Written Service Sunday November 9th
Service of worship for use at home
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Jesus speaks to the Sadducees

Opening Prayers:

You Lord are in this world;
Your presence fills it;
Your presence is Peace.

You Lord are in this place;
Your presence fills it;
Your presence is Peace.

You Lord are in my heart;
Your presence fills it;
Your presence is Peace.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 20

1. Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;
   Come bow before Him now with reverence and fear:
   In Him no sin is found – we stand on holy ground.
   Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

2. Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around:
   He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned:
   How awesome is the sight – our radiant King of light!
   Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

3. Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;
   He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace:
   No work too hard for Him – in faith receive from Him.
   Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Prayers of Adoration and Praise:

Lord of all, Creator and Source of all life, you rule in strength and steadfast love over all the earth. Your glory shines through lives and traditions of all people.

Your love does not change: The power and the glory are yours forever.

The destiny of every nation is in your hands: the achievements of great empires and their leaders come to an end, but you are worshipped in every age, by every generation, in every land.

Your love does not change: The power and the glory are yours forever.

In Christ's death and resurrection, you demonstrated the power of your kingdom to overcome evil. You move ahead of us, using forces and movements in the world, bringing reconciliation and healing. In you the powerless and weak find strength and courage.

Your love does not change: The power and the glory are yours forever.

We praise you for every sign of your power to save, the experience of 'the heart strangely warmed', for the change you have become begun within us through your Spirit who leads us to repent and draws us closely together in community of Christ's body.

Your love does not change: The power and the glory are yours forever.

Amen

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 25:5-8
"If two brothers live on the same property and one of them dies, leaving no son, then his widow is not to be married to someone outside the family; it is the duty of the dead man's brother to marry her. The first son that they have will be considered the son of the dead man, so that his family line will continue in Israel. But if the dead man's brother does not want to marry her, she is to go before the town leaders and say, 'My husband's brother will not do his duty; he refuses to give his bother a descendent among the people of Israel.' Then the town leaders are to summon him and speak to him."

New Testament Reading: Luke 20:27-38
Then some Sadducees, who say that people will not rise from the death, came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, Moses wrote this law for us; 'If a man dies and leaves a wife and no children, that man's brother must marry the widow so that they can have children who will be considered as the dead man's children.'

Once there were seven brothers; the oldest got married and died without having any children. Then the second one married the woman, and then the third. The same thing happened to all seven – they all died without having any children. Last of all, the woman died. Now on the day when the dead rise to life, whose wife will she be? All seven of them had married her."

Jesus answered them, "The men and women of this age marry, but men who are worthy to rise from death and live in the age to come will not marry. They will be like the angels and cannot die. They are sons of God, because they have risen from death.

And Moses clearly proves that the dead are raised to life. In the burning bush he speaks of the Lord as the 'God of Abraham, The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' He is the God of the living, not of the dead, for to Him all are alive."

Sermon Part One:
When the emissaries of the Sanhedrin had been silenced, then Sadducees appeared on the scene. The whole point of their argument is based on one thing – the Mosaic Law. It all depends on how you interpret it. It deals with the marriage laws. According to the law, if a man dies without having any children, then it was the duty of a brother to marry the widow. And if they had children they would be considered to be the brother's children. All well and good as it stands – but it leads to all sorts of trouble, as can be seen in the story.

1. This introduces the Sadducees and the Pharisees. They are usually considered as part of the same thing – this couldn't be further from the truth. They were both very different.
   The Pharisees were entirely a religious body. They had no political ambitions and were content with any government which allowed them to carry out the ceremonial law.
   The Sadducees were very few and extremely wealthy. They were collaborators with the Romans and they were the governing class. Nearly all the ruling classes were Sadducees including the priests, who served in the Temple. They were the aristocrats who ruled Israel.
2. The Pharisees accepted all the scriptures plus all the thousands of detailed regulations and rules of the oral tradition, such as the rules which governed the keeping the Sabbath law and hand washing. Which Jesus roundly condemned.
   The Sadducees accepted only the written law of the first five books of the Bible and set no store by the books of prophesy or the book or psalms.
3. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection from the dead and they believed in angels and spirits. On the other hand the Sadducees believed in neither of these.
4. The Pharisees believed in fate; and that an indivual's life was planned ordered by God – and that there was nothing you could do about it. On the other hand, the Sadducees believed in unrestricted free will.

5. The Pharisees believed in and hoped for the, the coming of the Messiah: the Sadducees believed in no such thing. For them the coming of the Messiah would have been disturbance of their carefully ordered lives.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 620 (I have chosen only 3 verses as these were the only ones that were in line with the theme)

1. Thou God of truth and love, we seek thy perfect way,
Ready thy choice to approve, thy providence to obey;
Enter into thy wise design, and sweetly lose our will in thine.

2. Didst thou not make us one, that we might one remain,
Together travel on, and share our joy and pain.
Till all the utmost goodness prove, and rise renewed in perfect love?

3. O may thy Spirit seal our souls unto that day,
With all thy fullness fill, and then transport away:
Away to our eternal rest, away to our Redeemer's breast.

Sermon Part Two

So the Sadducees came with a question for Jesus to answer, and they thought they had fooled Him. What they failed to appreciate was they were talking to the Messiah Himself and they couldn't fool Him. They came with a question about whose husband would the woman be if she had married all seven of the brothers. They regarded such a question as the kind of thing that would make a belief in the resurrection of the body as simply ridiculous.

Jesus gave them an answer which has a perfectly valid truth – which it is impossible to think of life in heaven in terms of earth. Life there will be quite different, because we will be different.

Jesus went further. The Sadducees thought that way because no information can come from the books of scripture which Moses was thought to have written. He pointed out that in the story of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6) Moses had heard God say "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob", and that it was impossible for God to be a God of the dead. He was a God of the living therefore the people who wrote this were really alive. Therefore there was such a thing as resurrection of the body.

It may well be that this passage is completely unconvincing! Whereas it was a burning question in Jesus' day but it leaves us cold today. But out of this passage was the truth for all time. Jesus used arguments that the people He was arguing with could understand. He talked to them in their own language; He met them on their own ground; and that is precisely why the ordinary people heard Him gladly. We would too well to keep this in mind when we talk to people of the Gospel message.

Sometimes, when we hear the arguments of people who speak in religious and theological language it is very off putting to non-theological people - who are, after all, in the majority! Jesus used language and arguments that people could and did readily understand. He met people with their own vocabulary, on their own ground, and with their own ideas.
We would do well to appreciate that when commending the gospel to others.

Meditation: The Light Within

Why don't people turn to you Lord, when darkness overtakes them, when pain and grief tears them apart?

Perhaps they don't know you;
Don't believe you care about them;
Maybe they don't trust you;
Don't believe in you;
Never experienced your loving presence:
Or perhaps they turned away from you a lifetime ago
Life was much too crowded and exciting to bother with a distant God.
And now they are too embarrassed to ask for help after all this time.
How can they turn to the light if they don't know that your light is even there?
But you are the light in this dark world – and who can deny that this is a dark and frightening world?
How can people who are lost experience that light?
Your light shines in me Lord – a bit dim at times, but it's still there.
But how can they know it unless I explain it to them – in words that they can understand.
Your light shines in all your people:
If your light seems invisible at times,
Our light needs to shine for them – spoken in words that the can understand,
In order to find a chink in the armour that they have put up as a barricade:
Show me Lord, how I can shine with your light for those in darkness.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 611

Brother, sister let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
We are here to help each other,
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've this journey through

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony;
Born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

Prayers of Confession:

We ask you to forgive us for our closed minds and prejudice, our unwillingness to change and our failure to love. ***Father forgive us***

For thinking that we know best; for our unwillingness to listen and learn from those who are different from us. ***Father forgive us***

For our neglect of you; for our slackness in prayer; and for not reading the Bible ***Father forgive us***

For our failure to witness for you, for trying to keep Jesus to ourselves and our friends in the local church; for our lack of concern for the world church, especially those who are persecuted for their faith. ***Father forgive us.***

Prayers of Intersession:
Let us pray for the world-wide church:
For all who seek to bring to bring health and healing to the sick in our hospitals and hospitals everywhere; for all those who serve our community as doctors, health visitors and district nurses; for all involved in community-health projects in every part of the world.
May your light shine in the darkness

For all the people who work amongst the poor in every society. We pray for the people who work with the homeless and refugees, the unemployed and migrants seeking employment. For all who serve the handicapped, the distressed and those isolated by their society.
May your light shine in the darkness

For all the people who work to improve farming methods and crops, to increase irrigation and prevent soil erosion. We pray for all the people who enable, through the development of industry, and the growth of skills and opportunities for self-reliance.
May your light shine in the darkness

Now let us pray for our home churches – for all those who are lonely, bereaved, those who suffer from health problems, the sick, those grieving and those who feel that life is no longer worth living.
May your light shine in the darkness
Amen

Hymn: Songs of Fellowship 685

1. Christ's is the world in which we move; Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love;
   Christ's is the voice which calls care, and Christ one meets us here.
   To the lost Christ shows his face, to the unloved He gives His embrace,
   To those who cry in pain or disgrace Christ, makes His friends,
   A touching place.

2. Feel for the people we most avoid – strange or bereaved or never employed.
   Feel for the women and feel for the men who fear that their living is all in vain.
   To the lost Christ…

3. Feel for the parents who've child, feel for the women whom men have defiled,
   Feel for the baby for whom there's not breast and feel for the weary who find no rest.
   To the lost Christ…

4. Feel for the lives by life confused, riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
   Feel for the heart, conscious of sin, which longs to be pure but fears to begin.
   To the lost Christ…

Final Prayer said together:

God the Father is in this house
Nothing need we fear
God the Christ is in this house
Loving us so dear
God the Spirit is in this house
Listening to our prayer
The three are in this house
Always very near.
Amen