

God's Perspective

Today we listen in on a debate between the rich and satisfied religious and political upper crust, known then as the Sadducees, and Jesus.

Starting with a trick question, these fellows figure they will make a fool of Jesus, but, as so often happens, it's them that's left with egg on their face.

You've heard the lesson, but what I want to spend just a few minutes considering with you this morning is the sentence Jesus puts it all to bed with: "For to him, all of them are alive."

Into this short sentence Jesus manages to pack in nearly all of our faith — particularly that sense of our faith that has been in the spotlight all week long with the debates and disputes over gay marriage legislation.

So bear with me for a moment while we, as the scholars like to say, "unpack" this very packed statement by Jesus.

In saying "*for to him*" Jesus is taking hold of something essential to who each of us are, and he's about to start changing it completely.

What of ours is he grabbing onto?

It's our point of view, that's what!

Our point of view, is, quite naturally, **our** point of view.

We see life, we judge situations, we make choices, all based on our point of view — a point of view that begins to be formed soon after birth, and becomes hardened and more certain the older we become.

Our point of view is shaped by our experiences, our pains, our loves, our likes and dislikes, our prejudices, and personality types, and by our best thinking.

And because my point of view often conflicts with yours (as it's bound to do, since no two people ever live identical lives, ensuring that our various points of view will often be at odds), we have verbal disagreements, or physical fights and even wars as a result of our differing points of view.

And it's into this cauldron that Jesus steps, and it is Jesus who insists that we set aside our own point of view and instead adopt the point of view of God.

"For to him" means **"not to us,"** in other words, "My ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord to the prophet Isaiah, says the Lord to you and to me.

So Jesus invites us, he challenges us, even demands of us, that we put to the side our own point of view and take on in its place, God's point of view; and he does it by saying: **"For to him...."**

What does God's point of view look like?

It looks like Jesus.

Jesus is God's point of view in the flesh, in action.

So what is Jesus doing?

We don't have to look far to see that Jesus, God's point of view in the flesh, welcomes everyone, with a special attraction to those decent society frowns upon, with a special attraction especially to those the good religious folks are certain God rejects.

Jesus seeks out the lost, rejoices in those who are found, gives sight to the blind and blinds those whose own point of view fools them into thinking they can see.

Jesus says, ever so gently, "Come to me all you who are heavy burdened and find rest, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This past week has been quite a week at our State Capital.

I can't recall a time when so many stood so at odds all in the name of God.

Thousands gave testimony, many more thousands demonstrated, yelled, some drowning out voices they didn't wish to hear, those whose point of view differed from their own.

It was, to put it mildly, a spectacle.

Much of it done in the name of God.

No doubt we all have our own perspective on the matter of gay marriage.

No doubt those perspectives run the gamut from "for" to "against" to "not sure" to "don't care."

And while it was very tempting to preach a rerun sermon today on the topic of the resurrection, one that went over pretty well three years ago, the last time we had these readings, alas, the Boss was having none of that, at least from this preacher in this pulpit.

So what about our homosexual brothers and sisters, from God's point of view?

Pope Francis answered that question with a question of his own:

"Tell me, when God looks upon a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person? We must always consider the person."

Like the Sadducees so long ago, Jesus invites us to look at all of life with God's eyes — and when we do, everything begins to change.

"For to him, *all of them* are alive."

Not a few of them, not some and not even most of them.

To God, all people from all times and places and races and creeds and colors and orientations, **all** are alive.

And so we might ask, to what depth and height and breadth does the love of God reach?

Do we find kinship with the psalmist who wonders

“Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I fly up to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed with the dead, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and fly to the deepest depths of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand holds me fast.
If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,”
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.”

Psalm 139

Can we stand with St Paul, the murderer of Christians, who, having traded in his point of view for God’s point of view, stands convinced

“[T]hat neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor any other created thing,
can separate us from the love of God,

in Christ Jesus
our Lord.”

Rom 8:38

Who, after all, does Jesus reject?

Roman pagan soldiers?

Pagan women?

That Samaritan gal who was married or shacking up with 6 different men?

Did Jesus reject hookers or thieves or tax cheats?

Did he reject Sadducees or Pharisees or Herod or Pilate?

Or Judas?

Did he reject those who set him up to die or those who ran away in fear or he who denied him?

Hanging from the cross, Jesus looks out upon the whole world - on the soldiers and the hookers and the tax cheats and the Sadducees and Pharisees and yes, on Herod and Pilate.

“When I am lifted up, I will draw the whole world to myself,” Jesus says. Jn 12:32.

He looks out to Judas and Peter and the 10 who flee, and on you and me, saying:

“Father, forgive them.”

Who does Jesus reject?

Jesus rejects no one.

It is we who do the rejecting.

We who, since that fateful day in the garden, chose to take death into our midst by eating from that one forbidden fruit — the fruit we continue to gorge ourselves on everyday — the fruit of deciding what is good and what is evil — the only thing forbidden to human beings by God — yet we continue to eat it with abandon.

God's intent from the very beginning is that we leave the determination of what is good and what is evil, to God.

Our job, from the very beginning, is to enjoy the great bounty that is creation, and to love each other, in our own nakedness -- loving each other warts and all, leaving all judgment to God.

Which is why Jesus, God's point of view in the flesh, loves both crook and saint, sinner and righteous, outcast and insider, gay and straight.

He loves all of us to death — his son's death — and invites us to live in exactly the same way.

“For to him, all of them *are alive.*”

These last two words from Jesus bring it all home.

In God, there is no death.

In God, there is only life.

This is not easy for any of us to understand.

For us, we know we are alive because we're not dead.

All we do and think and believe and hope for is measured in a world where death seems to have the last word.

And so we have our philosophies and politics and wars and reasonable divisions of wealth because at the end of the day we fear that the old bumper sticker: “He who dies with the most toys wins” may in fact be true.

But it is not true.

“What Jesus tells us, and makes possible for us to believe, is that God is entirely different from what we imagine.

Jesus tells us the Good News - a story about God: a God entirely disconnected from death.

To us, nearly everyone who ever once lived is now dead - our own future is to end up dead.

But the Good News of God in Jesus is that death, for God, is something that is NOT.

"To God, ALL are alive". Paul Davies (paraphrased)

And if ALL are alive to God, and if all have sinned, and if all have fallen short of the glory of God, then perhaps when it comes to matters of how our fellow human beings feel called to live and love and make a way in this life, perhaps yet again we can leave those judgments to God, and get on with loving one another, even when it hurts, even when it's something we'd rather not do; since this, it appears, is God's point of view.

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