

Putting Jesus in His Place

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[0 : 00] Well, if you were to take your Bible and open up to Luke chapter 20, our second reading, page 80. And as you do that, I make mention of the fact that on the front of the bulletin, I've written a letter to encourage you not to come to church next week at 11.

We're going to our summer time schedule next week instead of at the beginning of July. So there are going to be two morning services, 8am and 10am beginning next Sunday.

I'm doing that for a number of reasons. The biggest one is I would like our lead legal counsel, Jeff and Stanley, to come to a meeting at 11.30 after the service and to give us a wrap up on the legal case.

And I'd like as many people to be able to hear that as possible. So if you have friends who come to this 11 o'clock service, would you pass the word?

We're going to meet in a fairly squeezy and happy way at 10 o'clock beginning next Sunday. Is that okay? Any questions?

[1 : 11] Okay. Let's have a look at this passage in Luke 20. I've called this passage putting Jesus in his place for two reasons.

That's what the religious leaders were trying to do. Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem. He'd been acclaimed the Messiah. He'd gone right into the temple, cleansed the temple, was preaching the gospel.

And the religious leaders wanted to kill him. They wanted to put him in his place, which was a hole in the ground. Secondly, God wanted to put him in his place.

And the place God wants to put Jesus is to raise him from the dead and to place him at the highest place above every name, above every dominion, power, authority and glory, at his right hand, the place of honour.

And it's very interesting to me that we are here within days of his execution. Jesus has resurrection on the mind. And there are two points, two big points in the passage.

[2 : 17] And then at the end, Jesus makes two applications, two concrete, real-life examples of the difference the resurrection makes now in our lives.

I drove past a church yesterday and outside the church it had a sign saying, free trip to heaven inside. I think a lot of people who drive past St. John's think that's what we're on about.

That Christianity is, well, it's for people who are a little bit weak in the head. And we can't face life as it really is. And so all we do is we just, we use this thing of heaven and the future as a crutch.

And we're not much use in this world, really. And this passage is full of the resurrection. And we are going to have to work hard. I warn you, we are going to have to work hard. If you left your brain at the door, go and get it.

We'll wait for you. I want you to see, as we get to the end of it, how dangerously practical the resurrection is now. So there are two main points. The first, verses 27 through to 40, I've called taking the life out of the resurrection.

[3 : 30] I was going to call it taking the fun out of the resurrection because in verse 27 we meet the Sadducees for the first time in Luke's gospel. And the one thing we're told about them is they don't believe in the resurrection.

And you know how the old joke goes, they don't believe in the resurrection. That is why they are so sad, you see. It's Terry Fullerton's joke, I promise.

These were the creme de la creme of the Jewish elite. These were part of the authority structure in Jerusalem.

They were wealthy, aristocratic, and their clientele was the wealthiest. And they had their hearts and their minds fixed solidly on this life, this world, and all the goodies that it gets.

They didn't believe in heaven. They didn't believe in angels. And they thought the idea of resurrection was absolutely nonsense because they created a religion that was limited and defined by their own imagination.

[4 : 35] And the spirit of the Sadducee is alive and well today. You see it in people who call themselves spiritual but say, I only live for the now, I only live for today, the future doesn't concern me.

That's the spirit of the Sadducee. You see it in those who limit the Christian faith to what they can imagine, who are embarrassed with certain parts and they slice them off, the nasty bits of judgment and sexual morality, and they modify the faith so it doesn't upset them and it doesn't upset their clientele.

One of the funny things about that is that when you do that, God strangely becomes more and more like you. And his interests are your interests and he's no longer able to challenge you or really change you.

Instead, from time to time he comforts you that your opinion is right. That's the Sadducees. And you can hear the arrogance. They drip with pride as they come to Jesus and ridicule this idea of the resurrection.

Verses 28 to 33, they take up this Old Testament principle where sometimes, in some circumstances, if a guy married a woman and died, his brothers could marry the widow to raise up children in his name.

[5 : 55] And so they put to Jesus the famous story of the seven unlucky brothers who all felt obliged to marry the same widow as the first brother died and the second brother died and the third brother died and I reckon by the time they got to the fourth brother they'd become suspicious of the widow's cooking, don't you?

Now, say the Sadducees, about the silly resurrection business. If they die and go to heaven in the resurrection, who will be married to whom? And you can see their smile and they think they've knocked, they've done the knockout blow to this silly idea.

And Jesus, just see how patient he is with them. And they are talking to the one who came from heaven, who is going to heaven, who has the power of life and death in his hands. And although they're trying to kill him and to humiliate him, what he does is he just opens the door for them to see the true nature of the resurrection.

They are playing a very dangerous game. They've asked Jesus this two-cent question and he gives them a billion-dollar answer. And I want to warn you as we read these words. In church, we read words that are like thunderclaps to us spiritually.

And it's hard to realise the consummate authority, just the utter relaxed ease with which Jesus talks about God and heaven and resurrection and who's there and who's not and what life will be like.

[7 : 23] Verse 34, let me read just a couple of verses. These are just remarkable words. Jesus said, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore because they are equal to angels and are sons of God being sons of the resurrection.

Jesus divides history and reality in two. He says there's this age, there's that age, there's this world and there is the world to come. And the problem, he says, you Sadducees, because you are in love with this age and this world, your view of the resurrection is completely wrong, completely upside down, because the resurrection opens the door to a different world, a different life, a different kind of existence.

The Sadducees are trying to rubbish the idea of the resurrection with a marriage analogy, but Jesus says their mistake is they think that the next life is just a continuation of this life for centuries and centuries and centuries with a couple of modifications and improvements.

And the point that Jesus is making is the radical discontinuity between the resurrection life and our life here. The whole system of life is radically different in the resurrection.

He says those who attain to the resurrection cannot die anymore. They are, in that sense, they are equal to angels. Transformed by the deathless life of God, we will be given the gift of immortality.

[9 : 04] You know the idea of the immortality of the soul? That's a Greek idea. It's not a Bible idea. You and I do not have immortality. It is a gift that God gives those whom he raises from the dead.

And of course there will be continuity, but there's also a radical discontinuity, and that's what Jesus wants to emphasize here. If you take a seed, you cannot tell the beauty of the flower or the fragrance of the flower from the seed.

Or perhaps a better illustration, you know that this week Jim and Amber Saladin had a baby boy. Beautiful baby boy, whose haircut is exactly Jim's haircut.

I don't know how he did that. And I've offered him the name Seaprae Saladin, but they're not interested in that for some reason. Now in a couple of years, baby Saladin will be playing the piano and preaching the gospel.

But if you asked him three months ago what he thought of the sunset, he would not have been able to give you an answer. Now that he's born, things are different. In a little bit the same way, when you ask the question, what becomes of marriage, my marriage, our marriage, in the resurrection, Jesus is saying, we just do not have the capacity to understand it.

[10:26] And I notice in the heading, in the column there, the translators put, no marriage in heaven. I do not think that's true. I don't think that's what Jesus is saying. He is saying that the life in heaven is significantly different.

But here's the point. Jesus says, in verse 35, who is going to be raised? The who is those who are counted worthy. It's not those who think themselves worthy.

It's not those who are trying to make themselves worthy. It's those who God says are worthy. And we know from Luke's gospel, the people who God counts worthy are those who say, Lord, I'm not worthy. Have mercy on me, a sinner.

And then, in verses 37, 38, Jesus turns to the Sadducees and said, if you'd read your Bible, you'd know better. If you'd read your Bible, you'd know the truth of the resurrection. It takes them back to that day in the Old Testament when God appeared in the burning bush.

You know when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been dead for centuries, hundreds of years. And when God appears, he says to Moses, I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

[11:37] Not I was the God. They may be dead and gone to you, but to me, they are very much alive. What Jesus is saying is true biblical faith is resurrection faith.

All the Old Testament patriarchs had resurrection faith. They all believed in the God who could raise, that could bring life out of death.

They all looked to a greater city, a city with foundations, to a country, a heavenly country. We are constantly bombarded with the propaganda of the Sadducees, even today.

Almost every movie or contemporary song that speaks about heaven does the Sadducee thing and limits it to our imagination. Some years ago, ten years ago, there was a movie called What Dreams May Come.

If you didn't see it, don't bother with it. Chris is killed and goes to heaven, but he's miserable, his wife isn't there, and he dies, goes to hell, so Chris goes down and rescues it and brings it back to heaven.

[12:49] And it won an Academy Award for visual effects and it was lauded by critics as brilliant and creative and it just sucks the whole life and truth and fun out of the resurrection, the same way the Sadducees did.

It limits the afterlife. And there are Christian equivalents to this as well. I am a great fan of Dr. Billy Graham.

I have enormous respect for him, but if you visit, I have to make that disclaimer before I use that illustration, if you visit the Wheaton Billy Graham Evangelistic Museum, there are four floors of exhibits which go through some of the history of evangelism in the United States and the remarkable things that happen through Dr. Graham's ministry.

But when you get to the top floor, there is a room called the Heaven Room and you go through a corridor and there are four blank walls painted with clouds and the Alleluia Chorus loops around and around and around.

Well, I don't think that's very helpful really. It just takes the life out of the resurrection. So, that's the first point. The Sadducee defining God by our own imagination takes the life out of the resurrection.

[14:07] Well, that's the second point of course is putting the life back in the resurrection and it's verses 41 to 44. These are by far the most important verses in our passage and let me introduce them to you in this way.

If you look carefully in verse 39, there's another group of people, not the Sadducees, the scribes and they say to Jesus, Bravo, well done, you've put down the Sadducees, we were right all along. And you see, Jesus looks at them and he says, you can be completely orthodox on the resurrection. You can say the creed proudly and completely miss the point. Because the point of the resurrection is not getting your theology laser accurate.

The point of the resurrection is Jesus Christ himself. If you think about the resurrection just in terms of what's going to happen for you and your happy life after death and Jesus doesn't feature large in it, you've misunderstood.

And so what Jesus does in these little verses, 41 to 44, is he takes them to Psalm 110, which is probably one of the most important texts in all the scriptures.

[15:24] It's the one Old Testament text that's quoted more than any other in the New Testament and we need to spend a little bit of time on it. Alright? So keep one hand in Luke 20 and turn back to Psalm 110.

It's left quite a ways. If you don't have your Bible open, don't feel too guilty. If you have got your Bible open, don't feel too righteous. Psalm 110, page 539.

I'm going to read just the first verse. The heading, which is part of the text of scripture, says, a Psalm of David, verse 1, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool.

How many people are there in verse 1? Well, there are four, but there are three very important ones. David, the Psalm writer. The second is the Lord, and if you look very closely, it's all in caps. Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. That is the name that the Creator God revealed to Israel. That's the personal name of God Almighty. But there is a third character.

[16:44] You look there, the Lord says to my Lord. There is a second Lord in the first line, and this second Lord is the focus of the Psalm.

And God, the Creator, says to this second Lord, now sit at my right hand. I'm enthroning you over the world until I put all your enemies at your feet.

Who is David talking about? And when is David talking about? And the answer is, David is talking about Jesus Christ Christ, and the day that Jesus was enthroned at the right hand of God was the day of the resurrection.

And that's the point of the resurrection. Let's turn to a second passage. Turn back to Acts chapter 2, a little bit right of Luke. On page 113.

It's a great advantage in coming to the 11 o'clock service. I'm only going to do two passages. We did three at the 9 o'clock. They got more money value out of the service, I'm sure, but it was a bit long.

[17:54] We could do this all day, this looking at Psalm 110 in the New Testament. It's very important. But here we are in Acts chapter 2 on page 113, the first Christian speech sermon by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit has fallen.

Jesus has been raised 40 days before. And he touches on the resurrection in verse 24, and I'm going to read 32 to 36. Peter preaches, this Jesus, God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but David himself says, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies a stool for thy feet.

Here is the implication, here is the result, that all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, Jesus, both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

[19:05] the point of the resurrection is not that you and I get a happy life after death, the point of the resurrection is that God is making Jesus Lord and Christ and enthroning him, he is making him the Lord of Psalm 110.

And on the day that Jesus rose from the dead, he was placed at the right hand of God and he now rules all things. His rule is invisible and what God has been doing since the morning of the resurrection, that first morning until the day he comes again, is he has been placing all of God's enemies under his feet, including death itself.

This is very important, brothers and sisters. The resurrection is about Christ. Our resurrection is just part of Christ's resurrection.

Our resurrection comes about simply because he has been placed at the right hand of the Father on high. And the way in which we receive resurrection is not by trying to be raised from the dead but it's going to Christ and seeing in Jesus Christ the one who is precious, the head of the corner, the one whom God has chosen above all things.

You sometimes hear Christians talking about life after death in this way. They say, well, I'll be reunited with Uncle Bob and my favourite golden retriever. And part of that is true.

[20 : 31] The real point of the resurrection is not just the chains of death have been burst open. It's who burst them. It's Christ who burst them.

Jesus Christ is our resurrection. He is our life. He is our justification. He is our redemption. He is our exodus. This has massive implication for all sorts of things.

I mean, just a very simple illustration is, you know, what is the greatest grief and difficulty which overpowers you. God is placing it under the feet of Jesus Christ.

And so the way in which we deal with that difficulty is we go to him and ask him and approach him and everything he promises he will perform. So let's gather this up and bring it back to Luke 20, shall we?

Back on page 80. If we would return there for a moment. It's amazing. This is what Jesus had in mind just a couple of days before he was crucified.

[21 : 36] So you see in verse 41 he says, how can they say Christ is David's son? Because David says, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at thy right hand. Quote Psalm 110. David thus calls him Lord.

How is he his son? We know from Luke's gospel Jesus is the son of David. The angels announced it. Gabriel announced it. The people have said it. The beggar in Jericho called out, Jesus son of David have mercy on me.

But they have not seen the amazing fact that this one, the son of David is also God in the flesh. David's Lord of Psalm 110. And the Sadducees are arguing the things of God with the son of God and he doesn't crush them and he doesn't humiliate them but he opens the scriptures to them very gently in my view.

The great danger for them you see is their worldly religion they separate their idea of resurrection from Jesus and if you separate resurrection from Jesus you have an empty religious device that has no power to give us any hope, zero power to change us, it can't turn us out to serve others.

I mean what was it that so radicalised the early Christians in the book of Acts where they risked their lives for the gospel. The Holy Spirit comes and fills them with power. What do they preach?

They don't preach I'm going to be raised from the dead, you can be raised from the dead.

[22 : 52] They preach Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and from that position he offers us forgiveness and life and the spirit that risen Christ he rules over all things and he is going to remake all things, heaven and earth will be restored, God is placing all things under his feet, that is the gospel.

And nothing else I think in all the world can give us the courage to face persecution and nothing else I think can demote our idols except seeing the beauty of Christ.

It's all a matter where our treasure is. So I need to turn very quickly now to the two applications and they are truly devastating.

The two applications show us what the resurrection means now and one is a negative illustration and the other is a positive illustration. The negative is in 45 to 47 which is a picture of a kind of religion without God, without the life in it.

He turns to his disciples in verse 45 and he says 46 beware, look out for the scribes. They love to go out in long robes. They love salutations in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogue, first seats as it were, the places of honour at feasts.

[24 : 11] They devour widows' houses. For a pretense they make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation. This is religion on my terms.

This is a horizontal religion. This is a religion that does not care what God is doing or what God has said. And this kind of religion wears its religiosity as a camouflage but is actually enslaved to idols. If you've been with us in Luke, since chapter 12 there are three idols that have kept coming back again and again and again. money, human approval and status.

Just look at this kind of religion. They invest in fashion for their own status. It's ecclesiastical fashion but you know what they're doing. They love the places of honour, they love the places which will give them status, they're in love with their own status and they devour widows' houses.

They use religion to rip money off those who are kind and patient. They trade on that gentleness because this is their other idol. This is a religion that's empty and powerless but it's very deceiving. [25 : 23] It's not the religion of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's a religion that wants what God gives but doesn't want God. And Jesus says a terrifying thing at the end of chapter 20.

He says they will receive the greater condemnation. The Son of God says to us on the day of judgment there will be degrees of condemnation and those who have lived the life of religious hypocrisy who have used their religion as a cover for greed and status and all their idols will be judged most harshly.

It's a terrifying phrase. But then he moves to a most beautiful illustration in the positive. Chapter 21 verses 1 to 4. It's an extraordinary thing.

Here is a woman she is poor she has no status she's weak she's defenseless and she's got something in her life that seems to be seems more important than money and more important than approval.

What could it be? And there she is in the temple and she's in the line the long line of very major donors who are putting in their large gifts into the treasury so everyone can see and everything about her is wrong she's got the wrong clothing and her gift is pathetic two copper coins and Jesus says God loves it.

[26 : 48] God measures this totally differently than we do. God's not impressed with money he's not impressed with status he's not impressed with human approval what matters to him is what's going on in the heart of this woman and this act of sacrifice which I'm sure her financial advisor if she had one would have said to her keep one coin back at least it's foolish it's crazy but to God it's deeply deeply precious.

Jesus says all the big givers on that day did very little they could easily afford their big gifts and what they kept back was just plenty for themselves but in God's eyes what the poor widow did was more than all the others combined her two copper coins and the reason they're more than all because he says she gave out of her need she gave all of her life literally she gave all of her existence in that gift and what on earth what on earth has the power to cure us from greed you know to replace my stinginess with a sacrificial attitude to take me and change me from being a taker into being a giver and the answer Jesus says is nothing on earth it's only what's happening in heaven it's only the fact that he is seated at the right hand of the father and here is a woman who lives before God who is able to give her life to God because she believes that God is the one who raises the dead this is very important the only way she can be a generous person is by giving her whole life to God and the only way that she can give her whole life to God is if she knows that God has the power of resurrection in his hands it's only the resurrection that has the power to loosen the strangled hold our idols grip us with it is only when we're convinced that our true treasure is in heaven that the treasure here loosens its grip on us and we begin to desire to store up treasure in heaven isn't it a stunning example of true life and true faith

I think giving financially sacrificially giving financially is like dying and the only way we can enter into that death is through faith in the God of resurrection power it's only when we come to see that God has placed Jesus at the highest place we are freed to do that and if this poor widow could do what she did on that day you and I have much more reason because we've seen Jesus raised from the dead appearing to many taken up into heaven seated at the right hand of power far above all rule and authority in this age and into the age to come so let us kneel and pray and ask God for a generous spirit our father our treasure in heaven our father we thank you that in your son we may call you our father we pray to you indeed for you are in heaven where our elder brother your son reigns at your right hand our father today we would hallow your name and never take your name in vain we would bless your name for you have made yourself known in Jesus indeed as we have been reminded this morning you are not who we think you are but you have revealed yourself in Jesus as the one you know yourself to be you are our Lord our father in heaven and Lord we pray in your mercy hear our prayer today Lord we would ask for your blessing on the church your church as she confesses that Jesus is Lord we pray

Lord for the arrival of your kingdom we pray that your will may be done always may our obedience as your people our obedience on earth be pleasing to you as your son is pleasing to you in heaven Lord in your mercy and in praying for the church Lord we pray of course for our leaders today this time of special drama in our life together we pray for our Bishop Harvey we pray for Bishop Harding Lord we pray for Bishop Ferris we remember and give thanks and pray for our shepherd in Christ

Archbishop Gregory Venables we pray of course today for missionaries proclaiming Christ throughout the world we pray today for Christian scholars and their work in the gospel we might pray as well for Christian artists who seek a faithful witness in God's creation this creation which you love and have come to save and today Lord we would as your people we would pray as you have commanded us to pray we would pray for our enemies we would ask Lord that you would turn their hearts to love truth to love peace and to honor your word written Lord in your mercy and as you have taught us Lord we would pray today for daily bread we would pray for all we need to live for you in this as you have taught us this evil age we do pray

[34 : 04] Lord for the hungry in the world for the homeless for the aged we pray Lord for refugees we would pray Lord for all who are denied the dignity of those created in your image and as your people Lord we would remember those in our midst who suffer we remember especially today Velva we pray for Ron for Howard we pray Lord for Paul we pray for Rowena we pray for Gordon and in a moment of silence Lord we bring before you those we know who stand in need of our prayer at this time Lord grant to these that we remember before you grant to them patience and grant to them hope and grant to them a deep and abiding confidence in your love

Lord in your mercy Lord teach us to walk in forgiving love always towards all as we daily receive your forgiving love you know Lord that we as a congregation we are uncertain now about many things so we would pray that you would keep fear away may no temptation approach for which you have not provided in all temptations and trials Lord give us a strength to stand indeed Lord deliver us you are the Lord of all might deliver us from evil so Lord we would conclude by saying Lord hear us today do more as you have promised do more than we can ask or imagine Lord in your mercy hear our prayer prayer prayer please from hour and hang to whatever God I will oh hear our better