

November 9, Ordinary 32C (Luke 20:27-38)

God's parentage operates by entirely different logic than human patriarchy.

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Kinship ties can be fraught, especially for those born of the transatlantic slave trade. For my ancestors, marriage and parenthood were problematic from the start. The enslaved had no rights that their masters were required to honor or respect. Their children were not their children, and their marital commitments meant nothing because their own bodies did not belong to them. Legal codes ensured that any enslaved woman who bore children, regardless of the father's legal standing, would pass her enslaved status to her offspring—*partus sequitur ventrem*. Black women's wombs paradoxically served as both sources of life and the means to perpetuate enslavement. Their bodies and fertility were rendered valuable only for their ability to sustain the very structures of their subjection.

Under such conditions, my ancestors had to envision kinship relations that served their relational needs, even when unrecognized by the structures determining their lives. Their theology of kinship required them to call on a God who ensured that everyone had shoes: "I got shoes, you got shoes. / All of God's children got shoes. / When I get to heaven gonna put on my shoes, I'm gonna walk all over God's heaven."

The woman in the Sadducees' story faces a different but related crisis. While not property like enslaved women, she remains trapped within systems that deny her full personhood. The Sadducees' question is simultaneously about the resurrection and about a property dispute. Levirate marriage functioned as a mechanism for transferring women between brothers to ensure patrilineal inheritance—the woman becomes the means for producing an heir for the dead brother. The Sadducees assume the resurrection will simply extend these arrangements into eternity.

Jesus' response undermines both the widow's predicament and the enslaved woman's ontological crisis by removing marriage from the eternal question. For the widow, the problem is primarily about producing an heir; for the enslaved woman, the issue is whether she counts as a person at all. Jesus resolves the deeper matter by establishing genealogy as grounded in being offspring of God. In resurrection, identity stems from divine rather than human kinship.

Jesus grounds his argument by reinterpreting patriarchal authority itself. He invokes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob not to endorse their social arrangements but to demonstrate that God's life-giving power transcends even the asymmetrical relations God's own covenant partners inhabited. These patriarchs were themselves trapped in networks of exploitation—multiple wives, concubines, household slavery. Yet Jesus argues they remain alive in God. This strengthens rather than weakens his critique of inherited social arrangements. If even flawed ancestors are alive in God's resurrection, then God's parentage operates by different logic than human patriarchy.

For Jesus, the truth of resurrection means that even the ancestors live as children of the God they worship. The resurrection attests to a God who remains in relationship with the living, even when their bodies are dead. Because God is the holy parent and because God is alive, resurrection ensures life that is quite different from what marriage offers. What makes someone alive is not biological function or social recognition but relationship

with the living God.

This resurrection reaches into the past as well as the future. Jesus' theology disrupts our understanding of ancestry and time in relationship to life in God. Our ancestors also live in God's realm. We are siblings across time and space. This kinship doesn't negate the historical trauma of family separation. It reveals that slavery could disrupt earthly expressions of kinship without touching its eternal reality.

The way we metabolize history informs our longings beyond this age. For bodies given and taken in relationships that undermine their identity as God's children, resurrection stands as both critique and hope. God's fidelity as parent nullifies the historical work of death and the power plays that shape our present experience. For those whom the world kills over and over, the promise of resurrection declares that God sees them not as dead but as alive, as God's children.

The gift of Black kinship, both in enslavement and now, is how it heralds this eschatological claim. Our practices of communal care are not merely social work, they are modeling resurrection kinship in the here and now. They demonstrate what it looks like when the organizing principle is God's parentage—not paternity, maternity, or economic standing. When neighbors feed the block, they aren't just being nice; they are embodying an eschatological vision: all God's children eat.

The goal of Black kinship is not to model relationships that appear successful in this age but to live into the eternal truth of God's parentage. This is an invitation to care for those whose being this world forecloses on—by modeling, even imperfectly, what it means to be children of God. In resurrection, we learn that divine kinship exceeds every logic of ownership, exploitation, and death that organizes society. Black communities practicing this kinship become witnesses to what resurrection looks like when we organize around not this age's logic but the radical claim that in God, we are all family.