

# **Resurrection Here and Now**

## **Proper 27C**

### **Haggai 1:15b-2:9**

### **Luke 20:27-38**

**Rev. Dr. Laura Blazek**

**St. Michael's Episcopal Church**

**Norman, OK**

**November 9, 2025**

Riddle me this- As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives; every wife had seven sacks; every sack had seven cats; every cat had seven kits; kits, cats, sacks, wives. How many were going to St. Ives?<sup>1</sup> The answer- one. I was the only one going to St. Ives, everyone else was going the other way. This is one of those questions designed specifically to trip you up. And like many similar questions it is asked in gleeful anticipation of watching the other person struggle to find an answer that you are confident won't be right; thereby making you feel smug in your superiority.

This is exactly what the Sadducees are doing in today's Gospel lesson- asking Jesus a question that they are confident will trap him. Since the Sadducees and the Pharisees didn't get along, I imagine them saying to the Pharisees, "You incompetent fools! Your attempts to trick Jesus have been feeble at best. Now, watch this!" They thought their confusing question about one wife and seven husbands in the afterlife would finally discredit Jesus.

This confrontation happens shortly before Jesus dies on the cross. By this time, he has shown innumerable times that he can take any questions they throw at him and send them back gift-wrapped and tied with a neat little bow. His answer to the Sadducee's question is no exception. Jesus tells them they are asking the wrong question because they are assuming that life in this world is the same as life in the world to come. There is no way, he says, that we can even begin to comprehend the age to come.

Take for example kids today who have only known media-on-demand and instant information on the internet. They find it challenging to understand what it was like to have to run to the kitchen on commercial breaks to grab a snack and then make a mad dash to the couch as someone yells, "It's back on!" Envisioning the reality of the past is just as hard as trying to begin to understand what our world will be like in the future. Science fiction writers try, but I'm still bummed that we have yet to explore the universe at the speed of light. If we can't have any true concept of life one hundred or two hundred years from now, how can we even begin to grasp the afterlife?

The big question that Jesus says we should be asking is how to practice resurrection in our daily lives. Our focus should be on what is currently happening rather than worrying about something that is beyond the scope of our imagination. Resurrection is here and now. It is built into the vast fabric of life. As we move into winter, plants shrivel and die on the surface, but the roots, the soul of the plant if you will, live on, dormant, waiting for spring to burst forth with new life. When the sun goes down, we will fall into slumber; our awareness diminishes until we awake to a new day filled with possibilities and hope. Through our baptism, Christ has given us new life. The rhythm of resurrection and new life is part of our lives.

We are a resurrection people. We need to remember this now more than ever. Darkness has left the shadows and feels confident striding about in broad daylight. Greed abounds masquerading as positive and necessary changes. The worst parts of our humanity are running rampant, posing as harbingers of benevolence. The list of all the evils and injustices that are shrouding our society in darkness is long. You hear it on the news and see it on our streets. We are sorely in need of resurrection.

When we come out on the other side of this, and we will, things will be different. Change, as much as we tend to fight it, is a necessary part of resurrection. We see this frequently in Old Testament scripture through the stories of the Israelites. Our reading from Haggai [HAH-guy] comes seventy years after the Babylonian exile when a group of Israelites return to the ruins of Jerusalem to resurrect the temple to its former glory. However, the reality of what they build doesn't live up to their vision. They are disheartened and disenchanted, just like many of us are in our current times. We would do well to pay heed to the word of the Lord spoken in Haggai. "...take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you ... My spirit abides among you; do not fear." (Haggai 2:4-5)

You might think of this as a pep talk from God. Take courage. Do not fear. Resurrection brings us into the presence of God. He meets us where we are, not where we wish to be. God isn't asking us to be perfect. For all us perfectionists out there, this is a hard pill to swallow because we think all that we do must be perfect. Nothing we do in service to God and our neighbors must be perfect. He does ask us to be faithful to Christ's command to practice unconditional love. Our focus needs to be on our current time and how we live a life of love for God and our neighbors.

We are standing in the ruins of our society. The challenge before us isn't resurrecting it to its former glory, because it is quite evident that the 'former glory' was merely a mask covering ugliness. Our challenge is to change it, so that unconditional love for all God's children is the driving force behind all that we do, striving to make our world into all things new.

The last verse of our reading from Haggai says, "The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity..." (Haggai 2:9). To our modern ears this sounds like we will all become wealthy since we associate prosperity with economic well-being. And while it is true we will become rich as we show unconditional love to everyone, the wealth we achieve has nothing to do with lots of money and expensive

things. In Hebrew scripture the word translated as ‘prosperity’ is ‘shalom’. Shalom is a nuanced word that means wholeness, health, safety, and peace. This is where our wealth lies- becoming whole and finding peace that surpasses understanding by letting the peace of God flow through us.

Shalom is what we are called to bring to the world through acts and words of unconditional love. Feeding the hungry in whatever way we are able is an act of shalom and resurrection. So too is caring for one another, being fully present for those who are alone or in need of help, and so many other things that give life and bring light to push back the darkness. Our ministries don’t have to be perfect, but they do need to be rooted in faith and done because we are driven by unconditional love.

Resurrection is here and now. It is hope, light and love that is desperately needed as the feeling of night surrounds us. As we strive to live resurrection, may we remember a portion of night prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book<sup>2</sup>:

It is night.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest [in the Lord.]

Let the quietness of [God’s] peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.

Amen.

New Zealand Night Prayer #6 Full Text<sup>2</sup>:

*Lord,  
it is night.*

*The night is for stillness.  
Let us be still in the presence of God.*

*It is night after a long day.  
What has been done has been done;  
what has not been done has not been done;  
let it be.*

*The night is dark.  
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives  
rest in you.*

*The night is quiet.  
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,  
all dear to us,  
and all who have no peace.*

*The night heralds the dawn.  
Let us look expectantly to a new day,  
new joys,  
new possibilities.*

**Works Cited:**

1. This riddle has been around since the 1700's but I first heard it on *Sesame Street*; Season 1, episode 45, 1<sup>st</sup> aired Jan. 9, 1970
2. The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. *A New Zealand Prayer Book*. Williams Collins/HarperCollins. 1989. p 184