

Triumph in the Living God

✦ **Over marriage (vv.27-36)**

✦ **Over death (vv.36-40)**

In the name of Jesus, God's Champion for our bodies and souls, dearly redeemed children of God:

Sometimes people coming to church for the first time tired and weary can get a little frustrated. They may very well be Christians who already trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. By faith they are confident they will go to heaven when they die. Preaching to them about the hereafter may leave them hungry for help in the here and now. If a cartoon bubble suddenly appeared above their head, it might read: "How can God help me in my relationships today? My family needs help, and my marriage! How can God help me cope with real life?" Medical concerns can cloud the sun too. For good, practical counsel and encouragement, I thank God for bringing you today. Our dear Lord Jesus invites so kindly, sweetly, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" And this is the best "*rest*" of all, "*...rest for your souls.*" (Matthew 11:28f NIV84)

Ancient believers like Moses could see that "*the LORD is a warrior.*" (Exodus 15:3) He is the Savior-God who "*holds victory in story for the upright.*" (Proverbs 2:7) His holy Apostle Paul prayed for God's people in today's Second Lesson: "*May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:5) God's grace and mercy want you to **Triumph in the Living God...**

✦ **Over marriage (vv.27-36)**

That may sound strange for a happily married pastor to say: **Triumph...Over marriage.** But this is one of the priceless insights the Holy Spirit reveals in this text. We need this! Our society is confused about marriage. God wants people to see the blessing He intends and honor marriage. This blessed estate is not the problem. As people of God we need our burdens lifted and our sins forgiven in marriage too.

Years ago, one of our elderly brothers said, "Good-bye," to his wife, and we laid her to rest. In spite of some challenges he really loved her and missed her terribly. He came to me one day feeling confused and guilty. He had met a kindhearted waitress, really too young for any romantic relationship, but he felt guilty because he liked talking to her. He was lonely. The Holy Spirit led us back in the Bible to the beginning. *The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* (Genesis 2:18 NIV84) Our brother was relieved that God cared about his need for female companionship. The one time during the six days of creation when God said, "*...not good...*," the man was still alone. After God created the woman from the man and gave her to him in marriage, the LORD said, "*Very good.*" (Genesis 1:31) But was it okay for him to enjoy the young woman's company?

Now here's an insight from our text: You can't always get straight answers from religious leaders. We need to listen more to what God says about marriage and less to the "authorities" – secular or ecclesiastical. God's Son reveals how we can **Triumph...Over marriage** in one of its most difficult aspects: separation. Let's face it. If your marriage isn't happy here on earth, you might be relieved by this. And if it's so wonderful that love for your spouse is threatening your love for God, He can correct you and save your soul for heaven. God's grace and mercy want to lift us up.

Some of the religious leaders of Jesus day were dreadfully wrong. This was Tuesday of Holy Week when Jesus' enemies were ganging up on Him to shame Him before the crowds. They hated each other, but they hated Him more. They wanted Him dead. So the Sadducees who denied any life after death wanted to nail Jesus while sticking it to their enemy Pharisees at the same time. Understand that the Sadducees insisted the only true Jewish Bible was Moses' five books of Genesis – Deuteronomy. So that's where they went for what they thought would be the perfect scenario to destroy Jesus' credibility.

The law of the land said that if a man died childless, an unmarried brother should marry the widow and count the first son for his dead brother's heir. Sounds strange to us, yet God used the Levirate Law to protect families and give everyone a place in the Promised Land. But this Sadduceen scenario seems obscene: *"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?"* Can't you just see them sneering at Jesus? "Got ya! Didn't we, Rabbi?"

If you want to know your Savior better, watch Jesus under fire. He's always at His best when enemies try their worst. Jesus fights to win, because He's fighting for you, your peace of mind, your confidence on Judgment Day to **Triumph in the Living God**. So the Word of God Incarnate answers with their favorite prophet Moses. He will put them in their place and help us **Triumph...Over marriage** too. *Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 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."* All earthly relationships will be superseded, changed up to for the full family of God. Marriage is God's blessing here and now. No one has the right to burden a spouse about not marrying when they're gone. God sets you free to seek companionship if He ends your marriage in death. Widows, widowers and Christians in difficult marriages can feel relieved. Christians in great marriages can keep a clear focus on God's eternal love.

✠ **Over death (vv.36-40)**

Our Champion Savior was not finished with these self-righteous religious leaders. Now Jesus goes on offense. *"They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection."* The Sadducees were dead wrong to deny the resurrection! From their own favorite Moses, Jesus the Prophet to whom Moses and all the prophets pointed, lays out this simple proof: *"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."* (cf. Exodus 3:6) By the time Moses lived, the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – had been dead nearly 700 years. Yet the LORD God speaks of them as still alive. They had taken part in the first resurrection by trusting in the coming Messiah as their Savior. So when they died, they went right to heaven, as Jesus promises for all believers. Our souls live on after this body dies. And whether we perish at sea or scatter our ashes to the winds, our **Living God** will gather the molecules on the Last Day. According to His own promise, He who raised Himself from the dead, will reunite our saved souls in glorified bodies to enjoy life with God in glory everlasting. Everyone will be close in heaven.

For the young and the restless, the healthy and the wealthy, God wants you to **Triumph in the Living God – Over death**. It may seem a long way off. So what else can God do than to let sickness come to our little ones, to help us see how fragile life really is? How else can God get our attention except through storms and disasters and suffering? *"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."* (Acts 14:22 KJV) Like a championship coach or a commander of special forces, God knows we need the hard times to help us reach His goal of good times everlasting. Christ's big victory over death helps calm us for real life challenges now. As the scribe told Jesus, *"Well said, teacher!"*

Since we know the victory in Christ, we can face this fearlessly. Unless the last trumpet sounds first, someday your loved ones will lay you to rest. Take comfort in Jesus who went this way before. He leads us through the valley of the shadow of death to **Triumph in the Living God**. His angels will carry you home. Heaven's gates stand wide open now for you. And just inside is the smiling face of Him who holds your heart from the day of your Baptism. Finally faith will have its reward. There in His eyes you see the infinite love of God. Your soul sighs in relief. Home at last! And then you hear the cheering. All around your Savior dear are countless throngs of angels and believing loved ones already home in glory. They're cheering for Christ and they're cheering for you. **SAINTS TRIUMPHANT! Amen.**