

September 2024

# Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter

## From the Mission Department

With Summer transitioning into Fall, we reflect on the busy season of camps and service events we have been able to gather at and be comforted with God's word. Many have been asked to serve in different ways at these events and we wish to thank you for your labor of love. We continue to experience the importance of gathering at services and camps, where we are encouraged in the endeavor of faith.

In the coming days we look forward to seeing many of you at Ministers and Wives Camp in Longview, WA September 20–22. This event is held annually each fall, and we encourage all ministers and wives to attend when possible. The directors for this year's camp are Joe Ojalehto and Bob Haapala. Feel free to reach out to them if you have any questions about camp. The camp events will be held at the Longview Laestadian Lutheran Church. A Zoom connection will be made available for those who wish to join during the Presentation/Devotion times. Please let Daniel Kumpula know if you wish to receive the Zoom link.

Remember to sign up for the upcoming Bible Course at Stony Lake, October 4–6. This Bible Course will explore the books of Ezra and Nehemiah looking at the main events and themes of the post-Exile.

## Noteworthy

### Upcoming Events

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp  
West Coast  
September 20–22, 2024

SLC Bible Course  
Books of Ezra & Nehemiah  
Stony Lake Camp  
October 4–6, 2024

LLC 2024 Ministers Webinar #4  
November 7, 2024  
8:00 pm CST

## Jesus and the Sadducees

Leo Väyrynen

*Mark 12:1–27*

The word “marras” is an old Finnish word and it means dead. “Marraskuu” (November) is the month of death. By then all of the flowers of the meadow have wilted. Appropriately at the beginning of November deceased ancestors have been remembered already in pre-Christian times. At the same time, it was pondered that where does a person go after death. Is there life after death or does a person’s life end eternally in the grave? This question puzzled people already in Jesus’ time. We can read about this in the Bible portion mentioned above as well as in its parallel texts in Matt. 22 and Luke 20.

The Sadducees formed a high priestly party, which also included the priesthood, large landowners, wealthy businessmen, and public officials. They did not believe in any life after death or anything supernatural at all. Amazing priests these Sadducees! But even in our time there are theologians who have put Jesus’ resurrection from the dead in question. At the same time, they are eroding the foundation of Christian belief in the resurrection. If Christ is not risen as the firstborn from the dead, it is in vain, as Paul says, to believe in the resurrection of the dead.

An even more speculative position, which toils from a purely natural scientific worldview, is held by people of this time. They believe only in what they can see with their eyes or can be proven true with the senses or sensitive measuring instruments. There is no room for the resurrection in the world view of such a person.

The Sadducees prided themselves on their rational explanation of the Bible. They only accepted the books of Moses in their Bible and argued that Moses did not speak of the resurrection or life after death. The Sadducees took support for their understanding from the Hellenistic philosophy of their time. To illustrate the impossibility of the resurrection they concocted a fictitious narrative of seven brothers and a woman who had been married to each one of them, because the brothers had died one after another. This could actually have happened. There is a decree in one of the books of Moses concerning levirate marriage. According to it, a widow was to marry her late husband’s brother if no children had been born of their marriage. The

## JESUS CONVERSES

Jesus met many people during His life. Several of them wanted to converse with Him. Jesus’ teaching gave birth to questions in some listeners. They wanted to hear more since His teachings deviated from the teachings of the scribes of that time. Several people approached Jesus because of their difficulties and problems. Jesus also used to talk on His own initiative with people He encountered in various situations.

Several discussions which Jesus had with various people are recorded in the Bible. This year we will publish a series of writings in this paper by Leo Väyrynen on some of these discussions. Although around two thousand years have passed since these discussions, their topics and issues are still timely. We notice this in this series of writings.

name and inheritance remained in the family if children were born in the new marriage.

The Sadducees asked Jesus: Which of the brothers’ wife will this woman be in the life to come since she had been married to each of the seven brothers here. With this question they wanted to show that faith in the resurrection leads to impossible and ridiculous problems. It would be better not to believe in the resurrection at all. The Pharisees were the object of the Sadducees’ criticism. They accepted books other than the books of Moses into their Bible. From the prophetic books, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel among others, they had concluded that there is an afterlife, but life there is basically the same as life here. The Pharisees apparently thought that the woman of the narrative would be with her first husband in the life to come.

What did Jesus think about the question? He rejected the Sadducees view by reminding them of the portion in a book of Moses in which God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. God said: I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! An important matter had to be concluded from this: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob yet lived, for God is only the God of the living. If God says the He is the God of those men, they live a life after death, even though they have died from this life. The Sadducees had to admit that Jesus’ understanding that God was the God of the living was

# Jesus Converses

correct. At the same time, they were surprised that a text that supported resurrection faith was found in the books of Moses, in which they were specialists.

Jesus had reason to say to the Sadducees that they had gone astray. Why? They did not know the Scripture or



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the power of God. The resurrection of the dead to a new life does exist and it concerns those whom God deems worthy of eternal life. But Jesus also had something to tell the Pharisees. He rejected their view of the nature of life after the resurrection. Jesus explained that the resurrected are like angels who never die. Since death does not exist, no one marries in heaven and children are not born there. Jesus does not describe the resurrection in more detail. He just says what it is not. The resurrection is a mystery, a secret, as is also the beginning of life. It is impossible to explain what the resurrection and life after the resurrection is with the inadequate understanding of this perishing world.

Who then does God deem worthy of eternal life? Those who come to recognize God's power, who believe upon Him. The foundation of the resurrection is Jesus' resurrection on the first Easter. Its effect and power are owned through faith begotten by the Holy Spirit. For obtaining this faith, the Holy Spirit has a special congregation on this earth and in this congregation the office of preaching to which the duty of proclaiming repentance and the forgiveness of all sins has been entrusted. Where God's power is owned through the preaching of the Holy Spirit there is faith in the resurrection of the dead and there are partakers of the miracle of the resurrection already in this time.

## Epistle Postil

### The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jorma Manninen

#### JESUS GIVES LIFE

Beautiful names for this Sunday are Autumn Easter or Little Easter. The Lord Jesus defeated the power of death over creation. We had come under the power of death because of our sins. We must be humbly aware that our life here is only for a short time. Our texts speak of the life which Jesus won for humans. The Great Redeemer once will stand upon the earth. He will then proclaim His final, decisive words.

Already in time, God sometimes does such miracles that the dead are awakened to life. Prophet Elijah healed the son of the widow in Zarephath, and Jesus woke Lazarus from the dead in Bethany. The texts testify of miracles and signs, but they aren't the most important thing.

The Sunday texts reveal what is most important. It is faith's connection to Christ, life in Him. Christian hope becomes convincingly evident at this time. Even sufferings only last for a moment. They change into immeasurable glory in our home in heaven. Hope inspires the traveler although the treasure received from God is in fact in "vessels of clay."

# Epistle Postil

## LECTIONARY YEAR 3

*Philippians 1:20–26*

### THROUGH LIFE AND DEATH

Paul and Timothy apparently wrote to the Philippian congregation from Rome in the year 62 or 63, where Paul had been imprisoned. He had already been transferred to a rented apartment in the barracks. He awaited his release and sent greetings through the saints among the emperor's bodyguards. The help from the Philippian believers had been received. Their apostle Epaphroditus had brought it. He had become seriously ill in Rome, but he had also recovered. "Sorrow upon sorrow" was avoided. The core content of the letter is the gospel of Christ and the joy of God's people.

### CHOICES BEFORE PAUL

Hope dominates the letter. There are three elements in it: joyful anticipation, comforting trust in God, and contentment. Hope protects the person who is waiting from becoming exhausted. If he were to fall into the shameful ways of sin as one who believes the gospel, this also would bring shame upon Christ's holy name. Paul safeguarded God's glory. His own shame and honor were secondary. It was important to obtain strength for the confession of faith.

Paul knew that God had two good options for him, life and death. He pondered this. The philosophers considered death better only when life became painful. Nowadays, it may be said that it was indeed a relief for one who has suffered so much to escape such a wretched life, from a family with addiction issues, or some other plague. Let us consider, were the sins of the departed forgiven, or did the suffering become something even worse?

When Christ is our life, it is safe to live. Death also is victory. Still the options are not the same. Death would certainly be the best on the part of the believer. We would like to leave to be with Christ in heaven, where nothing could threaten our victory. The dangers and problems would end, and faith would change to seeing. The joy would be complete and unending.

From the perspective of a holy vocation, life is clarified to be more necessary than even death. Paul finally became convinced that on the part of the Philippian believers it



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would be better for him to remain alive. He experienced the same thing as fathers and mothers as do as educators. It felt that one could still do something necessary and improve some matter.

### THE JOY OF GOSPEL WORK

Paul "knew" that he could return to his Philippian friends in faith. They could remember the triumphal procession of the gospel and God's grace work that happened to them. They could rejoice. Also, mutual faith would be strengthened.

In Philippi boasting of Roman citizenship appeared. Paul reminded them that the greatest gift is citizenship in God's kingdom. There is no boast in what you are yourself or what someone else is. Paul taught what man is based on his own experiences and humble accounts. Human gains had to be surrendered. They became a loss. The most important thing was to receive Christ as one's own. The apostle's joy in the company of believers was connected to this. Temporal desires are realized if that is God's will.

## Contact Information

Adrian Pirness  
Mission Director  
adrian.pirness@llchurch.org  
763-360-0820

Daniel Kumpula  
Pastoral & Mission Program Manager  
daniel.kumpula@llchurch.org  
763-614-6324

Maria Fredrickson  
Administrative Assistant  
mfredrickson@llchurch.org  
763-479-2422