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“When Faith Gets in the Way” **Sermon on Luke 20:27-38**

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The 20th chapter of Luke’s Gospel begins with an “Amen,” Glory to God, Good News Sunday! “One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and telling them the GOOD NEWS....” That’s how the 20th chapter of Luke begins! He’s in Jerusalem, the big, big city, in the Temple, doing the essence of his calling – telling the Good News! We know this because it was the first act after he runs away from the wilderness to come back to his hometown, and he unrolled the scrolls of Isaiah and read:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

His ministry is about proclaiming the Good News! But while the 20th chapter of Luke begins so wonderfully, it doesn’t take long for faithful people to let their faith get in the way of Good News. Chief Priest, Scribe, and Elder - all very faithful people – interrupt Good News with questions about his authority. Was his authority from heaven or from earth? What do you think? Heaven – I hear a “Heaven” out there – and you’d be right!

Did God say to Jesus, “I need you to go down there and fix this! God so loved the world that he gave his only son.” Answer: His call was from Heaven. Or maybe it was from Earth. We are more apt to hear the cry of people in our day to day than the cry of God. The captive, the blind, the broken, the hungry, the sick, all cry out, and the Prophet raised his fist to the heavens... “Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down.” So, the call for Good News can come from Heaven or from Earth. Where did you get your authority from heaven or from Earth? Yes.

Faithful people sent spies to Jesus. Spies “who pretended to be honest.” That’s a lot of hard work when you have to pretend to be honest. “Teacher, is it ok to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” Bringing the flag into the Sanctuary, getting everyone upset about politics and Church. It puts an end to a Good News Day.

It was supposed to be a Good News Day, but these people kept interrupting him with their faith of tricks and traps. And then was this group....

Luke 20: 27-38

Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally, the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.’

Jesus said to them, ‘Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

If I had been that seventh husband, I would have slept with one eye open and had Grub-Hub deliver my meals. I’m just sayin’. Ain’t nobody got time for this. And, if you haven’t figured out the point of the sermon, that’s the point. Ain’t nobody got time for this. Ain’t nobody who’s got time for hardly anything.

I’m on the clock! You’re on the clock. It’s Children’s Sabbath, it’s baptism Sunday! Need to get this sweet hour of prayer over with. I don’t have time to fill you in on the challenges of the text. I don’t have time to tell you about Sadducees who carry little Bibles. The Sadducees’ bibles just had five books. The five books of Moses. Called the Pentateuch, called the Torah. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

I don’t have time to fill you in on the details about Levitical law and how, when the man died, it was his brother’s duty to marry the widow. Make her part of the family. I don’t have time to tell you about why the Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection, and that’s why they were sad, you see.

I can’t get into the nitty-gritty of life after death. And whether in heaven you’re going to meet your second wife, your ex-husband, the boss who cheated you, or why the most common phrase among the saints in heaven is. “Well, I didn’t expect to find you here.” That’s the power of Amazing Grace.

Time is of the essence... for us... and for Jesus. We are in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Turn the page, and Jesus will be betrayed, handed over, crucified, and buried. When you know you don’t have much time left, every moment counts.

I know the day when I made the drive over to the Hospice Center and found the number on the hallway wall, entered into the room, and found Holy space filled with words so deep and rich with meaning. “I can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done for me. Dad, you were always there for me, and I appreciate that. I hope you know that I love you.” “Do you remember that time, Mom, when we were in the park? You gave me some advice, and those words changed my life. I’m so grateful for you.” Rich and deep, Good News. This is what is said when time is of the essence - Good News.

Most of the time, however, we don’t know how much time we have. We don’t know what time it is. For me, most recently, the surprise of time came because of our Sexton, John Penton. On Tuesday morning, he greeted me at the Mayfair entrance, and the next morning, he was gone. If I had known that was the last time I would ever be with John, I would have turned that space between the steps and the street into holy ground, and I would have told John all that he meant to me and to this church. It would have been Good News!

It was the calling of Jesus to hear the cry of the people and bring Good News. Maybe he knew that time was of the essence. Maybe he knew his days were numbered. He did his darndest to make his life about giving care, giving hope, giving a hand. Giving.

Or maybe he just knew that whether you live a few days or a hundred years, that this is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it, and you fill your whole life with Good News.

I think this text is a wake-up call to faithful people. Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, they were faithful people. Faithful people who quit hearing the Word of the Lord and replaced it with the Book of Order, or Sanctuary Policy.

Faithful people who worshiped WORSHIP, instead of the Lord. Faithful people who will seek to save THE institution. “We’ve got to save the church.” No, the Church is the Body of Christ. Its life is to be given away. And when it does that, the Lord adds to its number day by day. Don’t make it your faith to worry about the church – we’ve got Good News!

Faithful people didn’t want Jesus telling Good News. Why would you do that? Because they liked the day the way it was? When it was filled with the cries of those who needed Good News? Did they like it when bad news could rule a day? Nothing like a day of being bitter! Nothing like getting even! Nothing like having to prove you’re right! Nothing like needing to win every argument. They liked those days of division. They liked the days when you could look down your nose at those less holy than you.

Jesus has no time for that! Faithful people, don’t let your faith get in the way of the Good News!

Last Sunday night in this Sanctuary, I wish I had some Sadducees with me to listen to the choir sing. They lifted you up into the eternal heavens. You can’t prove the resurrection. You experience it – the joy, the love, the alpha, the omega, the beginning and the end of it, it’s eternal.

On this day, we have little ones being carried into waters of baptism. They’re so innocent. They don’t know what they’re in for in this world, but the prayer, the cry, the call is that they will be loved and nurtured to know the love of Christ! That’s our prayer, our hope, our Good news!

I heard that a woman who wrote a book recently spoke to one of the high schools. She was a sociologist, psychologist, I don't remember. But one of the things she said to parents is what youth need to hear the most, and they're not hearing it. Because if they heard it, so many of them would not end their lives so tragically. What they need to hear is, "You matter." How much time does that take?

Well, in the Church, we don't say the word "matter." "Matter" just sounds like a collection of atoms. We say, "You are a child of God." We say, "You are made in the image of God." We say, "I love you! I care for you!" "We'll give our life for you!"

We say these things on this day, and the next day, and all the days that the Lord has made, forever and ever, and ever because that's all the time we have.

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