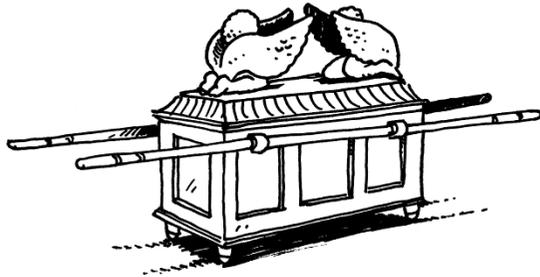


**BACKGROUND NOTES**  
**32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**PSALM 16/17** vv.1, 5-6, 8, 15

Today we are praying selected verses from the lament of an individual who claims he has been wrongly accused. The boast of self righteousness can perhaps make contemporary readers feel uneasy, but was an accepted way in ancient writings of reminding God of one's fidelity. Beyond the cry of this individual we may also hear the collective appeal of the people of Israel, or indeed of all peoples struggling against adversaries.

The psalmist expresses his faith and trust in God, using evocative images. *'Guard me as the apple of your eye'*: this expression in Hebrew literally means 'a little man', that is the image of someone close by reflected by the pupil. *'Hide me in the shadow of your wings'*: a similar image was also used in Deuteronomy (32: 11). It also conjures up the wings of the Cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant: *'The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the cover with their wings.'* (Exodus 37: 9)



Present day readers will perhaps see in the last two lines of the psalm a confirmation of the resurrection of the dead, when they will be able to see God's face as they *'will be like him, for [they] shall see him as he is.'* (1 John 3: 2)

**Gospel**  
**Luke 20:27-38**

**Jesus speaks to the Sadducees**

Jesus has previously been confronted by the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he has shamed into silence. He is now facing further opposition from the Sadducees. It is the only time they are mentioned in Luke's Gospel.

**The Sadducees**

They were a Jewish group drawn mainly from the priestly classes, but included many upper-class laymen. They did not believe in the resurrection or in angels, and held only the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah), as authoritative. Sadducees scorned Pharisees—both their 'modern' beliefs and their interpretation of the Law. They believed that the after life was a continuation of this life which would still involve marriage.

**The Sadducees' question**

They ask a trick question, hoping to trap Jesus into denouncing the Pharisees' belief in bodily resurrection or allowing polyandry (having several husbands) which was considered immoral. They do so by quoting Moses on Levirate marriage (from the Latin *levir*, brother-in-law), which required a man to marry the widow of his deceased brother if the brother had died without a son (see Deuteronomy 25: 5-10).

**Jesus' response**

Jesus shows his authority by also quoting the Law of Moses, meeting them on their own ground and defeating them. He quotes from Exodus 3: 1-6. The Sadducees are silenced because they cannot refute the words of the Pentateuch. To the argument about the resurrection, Luke adds one about immortality in v 38b, *'...for to him all men are in fact alive.'*