
Undying Love (Luke 20:27-38)

A Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



Back in high school, I had a friend that really wanted a girlfriend. He and I talked about it a lot. He saw other kids at his school who were dating and he just wished that he had what they had. He wanted to find that girl of his dreams. He wanted to find that “happily ever after” that all the movies and story books talk about.

It really got to him too. He would often call himself a loser because he didn’t have a girlfriend. I had started dating my now wife by this time and I would tell my friend to just be patient. I had been in a similar frame of mind too but I ended up dating a girl. I figured if it could happen to me, it could certainly happen to my friend. He didn’t want to hear that from me though. He was convinced that he would never find a girl. He was sure that he would miss out on that “happily ever after.”

Sometime later, I remember him talking to me excitedly about this girl that he was hanging out with and how wonderful she was and how much they had in common and on and on. During that time, I always wanted to tease him about how sure he had been that he would never find a girl, but I never did. Eventually, he asked that girl out and she said, “Yes.” And they lived happily ever after.

Well, actually, they didn’t. They dated for a while, but eventually they ran into problems. They disagreed on some things and ended up breaking up. “Happily ever after” really doesn’t happen, does it?

Our relationships are one of the best parts of life. The ability to share our joys and our sorrows with one another. The opportunities we have to just spend time with friends who appreciate us, who accept us, who love us, that is an awesome thing. And marriage, the chance to share your whole life with someone and even to raise a family together! The relationships we have with other people are just an incredible blessing.

However, if we are honest, we also have to say that relationships can also be one of our greatest hardships. Even the best relationships, even those relationships that bring us the most happiness, still take some work. Relationships take effort. It’s not always happy. It’s not always fun. It’s not always things you want to do.

And finally, all of those relationships end. Love dies. Some, despite our best efforts, somehow turn from love to hatred. Sometimes, those people whom we had trusted betray us. And that hurts. And the worst of it is even those great relationships, where everything maybe was just perfect for a long, long time, even those relationships someday will end in death. “Happily ever after” just doesn’t happen. It can only be happy for a time, but that time will come to an end. Love dies.

Today, however, our God wants to tell us about a truly Undying Love. You see, our relationship with God is not like our relationships with other people. Our relationship with God will not end when we die, but will last into eternity. As we take a closer at our gospel lesson, God shows us the one place where we can truly find Undying Love.

Go ahead and follow along with me as I read our lesson again. (Read verse 27: *Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.*)

Our gospel lesson begins with the Sadducees coming to Jesus with a question. It's a pretty normal situation even for Christians today. Unbelievers and skeptics pick one teaching from God's Word or they grab one phrase from the Bible completely out of context and they point out how ridiculous it would be if you think about it.

And, this sort of tactic can work pretty well. Maybe there is some question about God's word that someone brought up to you at some point, and it really bothers you. Maybe there's something that you've always wondered about.

If so, search for an answer! Dig into God's Word. God's people have been on this earth since man was created, so I can guarantee you are not the first person to ask this question and there has been a Christian before you who found an answer. At the very least, ask me about it and I will do my best to look into it and help you grapple with it.

So, back to the Sadducees' question: again, the Sadducees want to show how the idea of a resurrection is ridiculous, so they point to an Old Testament law about marriage. (Read verse 28: *"Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother."*)

Among God's Old Testament people, the Israelites, God has given specific portions of land to specific families. Parents would pass that same land on to their children and it was very important that the family's land stay in the family.

So there was this law, and really it wasn't so much something that people *had* to do and from most examples it wasn't really enforced, but it was a very loving thing to do for your family. If a man married but then died without any children to pass his land onto, the dead man's brother would marry his widow and the first child born of the brother and the widow would be considered as the dead man's heir. This way the land could stay within the family.

The Sadducees, again taking things out of context and applying things that don't apply together, come up with this ridiculous situation: (Read verses 29-33: *"Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"*)

So we have 7 brothers who all marry the same woman, one after the other, but all of them die childless. So, at the resurrection, who will the woman be married to? All 7 brothers would have an equal right to be married to her! If she would only be married to one of the brothers, why not the other 6? And if she were married to all 7, well, that's even more ridiculous! The Sadducees are sitting there, going, "See!? If there is a resurrection, it leaves us with ridiculous implications! The idea of people rising from the dead is complete nonsense!"

But Jesus, with divine wisdom, corrects the Sadducees and gives us this incredible lesson about the one place where we can find Undying Love. (Read verse 34: *Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage."*)

First, Jesus points out that marriage is only a part of our lives here on earth, in this age. God has given us marriage to provide us with earthly blessings. Marriage gives us blessings like companionship, sexual fulfillment, and families.

But those things won't be necessary in heaven. (Read verses 35-36: *"But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection."*)

In heaven, God will be our constant companion. We won't ever face the struggles and sadness of relationships lost because we will have a perfect relationship with our God. In heaven, we will be perfect and holy saints.

Jesus also says that we will be like the angels, not that we are going to have wings, wear robes, and float around on clouds playing harps all day, but we will never die. And so again, one of the earthly purposes for marriage, i.e. having children, will not matter in heaven. There will be no need for more children to be born in heaven because none of us will die. We will all enjoy our God's love forever!

But wait, Jesus says this is only for those who are *considered worthy* of taking part in the age to come. Are you worthy of the resurrection from the dead? Are you worthy of escaping death forever? Are you worthy of sharing heaven with the one and only perfect and holy God?

If we're honest, we have to say, "No. We're not." We are all sinners. That's the biggest reason why love dies. If we honestly look at the problems we've had in our relationships, we'd have to admit that we often, if not always, contributed to the problem by being selfish, or trying to get revenge, or by not listening, or any other number of things we do wrong. Can someone like that really be worthy of the resurrection from the dead?

Yes. Someone like that can be worthy of the resurrection from the dead. And, in fact, you are considered worthy. Not because of our own efforts or decisions, not because of your track record or because of your future potential, but God considers you worthy of taking part in the

coming age, because of Jesus. God considers us worthy of taking part in the resurrection from the dead because Jesus has made us worthy. Jesus was the only person who was worthy of this coming age and he freely gives that status to us, so that we might stand before God, worthy of the resurrection from the dead.

Because of what Jesus has done, that perfect and holy God is now our God. And in the same way that he is still the God of people like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, people who died long ago, God will continue to be our God even after we die.

And Jesus shows us very clearly what that means. (Read verses 37-38: *“But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”*)

Through Jesus, our relationship with God is so strong that not even death can separate us from him. Death separates and ends every relationship we know in this age, but it cannot separate us from God. Jesus died and rose again, specifically so that God might be our God. That is a relationship that nothing can end. As a popular hymn says, “No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand.” Death could not separate Jesus from us and it will not separate us from God.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And so long as he is our God, he will not allow death to hold onto us. We belong to God and not to death. This is truly Undying Love. Heaven will be the one true happily ever after. Amen!