

# Luke 20:27-44 "A Small View Story"

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Open your Bibles, if you will, to Luke chapter 20. This morning we're going to start reading at verse 27.

And we're going to read down through verse 44.

Follow with me as we read this portion from God's Word. There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection.

And they ask him a question, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

[ 1 : 14 ] Now, there were seven brothers. First took a wife and died without children. And the second and the third took her. And likewise, all seven left no children and died.

Afterward, the woman also died. So in the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? I mean, for seven had her as wife.

And Jesus said to them, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered 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. But that the dead are raised.

Even Moses showed in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now, he is not God of the dead, but of the living.

[ 2 : 30 ] For all live to him. Then some of the scribes answered, Teacher, you have spoken well. For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

But he said to them, How can they say that the Christ is David's son? For David himself says in the book of Psalms, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

David thus calls him Lord. So how is he his son? Let me lead us in prayer as we approach the study of God's word.

Father, Father, we need your spirit. We cannot in ourselves understand what you would have to say to us today.

And Father, I cannot in myself and in my weakness communicate what you would have to say to us today. So all of us, those who are listening and those who are speaking, We need you to be here in our midst by your spirit.

[ 3 : 54 ] To teach us. To speak into our hearts. To reveal yourself. To reveal ourselves. And lead us to where hope can truly be found.

So would you come pour out your spirit? And teach us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You know, as I read this challenge from the Sadducees and the Pharisees before them, I can't help but think again of a movie.

And that is the opening scene of the movie Gladiator. In this opening scene, you've got Maximus, who is one of the great Roman generals, and one of his senior leaders, Quintus.

They and the Roman legions are facing this barbarian horde. And Quintus simply looks at Maximus and says, people should know when they're conquered.

Of course, Maximus replies and says, would you know? Would I? Obviously, the Jewish leaders don't.

[ 5 : 12 ] You see them coming again. And you just want to say, please, no. Enough is enough. Haven't you suffered enough already?

Just let it go. But they come with the expected outcome. You know, I love movies like *Gladiator* because it's a big story.

I mean, it's a big story of this great Roman general who, through a change of power, was thought to be murdered. He ends up a slave, has his family murdered.

And then, as a slave, rises back to prominence to save the Republic of Rome itself. I mean, what a story.

So we love stories like this. We love them because they're big. You know, when we think of the *Lord of the Rings*, you know, you have the hobbits living in the shire as if there was no place else in the world.

[ 6 : 25 ] And they were perfectly comfortable, perfectly satisfied in a life that was perfectly managed and very small. Until a couple of them ventured outside on a grand adventure.

Normal, small view stories, which unfortunately describes many of us, are small.

They are manageable. They are predictable. They are controllable. They are very, very limited in risk, but also in vision.

Such stories, though they may be very familiar, are not the kind of stories that Jesus has called us to. He's called us into a story that is so much beyond that.

He has come to release us, in a sense, from these small views, stories of life. That we might enter into this epic of the gospel.

[ 7 : 52 ] And of eternity. For us to experience the riches in all that God has to offer, we must replace our predictable, small view story with the eyes of faith that we might see the glorious, unfathomable, boundless life that Jesus alone in the gospel can give to us.

Otherwise, we will remain imprisoned in a small view of life that goes nowhere.

In this story with the Sadducees, we see these guys demonstrating, in a sense, what small view of life is.

And they do it in three ways. The first is that they have a very small view of Scripture. They have a small view Bible. Secondly, we're going to see that they also have a very small view of the future.

And thirdly, we're going to see a very small view of Redeemer. So let's begin with the first.

[ 9 : 16 ] A small view Bible. You know, in this particular challenge that we have here, the Sadducees are coming to do battle with Jesus.

This is really the only encounter that Luke gives us of the Sadducees and Jesus. He'll mention them in the book of Acts, but here, this is the only time.

There are a whole different class of Jewish leader from the Pharisees. In some ways, the Sadducees are the kind of the political left.

But the Sadducees, you know, their appeal was primarily to the wealthy, elite classes of Israel.

But they were also very accommodating to Rome. They did not mind kind of working with Rome, making the most and the best of their occupation.

[ 10 : 23 ] And so, they did not fight against, in some ways encourage, some of the Hellenistic influences that were coming. They knew their Bibles.

They knew them well. But the only part that they liked was what was called the Torah, the first five books of Moses. So, for them, Moses was the only authority that they trusted.

And in addition, one of the things that Luke tells us here about their theology is that they did not believe in or they rejected the idea that there was a resurrection.

For them, there was no life after death. Life just ended. And so, when they thought of eternity, it was how their name would be carried on through their children, through their names, and so forth.

Which might also tell us why they thought of this particular example from Deuteronomy 25. So, they come to Jesus with this very fanciful dilemma based on what is called levirate marriage.

[ 11 : 46 ] And in levirate marriage, that meant that if, you know, a man and a woman, they get married and the husband dies before a son in particular is born, then that man's brother or next of kin was to fulfill, in fulfilling the law, was to come and then take the wife and bear children through her so that the name of the brother who died could carry on.

It was also very helpful for the woman because for her to have anyone at all to care for her in her older age, she needed children.

And so, this was for both the carrying on of the family name but also the caring for this widow. And so, they developed this scenario that in their mind, I mean, it was a crazy scenario but in their minds, in their logic, they believe that this will absolutely prove that there cannot be a resurrection

because this kind of thing can never happen.

So, though they thought they had Moses as their authority, you know, actually, in this case, Moses was under their authority because what they were doing was going back to Moses and finding a place that would prove what they believed instead of going to the scriptures to find out what they should believe.

And as they did that, you know, they missed everything. They missed a very foundational doctrine and a place of hope for their faith.

[13:53] They missed the possibility of eternal life. And so, to them, the Bible was simply a rule code that they could pick and choose what they wanted and just leave out the rest.

But we don't do that. You know, it's interesting how two opposing groups can read the very same scriptures and come to two totally different conclusions.

Or to say it says something very, very different. Those who are on the conservative side will look at the scriptures and read it as if, you know, it supports, you know, public morality, it supports capitalism, it supports all of these things.

It's like it was written by Republicans. But then you have the other side who will read it with eyes that find where it says all about mercy and justice and help for the oppressed.

And who's right? The problem is, you know, one may not be more right than the other.

[15:20] But how did they get there? And unfortunately, too often, when we read the Bible, we're coming with our own ideas and we press them in to make them fit, which is what the Sadducees had done.

A better way to read the scriptures instead of just going to the scriptures to find places where we can defend our positions is to read it with the eyes of faith and go ask the Holy Spirit and say, Holy Spirit, show me what I need to see here.

Show me what you would have to say to me. Show me where I'm missing the boat. Show me what I need. Make yourself known.

Make me known. Let me see. See, we need a Bible that's big enough that will actually challenge our way of life.

If we read our Bibles and it does not challenge us, if it doesn't challenge your political positions, if it doesn't challenge your whole sense of what life is supposed to be or your values or your cultural ideas, then you're not reading it with the eyes of faith.

[16:51] you're managing it. It's a very small view Bible. So we need those eyes of faith where we come to the Bible in submission and we let the Spirit tell us what we need to believe, how we need to see life.

we need big view Bibles. Well the second point that he makes here and it follows, it flows from the first, is that the Sadducees not only had this very small view of Scripture but they also had a very small view of the future.

Because of their limited respect for Scripture, they had developed this view of life that was very small and contained.

The Sadducees, their view of life, it ended at death. They could live on maybe through just their name carrying on through their children. But with that reference point, then that shaped everything else they did in life.

So they lived their life in such a way that they got everything out of life now that they could. They loved living with the upper crust. They loved living with the elite of society.

[18:24] They prized high position. They prized control. In fact, even as you read their discussion and talk about the way they're talking about marriage, they lifted themselves up highly and degraded women.

They were getting everything now. Because there was nothing later. Again, I have to, if I'm going to quote gladiator, I've got to use this quote.

From basically the same scene at the beginning of the movie, Maximus gets his cavalry off to the side and to encourage them to go into battle and to be faithful and courageous, he makes this statement.

He says, everything we do in this life echoes through eternity. And he was right. This is not all there is.

So do we live with eternity in mind? Or do we get so fixated as our view of the future and life so small?

[ 19 : 42 ] that what this life offers is all there is? Is this it? Three things Jesus says that should have sobered the Sadducees, especially in regard to the future.

The first one was that the very scripture they claimed to trust taught very clearly that there was life beyond the grave. That God was the God of the living.

He was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Then and now, the time when that was spoken, they were dead. Or were they? Secondly, life in the coming age was totally different.

They were looking through the lens of just the way everything is now and were imposing that on the future, especially in regard to marriage. marriage. And so marriage in this life, though, if we read the scriptures, is merely a shadow of something so glorious and wonderful to come.

Are we going to know our spouses when we get to heaven? Well, probably. I hope so. It's going to be different, though, because the real, the true love of my life is going to be right there before my face.

[ 21 : 11 ] And we'll stand there together because he'll be her true love, too. And he'll be glorious.

The third thing that Jesus says, almost kind of says it in passing, but he makes sure he says this.

He talks about those who are considered worthy for the age to come. And the verb tense is pointing us here of someone else considering them worthy.

It's not they themselves gaining worth, but do they measure up in the eyes of God himself? God.

Our lives will be weighed in that day, will be weighed in the balance, we will give account to the true authority and judge to see if we have met up the standards.

The Sadducees had basically wiped that out of their theology because if death was it and you just kind of ceased to exist, you lived, you did not live in this life as if judgment was coming.

Convenient. well, let me ask this question. How does life change now?

[ 22 : 48 ] If I see clearly that there is another life coming, how does a view of eternity change the way I approach life now?

I mean, how does it, you know, if that life is far more substantive, far more glorious, if that life is something where all that I would achieve in this life mean nothing, how would that change the way I live my life now?

How does life change now? you know, when God first, when we decided to go to the mission field back in 1999 is when I was really challenged, one of the things that God used to challenge me was simply this idea that my roots in this life were far too deep.

God's because we lived in a really nice little community in South Georgia. We had a nice little church. Our kids were prospering.

They had a lot of friends in the community and everything was going great. We were, in a sense, living the American dream life where, you know, you got great healthy kids, they're happy, and your church is good.

[ 24 : 28 ] Then I found myself in Ukraine wondering if God wanted more. And I realized that my view of the future, my view of life was way too small.

My view of ministry was way too small. My view of ministry and what I felt like was being accomplished, I felt anybody could have come and accomplished that.

In fact, if I was really looking for evidence that God was really at work in the midst of us, I would have to question that.

And so I decided that we needed to go somewhere where if the Spirit of God was not at work, nothing would happen. And we found it.

But sadly, as soon as we came back, my bigger view of life contracted. And now, unfortunately, too much of my focus is just on my standard of living, success in this life, retirement, and a new bike.

[ 25 : 55 ] all the good things in life. So what's the answer?

Well, I think we need to remember that this life is momentary. It's just a shadow. It's not the substance. It's the previews.

Nobody, if you like movies, nobody wants to just live on previews. We want the full feature. And that's still to come.

And that story is so grand and glorious that it will, there's no comparison between it and the shadow.

So when eternity is clearly in view, then I am freer to move my family to another part of the world that may be a lot harder for life.

[ 27 : 00 ] When eternity is fully in view, I can experience hardship and persecution because this life is only momentary. And the real wealth, anything that I would lose here is worth nothing there.

If I saw eternity clearly in view, how would life be different? Well, the third point he makes is, the Sadducees had this small view of Scripture.

They had a very small view of the future. But now we're going to find out that there's a very small view of a Redeemer. And at this point, after Jesus had given the answer, to the Sadducees, we find there's another group of Jewish leaders there in the crowd, and he mentions the scribes.

The scribes were friends of the Pharisees. And the scribes and Pharisees are a lot of times always mentioned together, but they come from the conservative end of the religious spectrum.

And so they also have, you know, a high view of Scripture, at least according to their mind. But their idea of a Messiah was released from Rome.

[ 28 : 34 ] They were not like the Sadducees. The Sadducees accommodated the occupiers, not the scribes and Pharisees. They resisted.

They fought against them. They wanted nothing to do with them. And their idea of what the Redeemer would accomplish, what Messiah would bring, is freedom from Roman occupation.

They wanted the Son of David to throw off that yoke of Rome. They wanted a political Savior who would give them the freedom to live and worship on their own terms and not in slavery to some foreign power.

Rome was their problem. And they needed a Savior from Rome. And Jesus uses this psalm and kind of puts all of that to the test because the Son of David, this political Messiah, was supposed to be the Son of David, the psalmist, says, wait a minute.

Jesus said, wait a minute. This is what the psalmist says. The Lord, and if you read in the Hebrew, it means Yahweh, says to my Adonai, which means God Almighty, sit on your throne until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[ 30 : 09 ] And Jesus said, wait a minute here. The Messiah is the Son of David. But the psalmist says he's a whole lot more than that.

He's not just going to be a political redeemer. He's not coming to just throw off Rome. We're talking about God himself.

How could David say this about his son? They read the scriptures just like the Sadducees.

They brought their own ideas into play. And they missed the Messiah himself. They missed what he would come to do and to give to them.

And it was a lot more than a better political leader. And this is where, again, I just, I really have to ask my question, what do I look for in a Messiah?

[ 31 : 20 ] What do I want from Jesus? What do I want him to do for me? What kind of Savior do I want? Well, one of the best ways to figure that out is to ask, okay, well, what do I pray for?

Well, when my dream life is threatened, I pray for Jesus to come and protect it. And when he doesn't, I can get despondent, I can get angry and think, he doesn't love me.

When my health is threatened, I pray for him to restore it. When I fear I don't have enough, I call on him to provide. When I'm traveling someplace, I want him to make sure I don't get a flat tire.

I think it's called traveling mercies. So what my prayers say are most important things in my life are travels free of disruption, freedom from disease, even colds.

Heaven forbid, I would get a runny nose. Successful children, a comfortable retirement, well, we'll leave out that new bike.

[ 32 : 53 ] But this is what I expect Jesus to bring. Because this is all I ever ask him for. Maybe not all, but this is so much of it. Is this all we want him to do?

Are these our big problems? Are these the big dangers in our lives? When God the Father puts all of Jesus' enemies under his feet, one of those probably will not be flat tires.

His primary agenda is not to deal with all these, what I consider external threats, but he's going to come and deal with the internal ones.

the ones that threaten not just my convenience, but eternity itself. Those enemies are, we read in the scriptures, there's three, they put them in three categories.

First is the flesh. And that's me, my heart, my propensity to look at life all through this lens that says self.

[ 34 : 07 ] Self-sufficient, self-determining, self-glorifying, self-satisfying, self-righteous. Life is all about self.

That's the flesh. The second one is the world. And that's kind of corporate flesh. It's this world system that functions like this is all there is, so get with the program. And so you have every system that we have out here, all of life, is pushing us toward this small view of life. And conformity.

And the third is Satan himself. Who walks around with a gas can and sees these temptations of the world and the flesh and pours gas on them.

It makes them so much worse. These are the enemies that Jesus comes to bring down.

[ 35 : 20 ] These are the enemies that threaten my very soul. And what Jesus has come to do is to take them on.

Through his life, through his death, and through his resurrection, he breaks the power of sin and death.

He breaks the power of the fear of death. He breaks the power of the fear of judgment. He tells me that there is so much a bigger world and paves the way for me to get there.

He comes and takes me by the hand, puts my small little world to death. and says, come with me. I give you life.

I give you eternity. I give you joy everlasting. Jesus has come not to make this life better, but to help me throw it off so that I will look forward to a much bigger story, a much bigger eternity where I get God himself.

[ 37 : 05 ] Is that the kind of Savior you want? Is that what you're looking for in a Savior? This Savior says, come to me.

Come to me. Come to me. Come to me. Come to me. Let's come. Let me pray for us.

Lord Jesus, would you show us how our views of life and eternity are way too small? And would you show us what you have in store for us?

And then would you defeat the real enemies? Would you set us free from our slavery to self? Would you set us free from our slavery to this world and the pressures it brings?

And would you set us free from the condemnation and the deceptions of the enemy that we might look forward to this glorious hope of eternity with you?

[ 38 : 18 ] Come to us and draw us to yourself, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org).

For more information,