

Title: “Who’s Truth?”

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Luke 20:27-40

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Overview:

We live in a world full of truth claims proclaimed by anyone with a large enough following on Twitter. We live in world where anyone with a loud enough voice, enough money, or the right friends can create a religion, create a set of truths, and adjudicate their claims against Christ’s.

Lesson:

We are defined and transformed by Christ who is the Truth.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Today’s message is taken from the Gospel, according to Luke, the 20th chapter. Starting in verse 27:

²⁷There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, ²⁸and they asked 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. ²⁹Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife and died without children. ³⁰And the second ³¹and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. ³²Afterward the woman also died. ³³In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.”

“Got milk?” For those of you too young to remember this was an ad campaign from the mid 90’s. It was a set of simple ads, usually a solid black background with those two words printed in bold, white text. And just as bold was the message behind it. If you didn’t already have milk, you needed to acquire some. There was no ambiguity in the statement, no hidden message, nothing - just a simple command: purchase milk. That was it. The premise of this assertion was based on an unstated, but inferred fact: everyone needed milk. It was assumed true and expected to never be found false. Everyone could and should have milk. Those of you who are lactose intolerant? You still needed milk. Everyone did. Everyone *must* because a challenge to this claim was a challenge to the foundational truth it was built upon. If allowed to define yourself as lactose intolerant, if they conceded that there were those who could *not* have milk, where would they be? They would be left questioning their identity, their entire belief system, their truth. The very foundation of this campaign would crumble; and so, they held firm: *everyone* needed milk. Did you have yours?

Now, we may laugh at the absurdity of this argument because we know that the source of this truth is an advertising agency and the consequences of accepting the claim have very little impact on our lives. But what of more significant claims? What if determining the truth of some premise would impact our life or death? Even greater, what if it would impact our eternal life or eternal death? All of the sudden we would stop laughing and focus in not only on the claim but on its source. We

would determine if it could be accepted as fact. And our final judgement would contribute to the very foundation of who we were. A truth claim of this magnitude would necessarily influence our very identity and so it would be critical that we arrive at the proper conclusion; failure to do so would be catastrophic.

In today's Gospel passage, we are told that the Sadducees had accepted as fact certain claims. We know that they held the Torah, the Law of Moses, highly, and they believed in the God of Abraham, but they also believed that there would be no resurrection. God would not raise them, or anyone else, from the dead. This was their starting point that formed the very foundation of what they believed. It even defined how they saw themselves. And it was from this position that they asked Jesus the question **"In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?"** It was not a question to expand their knowledge, or a question to challenge their thinking. There was no possibility that the response might move their starting point or contribute to the correction of their fundamental beliefs. Instead, it was a judgement in the form of a question. They had found the claims of Jesus false and were pointing out the folly of his claim for a resurrection. It would be like me listening to you tell me a problem and then reply with "Why didn't you do this?" On the surface, it sounds like a question, but it really is nothing more than a hidden statement or judgement about the actions that you took.

For the Sadducees, their unspoken claim about the resurrection drove to the core of what they believed and so it carried an enormous weight in their lives. They were defined by this set of beliefs and acknowledgement of one being false, especially this one, would redefine who they were, and potentially even destroy them and their position in society. And so, they completely rejected that truth claim. And in rejecting *that claim* they rejected *all other claims* Jesus made about God and about himself.

And we see the parallels in our society today. Anyone with a large enough following on Twitter, or with a loud enough voice, or enough money, or even the right friends can create a religion, can create a set of truths and expose it to a great number of people. They can claim a truth that is based not on God's word but on their own, and because it aligns with an ideological set of beliefs, it becomes attractive to the masses and they conform to it and identify with it, and they become a physical manifestation of these beliefs. But if it's not based on God, it's not based on anything. And if it is not based on anything, if it is built on nothing except an unfounded belief, how long can it stand against the pressures of God's truth? How quickly will it crumble and what will be the impact to those who have built their identity upon its foundations? They will find their identity in nothing they will be lost and left wandering.

But for us, our foundation is The Truth, God's Truth. And the proof can be found all around us: we see the consequences of a sin described to us in Genesis. We see the historic evidence of a resurrected Christ throughout the New Testament. We see the grace of God being poured out to all those who believe in Him, and so we know that what he reveals to us is the truth. And what he reveals to us is that *he* is the truth, and the way, and the life. We don't simply build our identity upon this foundation. Instead we are defined by Christ himself. We are in Him and He is in us. We are the temple where he takes residence. We are more than just people who know Christ and follow Him. We are defined by and through Him. This doesn't simply mean that the decisions we

make are based on His claims that we hold to be true but are based on claims that He has told us are true.

And this truth came down from Heaven, and was born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. And he did this so that we, too “are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory,” as stated in 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Over 2000 years ago, the Sadducees had an opportunity to ask Jesus a question, to hear from the mouth of Truth, and to experience everlasting life. They wasted this opportunity and instead tried to impose their truth on Him. What about us? If we were to ask Jesus a question today, what would our motive be? Would it be to expand our knowledge, or to challenge our thinking? Would it be to contribute to the foundation of our beliefs, or like the Sadducees, would it be little more than a statement to Him about where our opinions about our life or about the lives around us disagree with His truth?

I would like to close us in prayer using a verse from a song by a composer named Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

Lord,

Christ, you are the Savior, the Way to the Father,
The Truth we depend on, the Life that we need.
We trust you, believing! We listen, receiving
The joy of the gospel by which we are freed.

In your name we pray. Amen.

<https://sojo.net/articles/hymn-prayer-jesus-way-truth-and-life>