Where do you look for hope for the future? Where do you rest your hope and dreams? In whom do you look to find your security?

Do you rest your hopes and dreams in your marriage, or in your children?

Where I grew up the culture was geared towards parents being proud about their children, and in a way rest upon them for their hopes and dreams. Maybe you heard it said, *My son the Doctor,* or *My son the Lawyer...* and it just wasn’t the mothers or father’s saying this but the children, my peers who mocked the cultural pressure that they felt to be a successful surgeon, or a member of a significant firm. *He’s a good son... his mother should be proud!*

Our Gospel Lesson has Jesus teaching in the temple area. Since the early summer our texts have had Jesus traveling to Jerusalem. And now he has finally arrived. In Chapter 19 we read of the Palm Sunday events, him weeping over Jerusalem, Jesus cleansing the Temple, and in Chapter 20 he teaches there. The Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law question his authority to do the things he was doing. We read the parable of the wicked tenants, a parable directed at these very teachers of the law and leaders of the Jews. They question him in a way to expose him to ridicule, they question him about paying taxes to Caesar. The Priests challenge Jesus, the teachers of the Law challenge Jesus, the Pharisees challenge him; they all take their turn thinking confidently they will be able to stump the notorious rabbi. The Sadducees take their turn; they ask him about the resurrection, something they did not believe in. But little did they know they just exposed themselves to the master...

**The Sadducees**

Who were these Sadducees? They are mentioned only once in Luke. And all their own writings have perished in time so we know them only through how their opponents viewed them. They were a small number, made up of conservative, aristocratic, party of high priests. They rejected the oral tradition of the Pharisees, and accepted only the Torah, the first five books of Moses. They saw no basis for a belief in an afterlife, no basis for the belief of the resurrection that is found in the Psalms, Isaiah, the Minor Prophets, and the many other books of the bible that they rejected. They were the ancient version of today’s materialists whose hopes and dreams rested solely in their progeny – in their children.

**The Levirate Rule**

The Levirate Rule of Deuteronomy 25 stipulated that when a married male Jew died without a male heir, his closest brother or relative was obligated to marry the widow and the firstborn son of that union was considered the son of the deceased. This Levirate rule insured that the name of the brother would live on, there would a clear heir for his property, AND the widow and her children would be cared for.

We see this rule acted out in the book of Ruth, where the women play a prominent role, and are redeemed by Boaz. It is a story of Love and redemption; a positive story, that puts the focus of this Levirate rule on the redemption of the
woman and the preservation of the family. The relative who rescued his brother’s wife in this way would later be called the **Kinsman Redeemer**.

**The Sadducees Question**

Yet in our Gospel passage we see something else expressed by the Sadducees. They expose themselves and their prejudice. They tell a story of this Levirate rule being applied six times in a row, all seven men die before they give an heir, and then the woman dies. They then ask Jesus who’s property was she in the resurrection. Who did this woman belong to in the next life? How sad, can you even imagine?

Imagine this from the perspective of the woman. What rights did she have? What protection was she given? Seven times she experienced hope replaced with loss, seven times she experienced the pain of no children, six times she was passed off to another – probably implying a relationship without love, possibly even abuse, and then the pain...

- The pain over the loss
- The pain of having no children, no husband.
- The pain of being ostracized, seen as an outcast
- 7x Widow
- **The Black Widow of Bethsaida**
- Social Outcast – market, well, social settings

Ultimately these Sadducees objectify the widow, their culture only viewed women as a means of procreation – a means of continuing their natural line – Where is the **Kinsman Redeemer** here?

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Who is your Kinsman Redeemer?

The book of Ruth has another theme, a theme of faith. When Naomi was heading back to Judah, she told Ruth to go home to her people; she urged her, she begged her. But Ruth replied, **Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.**

Faith in God and Hope in God is central to the message of Ruth. It is not in procreation that we find our hope, that we find our security for the future, but in faith in God, and in His provision for us.

**Jesus’ Response**

When Jesus responded to the Sadducees he said: *The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But 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, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection.* (Luke 20:34-36 NIV)
Jesus sees through their dishonest question. He knows that they claim not to believe in the resurrection. He knows that they believe that this life is all that there is. He refutes their challenge by proclaiming that in the realm to come there is no marriage, since in this new realm there won’t be a need for procreation; no need for marriage – and no ownership of women.

The view of the Sadducees, that their security rested in marriage, family, and procreation – is mislead. In the new realm of God, security is to be found in God alone, and not in one’s mate, or in one’s progeny, or even in the ownership of people. People in the time to come will neither marry, nor allow themselves to be given in marriage. Rather their security will be found instead in their relationship to God. For they will be God’s Children, since they are children of the resurrection. Remember that for Jesus his brothers and sisters, and even his mother, are found within this community of faith:

31 Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

33 “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:31-35 NIV)

We are God’s Children by faith; brother’s and sisters of Christ. Our security is based not on relationships of this life, but on our relationship to God, based upon our faith in Him through Jesus Christ.

What about the woman in the Sadducees question? Whose property was she? What hope and security did she have? She was married seven times, and probably seen as a burden to each of the six other brothers – she dies without a child, meaning she also failed to fulfill her purpose in life; died as a woman under a curse. But under Christ she would no longer be accursed, she would no longer be a burden or the property of another, but rather she would be free in Christ, who is her true security. She would be a daughter of Heaven and an heir to all the precious promises of God!

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Co-dependency

People of this age feel a need to be married in order to be fulfilled. We see this in our society that desperately ties to make marriage a matter of equality. But Christ contends that our significance is in Him alone. The relationship of marriage is going away.

Christians today also feel a need, or at least a pressure, to be married in order to be fulfilled. Just ask yourselves if it is culturally acceptable in our churches to be
single... is it? Parents for centuries have pressured their children to get married. People question a person who is single. Yet the scripture is clear:

*Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. *But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.* (1Cor 7:8-9)

So I encourage all those who are single to remain so for as long as they can. Do not rush into a relationship, but rather seek out your significance in Christ alone. If you think yourself different, isolated by society, even ostracized, find your acceptance in Christ. If you think yourself incomplete, let Christ complete you. The truth is, you are not truly ready to be married until you are satisfied in your singleness in Christ.

Now I am married, and I must admit I love my wife, and I love being married. My wife Melissa is my helpmate in this life. But if I keep her dependent upon me, I do not really love her. If I keep her dependent on me to boost my ego, to satisfy my possessiveness, I rob from her- her calling in Christ. If I encourage her to base her significance upon me, I do her a disservice.

We must build upon our relationship as husband and wife, but we must also encourage each other to not be co-dependent but seek out our significance on Christ.

And if either of us sees our significance being based upon our status as mother or a father, we likewise put undue pressure on our children, and distract them from their calling in Christ. We must not be co-dependent in any way in this life, but rather encourage each other to seek out our security in Christ alone.

In whom do you look to find your security?

**Stand Firm**

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I call you all to stand firm in your faith and the Hope we have in the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. For God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through the gospel that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, stand firm therefore and hold fast to the teachings passed on to you. And May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. AMEN (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)

Bibliography Available Upon Request