



**A sermon for the Cathedral Eucharist at Wells
Cathedral, preached on Sunday 9 November 2025 by
the Reverend Canon Tim Stevens, Canon Precentor.**

What brings you hope?

What brings you hope?

On this Remembrance Sunday, we can all too easily be drawn away from hope.

The stories which are retold year after year, taught in schools, remembered by those who have lived through them, and passed on to the next generations, speak of pain, sorrow, torment, and suffering, not of hope.

That isn't wrong, but there has to be a balance, and the words which will be spoken in Civic services all over our country today, and which our choir will sing for us in a few minutes time, remind us of the importance of remembering.

Today is a day to remember what has gone before, the sacrifices, the lives which have been changed, damaged, and lost in war.

But I hope that we can't remember all of this, without also looking forward. And so I come back to where I started, and ask the question again – what brings you hope?

In our Gospel reading today, we heard the question posed by the Sadducees.

The Sadducees, as we heard, were those who say there is no resurrection. This is the backdrop to their question.

Either they are trying to make the resurrection seem impossible, after all, there cannot be any logic to a place where a wife belongs to seven different husbands, or they are hoping to gain some inkling of an understanding, and so perhaps have something to hope in.

Of course, the Sadducees do not represent the entire picture of the Jewish faith. The Pharisees did believe in the Resurrection. In the Prophecy of Daniel, we read that those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The first century Jews may not yet have had the opportunity to understand the Resurrection as seen through the example of Jesus' own Resurrection from the dead, but they did hold some hope in the life which was to come.

But there was still confusion, and even the two leading groups who we hear from so often in the Gospels, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, could not agree on the subject of the Resurrection.

Perhaps in a church which today is finding it so difficult to agree on topics such as same sex marriage, and even the appointment of the first female Archbishop of Canterbury, it is helpful to hear that there has always been disagreement, controversy, and uncertainty among God's people.

Today's Gospel though is about one particular controversy – that of the Resurrection. Perhaps, even more precisely, this is about the language of Resurrection.

We can't know what the Resurrected life will feel like, and we can only try to understand it through the language which is ours to use.

Jesus chooses a language of negatives to help the Sadducees.

Let's stop trying to understand what the age to come is, and instead understand what it is not. Those who belong to that age do not marry, are not given in marriage, and do not die any more. The age to come is not a replica of this age. It isn't an opportunity to live life again, but a bit better than this time.

In the age to come, Jesus tells the Sadducees, those considered worthy of a place are like angels and children of God.

No wonder we can't find the language to describe the resurrected life – but we can recognise that it is not this life, that it is different, that it is something to look forward to, that it is where we place our hope.

I don't know how many among you spend your Friday mornings eagerly anticipating the delivery of the next edition of the *Church Times* through your letter box. If you do, then you may have seen an article last week on the subject of the language of death.

For those who are not avid readers of the *Church Times*, this article by Daniel Sandham was reflecting on the post-Christian world, and the description of death as being a passing away. Sandham described the term "pass away" as being nebulous and open ended. What do we pass from and to?

Clearly it is a comforting term, because it holds some hope that the passing is from one place to another – that there might be another place, another hope, which the post-Christian world struggles to identify as Heaven, or the Resurrection, but which there is still need to imagine in some way.

The Church has an important part to play in the conversation, not about passing away, but about death and resurrection, and the real hope in the resurrection which follows the reality of death.

We may, like the Sadducees, not be able to identify the finer details of the Kingdom of Heaven. We may not know what the Resurrected life looks like, but our very being as a church is grounded in the fact that Jesus Christ died, and was raised from the dead.

The Resurrection of Jesus is what brings hope, because in this we see the promise of a resurrection which we cannot understand, become real.

We read in the Gospels of the resurrected Jesus. We place our faith in a Jesus who lives and reigns. We recognise that he himself is the resurrection and the life. We long for the day when we will join him in the place he prepares for us. We heard today that God is the God of the living, not of the dead, and so being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, makes it clear that they are alive and with him.

So many metaphors, so many realities, so many truths. So much which is positive and not negative. So much which speaks of what comes after death, and this is life.

We don't need to know the answer to the Sadducees' question, as long as we hear Jesus promise us that we will be like angels and children of God.

But the Resurrection can only come through death. Death is not an end if we place our trust in Jesus Christ, who through his own death showed the resurrection as a reality.

And so, on this Remembrance Sunday, as we give thanks for all who we do remember, as we commit to not letting go of the stories of pain, sorrow, torment and suffering, we renew our hope in Jesus Christ, and we pray for the day when we will all come to know the joy of the Resurrection.

Tim Stevens, Canon Precentor

9 November 2025