

Proper 26C
Haggai 2:1-9; Luke 20:27-38
November 9, 2025

“The Intersection of Past and Future”
The Rev. Dr. Brandon Perrine

²⁷ Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him ²⁸ and asked him a question: “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman and died childless; ³⁰ then the second ³¹ and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. ³² Finally the woman also died. ³³ In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage, ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶ Indeed, they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷ And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is God not of the dead but of the living, for to him all of them are alive.”

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Irish poet Stewart Stafford once said that if you “separate text from context and all that remains is a con.” I think he’s right. Context certainly matters to the readings you just heard from the prophet Haggai and the Gospel of Luke. Please allow me to share just a little.

Seventy years before the prophet Haggai wrote, the Babylonians had attacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and much of the city, and taken many of its inhabitants back to Babylon as captives. Shortly after the Assyrians conquered Babylon, the Jerusalem exiles were finally allowed to return home. Seeing the destruction around them and perhaps some even remembering what used to be, the words we heard from Haggai's prophecy encouraged the returned exiles with the promise that the Temple would be splendid once again and that God's spirit would remain with them always.

Our Gospel reading comes into clearer focus with a bit of context, too. The Sadducees, like the Pharisees and the Essenes, were a Jewish sect that functioned during the time of Jesus and had considerable religious and secular influence. Among their defining beliefs, the Sadducees rejected the idea of resurrection of the body and spiritual life after death. Knowing that Jesus' beliefs aligned more closely with the Pharisees, the Sadducees in today's reading tried to trap him and make him look foolish, undermining belief in resurrection at the same time.

Their question sounds absurd by design: "If a woman was married to seven brothers, one after another, whose wife would she be in the resurrection?" Jesus sees through it immediately. "It won't matter," he says. "God is God of the living, not the dead."

In both readings, the people are stuck. The exiles are stuck in the past, remembering former glory. The Sadducees are stuck fixating on the future, and missing the point entirely.

We all know folks like that, don't we? We know people that begin their sentences with the words, "Well, back in my day..." Honestly, I've caught myself doing that more than once! And we know people who are so fearful or so eager about the future that they rarely inhabit the present. Both perspectives miss the invitation Jesus offers. The point is now—this fleeting moment where the past and the future intersect and real life actually happens. That's where we encounter the divine.

A story is told of a man who was walking through a forest one day when he encountered a hungry mountain lion. He ran for his life and the mountain lion pursued. The man came to the edge of a cliff and there was nowhere to go but down. Taking hold of a vine, he began the descent.

Halfway down, the man looked up and the mountain lion was still pacing and caterwauling. Then he looked down and another mountain lion had appeared at the bottom. He was caught between the two. And that's when two little mice appeared and started gnawing on the vine. The man knew that if the mice kept gnawing, the vine would eventually snap and he would fall. He tried to shoo the mice away, but they kept coming back.

At that moment, he noticed a strawberry growing on the face of the cliff, not far away from him. It was plump and red and ripe. Holding onto the vine with one hand and reaching out with the other, he plucked it. With danger above, danger below, and mice chewing through his lifeline, he ate it. And it was *delicious*.¹

He couldn't go back. Moving forward seemed impossible. All he had was *that moment*—the intersection of past and future—where real life was happening. And he tasted it.

Admittedly, that moment isn't always delicious. The present can be painful, lonely, frightening—or, yes, just dull, like listening to your minister! But it can also be beautiful, affirming, life-giving, and deeply delicious. Either way, life happens here in the present—not in our regrets about the past or our anxiety about the future.

Still, living in the present is hard. Anxiety, stress, self-doubt, and pain make us wonder what went wrong and how we'll ever survive what lies

¹ Gregory Angell, Adapted. "A Story About Living in the Present Moment," Gregoryangell.com, October 10, 2017: <https://www.gregoryangell.com/2017/10/story-living-present-moment/>.

ahead. The frantic pace of life keeps us compulsively checking our phones and thinking of what comes next. Illness or loss can leave us longing for happier times. But Jesus reminds us that God is God of the living—inviting us into life that is here, now.

To stay present, spiritual teachers and mental health experts alike remind us to center our senses and come home to our bodies; to stay curious and creative and savor surprises; to recognize both the valleys and the mountains we go through and to pay attention for “little miracles;” to spend time in nature; and to appreciate others and say so out loud.² These aren’t rules for a perfect life. They’re tools that help us live fully and well in the only moment we ever actually have—the present one.

This is our time—past and future intersecting for a sacred, fleeting moment of present. Let’s make it count. May it be so. Amen.

² Cassie Hurwitz. “How to Live in the Moment, from Experts Who Really Do,” Oprahdaily.com, September 17, 2025: <https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/wholeness/a66110344/live-in-the-moment-mindfulness-hacks/>.