

November 9, 2025—Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. James Wyatt

Children of the Resurrection

I know these guys, these Sadducees. In my other job, we call them rules lawyers. They're the guys (I'm sorry to say it, but they're almost always guys) who make YouTube videos about how you can line up a thousand villagers spaced five feet apart and have each one take the Ready action to grab a spear when the person next to them hands it to them, and so you can pass the spear down the whole line of people in a single, six-second round, moving it five thousand feet—almost a mile—in just six seconds and then the last one in the line throws it and the spear is going nearly the speed of sound so it'll do devastating amounts of damage! And if you didn't understand that, that's OK. That's just a glimpse into a shadowy place in D&D fandom that's fun to visit sometimes, but I wouldn't want to live there. The point is, rules lawyers look for loopholes, they look for ways to exploit the rules to help them "win" in a game that's supposed to be cooperative, to the detriment of everyone at the game table.

So yeah, I recognize these Sadducees. They're not talking about D&D, of course, but they've got the rules lawyer mindset. They think they can trap Jesus by taking an absurd case and using it to try to disprove the whole idea of a resurrection of the dead. They're exploiting the rules to help them win their argument.

And Jesus, is having none of it. I mean, their question, fundamentally, is this: given Moses' law in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 25, beginning at verse 5, about a man's duty to marry his brother's wife if the brother dies without having a child, if this woman gets handed down from brother to brother, married off to seven men, then in the resurrection, who will she belong to? Whose property will she be? That's what they're asking. And Jesus is not going to answer that question. When Jesus says, "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," what he's saying is that in our life with God nobody is anyone's property.

And he goes on. "Indeed, they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection." And I feel like we are not very good at imagining what that means. I mean, somewhere along the line we got this idea that people die and go to heaven and literally become angels. You see that everywhere, from the guardian angel Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life*, who says he's been in heaven for 200 years and hasn't earned his wings yet, to cartoons and comics where people who die suddenly sprout halos and wings and get handed a harp. In our limited imagination, we figure that when Jesus said people in the resurrection are like angels, that means angels are like us. And sort of by extension, we imagine that eternal life—a life where "they cannot die anymore"—means a life that's a lot like our life here and now, just . . . more of it. An unending life. When I hear people outside the church imagining what we mean when we talk about heaven, I hear them say things like, "Wow, that sounds boring." Sitting around strumming on a harp all day—and I mean *all day*, because there isn't any night—doesn't sound very exciting to them. And . . . I can't really argue with that, except to say, again, I don't think we're very good at imagining what Jesus meant, and I pretty sure the reality is beyond our wildest imagination.

But I have a professionally wild imagination. My other job is all about dreaming up worlds that are like and unlike this one. I recently wrote a whole chapter about other planes of existence in a fantasy multiverse. And even that, as wild as it is, is too small, too limited by our understanding of time and space.

Because the way I see it, time and space are part of God's creation—not part of the nature of God. We are bound to time and space; we are tangled up in the limitations of reality as we know it—but God is not. And so eternity is not just a really long time, it's timelessness, it's being disentangled from the limitations of time. And eternal life is not just more of the same, stretching on forever—it's life beyond time.

So of course, in that context, it's absurd to ask "whose wife will this woman be?" or "won't we get bored?" or any of the other questions we ask when we imagine resurrected life

as just more of the same. I still have lots of questions about what life looks like without time to measure it. Questions like, what even is the music we imagine the angels playing on their harps if it doesn't unfold in time. And to a certain extent, it's all a thought experiment, because I can't possibly wrap my brain around it until I experience it.

And for that reason, I have to say, I appreciate the words of 2 Thessalonians: "We beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed" as you try to understand all of this. The important part—the really, really important part—is that we are now, in time, and eternally in the hands of a God who loves us, who keeps us as the apple of an eye and hides us under the shadow of sheltering wings, as a hen gathers her brood of wayward chicks. Whatever else we can imagine about an existence that will certainly be beyond our wildest imaginations, at least we know that, and hopefully we can find comfort in that.

In my mother's last days this summer, she asked me to help her find a photo on her iPad—a picture of her and my dad sitting on the beach in Thailand 25 years ago, before he died in 2006. Here it is:



Now, given everything I just said about life in the resurrection being eternal, beyond the rules and limitations of time and space, I know it's a little ridiculous for me to say that this is how I imagine my parents now. But I think of this image as something like the icon and painting we blessed last week: an "outward and visible" representation of "realities unseen," of "things which can be seen only by the eye of faith," in the words of the prayer we used to bless them. (Book of Occasional Services, p. 250) Because I don't know this for sure, but I have confidence that the love my parents shared in their lives in this world had something of the eternal in it. And even though they're far beyond the need to "marry and be given in marriage," as Jesus put it,

they have entered into eternal love. And that makes sense to me only if I imagine them still, in some way, together, gazing at the beauty of eternity together. And to be clear, I don't think Jesus contradicts that with his answer to the rules-lawyer Sadducees. Their question was about raising up a child to carry on the family name. His answer was that they're past all that now. But that doesn't mean they're past their love for each other.

I think, really, that is the central miracle and mystery of our faith: that we can taste eternity in the smallest of ordinary things. We can see the invisible, conceive the inconceivable, encompass the infinite, and touch the intangible through things that are tiny, apparently insignificant, and marvelously concrete. We come to understand what is universal through the gloriously particular, the beautifully ordinary, the delightfully everyday. In a bite of bread and a sip of wine we can experience a cosmic feast in which all creation takes part. In a gathering of two or three people for Morning Prayer, we can experience the unending stream of prayer and praise that suffuses the entire cosmos. In a simple act of kindness and love between two tiny people tangled up in time and space, we can express and experience the love of God that undergirds this whole vast universe.

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God, our Parent who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word." (2 Thess. 2:17)

Amen.