

I know I've been talking about my grandmas a lot lately, but it seems like, when it comes to God, they sure had a lot to say. Perhaps I should preface the following section: the opinions expressed within this sermon do not necessarily represent my own or those of this church. There, that's taken care of.

My one grandmother, Sue, was a die-hard, yellow dog Democrat. You know what a yellow dog Democrat is, right? You're so dedicated to the party, that, if it had a D by it's name, you'd even vote for a yellow dog. Well, one day, I took a friend of mine to meet her. He introduced himself, and Grandma Sue said, "It's nice to meet you. You're not a Republican, are you?" He was, as you might imagine, taken aback, and replied, "Well, Yes ma'am, I am." "Shame," she said, "I guess that means I won't be seein' you in heaven."

But my other grandmother, Mary, used to fall asleep on the living room couch to the dulcet lullabies of the 700 Club on the Christian Broadcasting Network. Mary was every bit as patriotic as Sue, she just landed on the other side of the divide. She donated to the Fraternal Order of the Police and got her adult son an NRA sticker for his car. And perhaps the most horrified Mary has ever been was the time someone in the family found out that Cynthia Nixon was a distant relative.

Both of them have died and are now wherever death takes us when we die. I suspect they've both landed in the good place, and I hope they've run into each other, die hard political rivals though they were. I can just hear Sue when she saw Mary wisp through a cloud, or whatever it looks like there. "Mary Harness. Well I'll be."

It's a dangerous thing for us to think we know what's going on in God's mind. I don't think I know it, but I've got more than a few guesses. It helps, though, to have things like the Bible to help us sort out where God might be coming from. And I love how this scene unfolds. A Sadducee, who doesn't really believe in the Resurrection, tries to spring a theological trap. And Jesus won't take any of it. It's kind of cool how this plays out. The trap is set, the Sadducee's sure Jesus is about to embarrass himself in front of God and everybody, and Jesus doesn't take the bait. In fact, that Sadducee kinda goes way out in the weeds to make his point. The Resurrection is the sticking point, but to get there, he leans on this old practice called Levirate marriage. (Basically, it's a codified way to make sure that a widow doesn't end up helpless and out on the street in a system that doesn't care too much for widows. If your husband dies, you are kinda absorbed into his brother's household.) So, the Sadducee makes up a scenario involving 7 brothers and a whole chain of deaths and not a soul gets even the least bit suspicious about the widow surviving while all the brothers die off. But instead of sorting out the riddle, Jesus zooms way out. He makes it about Resurrection again. It's not about the weeds, the distractions, the hypothetical, or even the immensely practical. For Jesus, it's about the one truth right at the beginning. What matters here is the Resurrection. Death no longer has a claim on us. Death has lost its sting. Death quails before the God of Light and Life. All that other stuff is distraction. The weeds only tangle us up and keep us focused on the wrong stuff. Turn your focus to resurrection, turn your focus to life, turn your focus to God.

I think we have a tendency to make this stuff way more complicated than it has to be. Now don't get me wrong, I love getting down in the theological weeds. And, sometimes, it's important to work through those weeds. But there's a draw to the weeds that can be unhealthy. Have you ever heard the phrase "the call of the void?" It's a troubling sensation most people feel but few of us admit to feeling. The call of the void is that thought that pops in your head when you're at the Grand Canyon, or somewhere else tall and dangerous, that thought that says, "I kinda wanna jump." It's not about self-destruction, not really, it's just this weird moment

where our programming to sustain our lives kinda blips. I bring up the call of the void because I think it applies on a broader scale. The void might not be limited to high places. The void might be all those places where we know better but still feel the tug of self-sabotage. And I wonder if sometimes, theological weeds become that void. Sometimes, sure, the void needs exploring, but there're healthy ways in. But getting stuck there, trying to trick up Jesus or find a loophole to get out of some Christian responsibility, that just might be the void calling. But today, Jesus grabs hold, steadies us on the clifftop, and points us away from that void and back to God.

New life is the thing. And with that new life comes all sorts of solid ground. Resurrection means we don't let the fear of death or loss or injustice win the day. New life means we move in this world changed, different somehow. New life means we love those the world isn't set up to love, we serve those that've never been served, and we pull back from our divisions, turning together to God again and again and again.

I know my grandmothers got that, kinda. I know they both searched for folks suffering in their communities, and they tried to make their lives better. I know they loved some pretty despicable folks, at least, they tried to love 'em. And I know they turned to God more than most, and more often, too. But they had a hard time separating out their version of Jesus from their politics. Strange, isn't it? They came at politics from such different places, but they shared the same void. And it seems these days, a lot of us are hearing the call of the same void. But Jesus calls us, too. 700 Club viewers and yellow dog Democrats alike. And thank God for that. Our God is bigger than that whole mess. Our God is bigger, more loving, more forgiving, and more open than any of our distractions. Pull away from the void, and turn, again, to new life. Turn, again, to love. Turn, again, to God.