

Sermon preached by Rev Rachel McDougall

St Paul's Canterbury

Pentecost 22 OS 32 Proper 27

Children of the Resurrection

What are the topics that you are passionate about that bring you alive when you talk about them?

What are the topics you are happy to talk about at a dinner party?

What aren't you?

The weather and sport are probably a couple of them, particularly your favourite team.

According to the Australia talks survey religion isn't one of them. Indeed there is a perception that people would like religious people to keep it private and not talk about it!

I wonder what the most awkward question you've been asked at a dinner party when people find out you're a Christian. I've heard a few!

So like Jesus we can be faced with awkward questions.

I wonder if anyone asked you questions yesterday at the fair?

Yet I've often found that most of the time it is people who are curious who are asking curious questions about faith – questions that indicate to me that they are open to an answer that I might give and are interested in what it means for me to be a Christian priest.

There are times when it can be a bit like the Sadducees questioning Jesus.

The Sadducees were a very conservative group of Jews connected with the temple who had a fixed way of seeing things.

They believed this life was all you got so you needed to make the most of it. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

So they put a ridiculous sort of question to Jesus, a caricature of what belief in eternal life might look like with the example of one woman who marries 7 brothers.

(All I can think of – is poor woman!)

What is striking that this was something that happened in the very early days of Judaism but wasn't done at all really in the time of Jesus.

It's like they were dredging the bottom of the barrel for the worst they could think of.

Jesus' response is to invite the Sadducees to see outside the narrow glasses they saw through.

He says that the new age is different to now. It is bigger and doesn't have the same constraints as now.

He says that those considered worthy are the children of God, the children of the Resurrection.

He talks about God as a God of the living – as the God who spoke to Moses in the burning bush said that he is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. To God all of them are alive.

Children of the resurrection, the God of the living.

This says to me that we all belong to a living God, in life, in death and beyond.

Eternal life is different than we can even imagine.

Yet being Children of the Resurrection begins now.

As Paul says if we live we live to the Lord if we die, we are the Lord's so whether we live or die we are the Lord's.

I think what this says to me is that we are living signs of God's hope.

Being people of the living God means that we can see beyond present realities and how faith is seen, even amidst the disagreements that go on and see the long view.

Julian of Norwich did in the midst of the dark ages with plague and wars surrounding her. She could still say that even though Sin was necessary all shall be well.

We are children of new life, people of a transformed life where the concerns and worries of this life are not all there is but are gathered up into God.

To be children of the resurrection is to be people of hope and of courage.

This means to be like the prophet Haggai who could see beyond the ruins of the old temple and to name that the living God is present and to encourage people to have courage to build anew.

This time between All Saints and Advent 1 is the season of the in-between times where we remember those who've gone before us and those who've given their lives and to look forward to see what the new heavens and earth of God's new creation will look like.

On this Sunday when we remember those who gave up their lives in war, we remember what they gave their lives for – for a better future. So many lived and died courageously that we might enjoy the fruits of peace.

And the beginning is already here.

I wonder what it means for you to be a child of the resurrection, a person of hope, and courage, to be hopeful in our living.

It is a reminder that in whatever happens we belong to God

This is what I like about the hymn we have just sung:

*When we are living we are in the Lord
And when we're dying we are in the Lord.
For in our living, and in our dying
we belong to God we belong to God.*

*Till earth is over may we always know
Love never fails us: God has made it so.
Hard times will prove us, never remove us
We belong to God, we belong to God.*

*Lections:
Haggai 1.15b-2.9
Psalm 145.1-5, 17-21
2 Thessalonians 2.1-5, 13-17
Luke 20.27-38*