter where we are or what we are going through.

For our God is not God of the dead, but of the living, and to God, we are and always will be... alive.

Amen.