

On this grey and dark morning, I have a couple of riddles just to make sure everyone is awake.

What are two things you can never eat for breakfast?

Lunch and Dinner

If someone fell off a 50-foot ladder but didn't get hurt. How did they do this?

They fell off the bottom step

What gets wetter as it dries?

A towel

What goes up but never ever comes down?

Your age

What starts with "e" and ends with "e" but only has one letter in it?

An envelope

Luke's gospel has the Sadducees asking Jesus a trick question, not because they want an answer— they already know their answer. They do not believe in the resurrection and are asking this question in order to undermine its credibility. They want to show that belief in the resurrection of the body is ridiculous.

So, Jesus has been handed this imaginary case involving the complexities of the Jewish marriage law – a patriarchal institution that protected women by passing them from brother to brother. To their surprise, Jesus agrees with them, but not in the way they might expect. He affirms the resurrection, but says it is precisely *because of* the resurrection that this practice is no longer necessary. Jesus' reply shows that the age to come will set aside the entire patriarchal structure that makes the possessing of women as property possible or seen as a necessity due to human brokenness. For in the world to come, *all our* relationships and concepts of justice are completely reframed by our foundational relationship as reconciled *children of God*.

There is a more serious tension in the resurrection though that underlies the Sadducees question— which cause continuous conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees understood that God would keep promises and enact justice even (particularly) beyond the boundaries of this world, which was a good (and necessary) thing because Rome quite clearly controlled this one and was clearly not going to be paid back for its injustices in their lifetime.

As a very wealthy, governing, class, who were largely collaborated with Roman rule, the Sadducees were more invested in the outcome of the present world. Far more important to them was the matter of the ultimate justice of *the world*. They understood this world to be the only world in which God would act as a keeper of covenantal promises.

But Jesus shows us that the future promise of the resurrection, shapes how we see and live in the world *today*. We are called to live this risen life, here and now. As St Paul writes to the Thessalonians, in Christ we are called to show the “first fruits” of our salvation. The resurrected life in the Spirit, is not about the promise of escaping to a better world in the future, though our faith is surely built on this hope. Yet, it is precisely this hope that defines how we should live *now*.

Taking the literal instruction of this passage, for instance, some parts of the church have sought to witness to the future reality of the age to come— making vows of chastity, leading lives of singleness, to show that one day, all relationships will be reframed and recast in Christ. Yet, for those of us who are married, perhaps in light of the resurrection we might ask; how does our marriage help us learn to be people who are learning the kind of solidarity in love that Christ calls us towards *all our* neighbours? How does our marriage

offer a foretaste of life to come as children of God, members of the communion of saints in heaven?

At the front of St Luke's, we have planted some daffodils. I say *we*, it was mainly Alec the church gardener, who I think was tempted to quit after he kindly helped the youth group to plant the bulbs. But now they've been planted, the bulbs will flower in Spring, around Easter time. Although I know my actions will not ultimately bring about their growth— which depends on forces beyond me, knowing the reality that the bulbs are there, changes how I act *now*. Knowing the bulbs are growing, means that I keep looking for signs of life and shoots coming from the ground, or that I know not to trample, the ground even when there doesn't seem to be much going on above the surface.

So too, belief in the resurrection calls us to live this risen life *now*. In *ways that align with this future reality, rather than against it*.

Belief in the resurrection is not an escape plan, but our source of eternal hope and renewal set in the midst of a broken world. As Christians, therefore, we should be no less concerned with justice now, precisely because we believe what we do now has eternal significance!

So, we might ask, what are the things in our world, or in our own lives that seem dead, or lifeless, beyond transformation? Where have we given-up on seeing transformation? Of course, the resurrection only comes through the agony and death of the cross. And we must face the full reality of pain and tragedy in our world. But let us recalibrate these all too apparent realities in light of the abiding good news and hope of the resurrection. If we really trust in Christ's risen life, how might we view this or that issue? The resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith, because it insists that the limits of our horizons, even death itself, is not the limit of divine possibility. Indeed, the limit of God's

saving and healing life and work has not been found. For we know our Redeemer lives, and we serve a Living God, who can bring life from death.

Amen.