



“Always Arguing”

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Scripture (CEB):

Luke 20:27-40

²⁷ Some Sadducees, who deny that there’s a resurrection, came to Jesus and asked, ²⁸ “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that *if a man’s brother dies* leaving a widow *but no children, the brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.* ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers. The first man married a woman and then died childless. ³⁰ The second ³¹ and then the third brother married her. Eventually all seven married her, and they all died without leaving any children. ³² Finally, the woman died too. ³³ In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? All seven were married to her.”

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “People who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵ But those who are considered worthy to participate in that age, that is, in the age of the resurrection from the dead, won’t marry nor will they be given in marriage. ³⁶ They can no longer die, because they are like angels and are God’s children since they share in the resurrection. ³⁷ Even Moses demonstrated that the dead are raised—in the passage about the burning bush, when he speaks of the Lord as *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* ³⁸ He isn’t the God of the dead but of the living. To him they are all alive.”

(³⁹ Some of the legal experts responded, “Teacher, you have answered well.” ⁴⁰ No one dared to ask him anything else.)

Sermon:

Under the surface of this argument between Jesus and the Sadducees, is something that feels like derision, mocking. It reminds me of the bullies in the schoolyard, making fun of another kid, backed into a corner with words as sharp as knives.

The Sadducees don't believe in resurrection of any kind anyhow, so they create this absurd question about a woman married to seven different brothers; asking who will she be married to in the next life?...

Oh please!

You can just imagine the snickering, can't you?

Jesus puts up with this kind of harassment all the time, all in the guise of questions, of debate, of argument over theology.

Sometimes, it is: honest debate, deep theological yearnings and questions.

Sometimes, it is just spite. Mean.

This is one of those times...trying to show others just how dumb Jesus is to believe in "the resurrection of the dead in the new age" with this ludicrous argumentative question.

Jesus is just a bit sharp with them, in response!

I so appreciate his quick comeback..."They are God's children, like angels", and then this: "God isn't the God of the dead but of the living. To God, all of them are alive."

Nobody wants to argue with that. No one presumes to argue that God's creative life-giving power is somehow limited or constrained, and so, he shuts them down.

Thanks Jesus. Sometimes, I just want somebody to shut up the harassers, and you did it!

Harassing in the name of "dialogue" is not true conversation or even debate. It is bullying, dressed up in a costume of conversation.

Don't fall for it.

When you look at our little narrative budget that is in your bulletin, look first and look hard at our inside left fold where our “values and covenant” are listed.

Our values:

Spiritual nurture, service, welcome, fellowship, progressive Christianity, and sustainability are listed there.

Our covenant is there:

We covenant together, members and friends of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ:

- *To create and hold an open, trusting Christian Community where we can each discover our unique relationship with God;*
- *To accept one another as we seek ways to resolve our differences, and to rejoice as a community of faith and trust;*
- *To seek opportunities for expression of faith by sharing talents and resources with our church, community and world;*
- *To celebrate the power of God’s call and God’s Love.*

Somebody, whether within our walls, or beyond it, is gonna smirk at us. Maybe challenge us, in the guise of “Christian debate” but really in the spirit of spite, or meanness, or perhaps from deep and dreadful disillusionment.

“What can your little congregation do to change the world for the better? You don’t have thousands of members, big buildings or a parking lot! How do you know that God approves of you and your church’s ministry? What if God hates you?” Or this: “How can you serve in such a traditional building, in such a sketchy neighborhood, in such a conservative town?”

Well, I say:

Watch us!

Watch us continue to be a loud, clear voice for inclusive, progressive, loving Christianity.

Watch us continue to give and give and give, to the very people who are being demonized in our town, especially those experiencing homelessness, those who are gay or lesbians or trans*, those who are struggling with depression, or bi-polar, or any of the diseases that afflict our modern world.

Watch us continue to fight; from Olympia, to city hall, to the neighborhood we share...so that there is affordable housing, and there is compassionate care for the most vulnerable

among us. So that there is police justice, and a clean river, and happiness and laughter on the streets of our town!

Watch us, join together with anybody who is willing to meet us: the Muslim community, the Jewish community, the atheist community, any activist community, any Christian community that thinks Jesus is not some guardian of the patriarchy, the capitalist system, the culture of greed, but in fact is the one who, in God's name, tears down those systems, refuses to participate in those oppressions, demands for us all, the freedom to live fully, richly, joyfully and gratefully.

- We are strong, together.
 - We have allies, and friends, from all walks of life...and we are here in Spokane, working together.
 - Here at Westminster, we have resources of skills, and money, and laughter and prayer. We sing loud, we pray hard, and often. We seek guidance from the words of Jesus and the Spirit of God that blows through the world and blows through our hearts!
 - We have the knowledge that Jesus sought to turn the world toward love and justice, peace and community. It's a different world for sure, an upside down world, most would say. We are here together to continue that work of Jesus, our Christ. We, too, plan to turn the world upside down, and yeah, people will be snarky about it.
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- This is who we are.
 - This is, we believe, what our budget reflects.
 - This is what our money is spent for.
 - This is who we are and what we give ourselves to. May God love and guide us, always!