

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time - C -'2022
2 Maccabees 7.1-2,9-14///2 Thess.2.16-3.5///Luke 20.27-38

→I've told this story before...but it is appropriate for our reading today and thought it worth repeating....

→there once was a woman who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and been given three months to live.

→so as she was getting her things in order, she contacted the pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes

→she told him what songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in...everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her....**“there’s one more thing,”** she said... **“what’s that,”** came the pastor’s reply...and the young woman said... **“I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.”**

→the pastor looked at the woman not knowing quite what to say... **“that surprises you doesn’t it?”** she said...to which the pastor replied... **“yes I am quite surprised by your request.”**

→and the woman went on to say

→“in all my years of attending church socials, potluck dinners wedding reception and parties, I always noticed that when the dishes were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say... **‘Keep your fork,’**it was always my favorite part of the event because I knew that something better was coming like chocolate cake or deep dish apple pie...something wonderful was on the way....

→and so, I want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand...and I want them to wonder... **“what’s with the fork?”** and then I want you to tell them: to “keep your fork....because the best is yet to come.

→well that was the last time the pastor saw the woman alive and at her funeral, there she was, with her beautiful dress and the fork in her right hand....

→over and over...the pastor heard the question... **“what’s with the fork?”** and over and over he simply smiled however during his message to those gathered...the pastor told of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died... and what the fork symbolized to her...that the woman had a better grasp of heaven and what it would be like than most people...because she KNEW something better was coming...and the fork in her hand was her way of reminding all of us...that the best is yet to come

PAUSE

→every time I am at calling hours...I remind myself of that story...because it gives me the assurance that **“the best is yet to come.”**

→and that story, is very much like the one in today’s gospel

...because often we also wonder about life after death and what that is going to be like

→in today's gospel we find the Sadducee’s, who didn't believe in life after death, approaching Jesus with an interesting problem, a riddle of sorts about resurrection and the afterlife

→and similar to this riddle I am sure, all of us, at some time or another, have also pondered and thought what happens after we die in our own moments of quiet and prayer

→as we see today, even in the time of Jesus....there were opinions and beliefs about life after death

PAUSE

→now...the Sadducees were people who clung to ancient traditions and beliefs...they rejected anything that seemed new and different

→and one of the NEW things they rejected and had no use for..... was this business about life after death

→the idea//concept of the resurrection...and life after death, was something that the Sadducees wanted no part of

→however, more important was that Sadducees also had no use for Jesus and all that he taught and stood for

→like the Pharisees, they saw J. as a threat and they wanted to get rid of him because he was the cause of so many problems for them

→so they confront J. with this clever argument about the 7 brothers and one woman to show the absurdity of HIS teaching about life after death and the resurrection

→and yet, J. manages to give them an answer that comes as a complete SURPRISE to the Sadducees and perhaps as a surprise to you and me.

→his answer is basically this....GOD is not a GOD of the dead but a GOD of the LIVING

→i.o.w. because God is the **source** of **all** life...**ALL OF US ARE ALIVE IN GOD**

→Jesus really doesn't spend time talking about what heaven or the afterlife is going to be like or what's going to happen

- ...instead he points out....that the presence of **GOD here and now** is what matters...[that] GOD is a GOD of the living.....and living life is what needs to be our concern

→it is surprising answer to the Sadducees, or at least one that was not expected

→yet, when you think about it, surprises were the hallmark of J. teachings....he was full of surprises, one right after another

→people expected the Messiah to be a royal figure...surprise!he came into the world in a stable

---people believed, as many still do today...an eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth...Jesus said something about turning the other cheek

→many are quick to condemn others, yet surprise!....J. got them to put down their stones

→and finally, many thought Jesus was dead forever when he died on the cross, but
SURPRISE! they went to the tomb and found it empty

→and today, J. is telling you and me, that the Kingdom of God, the resurrection will also be a surprise

→in the meantime....Jesus urges us today...to be concerned about our life here and now and how our faith and taking care of one another should be our priority.

PAUSE

---[you know]....not one of us knows what the afterlife, or the resurrection, or what heaven is going to be like

none of us knows what it is going to feel like, or what its going to taste like or smell like

→we have our images and dreams...it may be a garden or a feast....it may be a place of joy and singing.....but in reality that's all they are....images and ideas, hopes and dreams

→what we do know, however, is what our faith and lives and existence is like here and now...and what needs our attention in order to make all this much better

→and so perhaps maybe the message for us today is simple...instead of putting a lot of energy towards wondering what heaven is going to be like....why not just wait for the surprise!

.....and in the meantime, maybe focus our attention on making the most of the time we have here and now

→to cherish what we have....to encourage those in despairand take care of those in need

→and should you find yourself wondering about what heaven is going to be like...

→just be reminded...to always....keep your fork because the best is yet to come!