



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 22

November 9, 2025

God's Finger on the Page

Luke 20:27–40

²⁷ Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁸ saying: “Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. ³⁰ And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. ³¹ Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. ³² Last of all the woman died also. ³³ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife.”

³⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. 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. ³⁷ But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ ³⁸ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

³⁹ Then some of the scribes answered and said, “Teacher, You have spoken well.” ⁴⁰ But after that they dared not question Him anymore.

Is it surprising that the Sadducees – a group of Jewish intellectuals and priests – would deny that there is a resurrection? Not really. It’s appalling, but not surprising. It’s appalling – shocking – because the resurrection is foundational to biblical faith. The apostle Paul even stated that denying the resurrection makes it impossible for a person to remain Christian. He writes, “If *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty” (1 Cor. 15:16-17, 14).

As you can tell from those words, it’s important for Christians to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Faith in the resurrection is like the leg of chair: Take the leg away and the chair falls over. This is why we confess the resurrection of the body in our creeds and why it’s so alarming that the Sadducees would dare to “deny that there is a resurrection.”

But, like I said, it’s not surprising. Their brains – just like ours – were infested with sin and saturated in death. This is true for all of us. From the moment of conception (Ps. 51:5), each of us has been predisposed to reject God’s Word (Rom. 8:7), either in whole



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or in part. It's a miracle, a divine gift of God, that any of us holds faithfully to any part of the Christian Faith. It's no surprise whatsoever that someone would reject some aspect of that faith. Are those ancient Sadducees really any different than some of our friends or relatives today?

Have you never heard some supposedly kind and loving person say, "I simply cannot believe in a God who would condemn someone to hell." Or how about some of these:

- "You can't tell me that God wrote the whole Bible. People stuck some of those things in there. Nobody can be expected to believe *everything* it says."
- "Women are just as capable of being pastors as men. The parts of the Bible that reject women pastors were written by bigoted men."
- "Love is love. Why shouldn't two men or two women get married? The apostle Paul was homophobic."

You know, some Christians even deny that life begins at conception or that Baptism is a miracle that creates saving faith or that Christ is truly bodily present in Holy Communion?

Christians like these hold up some part of the Christian faith and say to Jesus, "This is not acceptable. Even if all the other parts of the Christian Faith can be accepted, I cannot accept this thing." Through their rejection of things they will not or cannot accept, such Christians take their seats among the Sadducees who denied that there is a resurrection.

What about you? Do you find some part of the Christian faith to be objectionable? I get it; some teachings of Scripture are challenging for us. We want to think of ourselves as open-minded or worldly wise, and that interferes with our ability to accept some points of Christian doctrine. Some of us are challenged by friends or loved ones who have trouble believing everything Scripture teaches. Do you have a hard time believing that a loving God would allow you to experience the sorts of things you've been going through? Is there an aspect of your life that is in conflict with biblical teaching and you just don't want to give it up?

I think we have to recognize that there are parts of Christian teaching that sound entirely unreasonable and even foolish to human ears (1 Cor. 1:18-25). The resurrection of the body is one of them. But we also need to remember that what God has set forth in Scripture is not to be believed because He has fully convinced us or proven His point to us. That would be to walk by sight and not by faith. But God calls us to walk by faith and to believe what He says simply because He has spoken it.



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God is so patient with us as we struggle to believe what He has said. Look at the gentle way He speaks in today's Gospel. The denial of the resurrection is an insult to God, but Jesus doesn't play the role of the offended party. "Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to *Him*." And Jesus answers their denial of the resurrection by speaking the Word of God to them. He puts His finger on the page and says, "But even Moses, showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised."

Can you imagine all the ways our Lord *could* have responded to these deniers of His Word?

- He could have condemned them as they approached Him, even before they asked Him their question. That's how John the Baptist treated the Sadducees, calling them a brood of vipers (Mat. 3:3). Imagine Him saying, "How dare you reject the resurrection, the central hope of the ancient faith?" But He didn't.
- He could have pointed to His own divinity and declared, "Hey, I wrote the book on the resurrection. I AM the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Believe in the resurrection because I say there is a resurrection!" He could have said that. But He didn't.
- He could have demanded that these men defend themselves and their preposterous ideas. But He didn't.
- He could have remained silent and turned His back, exercising the most deadly judgment of all: simply letting them die in their unbelief without even trying to help them. But He didn't.

"Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to *Him*," seeking to drive a knife into everything that Jesus is, says, does, and thinks. Jesus responds by showing them His Word. He places His finger on the page: "But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised."

With these words, with His simple and patient appeal to the Scriptures, Jesus is giving us power and life!

Oh, beloved, see here the kind and forbearing way Jesus gives you for speaking the Faith to your loved ones. You don't need to argue or fight or sputter against their foolish ideas. You can just show them the Word of God. Put your finger on the page. Rather than convincing them of their error, you can simply allow God's living and abiding Scriptures to do their native work.

See here the great confidence our Lord wants you to have in His living Word, the Holy Scriptures. By placing His finger on the page, Jesus is showing us that His book carries



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the full weight of His divine authority, power, and might. He wants you to know that, when you have a Bible verse, you have a Word from the mouth of God. He wants you to know that His Scripture carries for you the same benefit as His speaking directly to you, personally delivering to you forgiveness and life.

See here the patience and love of your Lord. Even though each of us is continually encumbered by many weaknesses and sins — weaknesses and sins that seek to tear us away from the Faith — Jesus remains patient in bringing us His Word of life. Today's Gospel allows us to know that, even though our Lord could be offended and insulted by the many ways His Word gets rejected among us, He still does not turn away from us. This Gospel gives us the joy and relief of knowing that our Lord remains among us because His Scriptures remain among us. This Gospel allows us to believe that our dear Lord Jesus has taken upon Himself the deep sins of our minds, just as surely as He has borne the sins of our bodies. What a patient and loving God we serve! Glory be to Jesus! In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen