

March 18, 2018
Sermon for Fifth Sunday in Lent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 10:32-45

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 10:32–34 (ESV)

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

Mark 10:35–45 (ESV)

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

Jesus asked John and James (v 38).

Are You Sure You Want *This* Cup?

The chalice has long been a symbol of Holy Communion. Another version of this symbol has the chalice with a serpent in it. This is known as the symbol of St. John, marking the cup of sin that Jesus was preparing to drink as He exchanged His cup of righteousness for our cup of sin.

This is the cup that John and James think they want. They don't understand what they've asked for. Jesus will drink from the cup of suffering, the cup of death, the cup filled with the sin of the world.

Not because He thought it would be tasty or fun, not even because He wanted to, but because it was the will of the Father.

“Abba, Father,” he prayed in the garden a few days later, *“All things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will”* (14:36).

For Jesus, the time was almost fulfilled, and the hour was at hand. *“Jesus was walking ahead of them”* (v 32), setting the pace. He was on a mission to Jerusalem—Jesus *“set his face to go to Jerusalem”* (Lk 9:51)—and those straggling behind Him weren't sure what the rush was about.

Why the determination?

In reality, it's a death march; the disciples don't get that yet, but they follow their Lord on the journey nevertheless.

It's a march toward Calvary, a march that started in Bethlehem and continued at the Jordan River. Jesus goes on the journey for which He became incarnate—the road that leads to Jerusalem, where He will be condemned and delivered up to the chief priests and the scribes, where He will be mocked, spit upon, flogged, killed...and ... where He will rise again. Just as He said would happen. Just as He said three times in this Gospel.

That wasn't what the disciples wanted to hear.

Success and glory don't look like a dead guy on a cross. How can humiliation and death have anything to do with God restoring His kingdom?

James and John—and all the disciples, really—were more interested in their future careers of presumed earthly glory. Even among the elect, it seemed to them that “who you know” is important.

James and John must have figured they were special already—after all, they were invited to the transfiguration, along with Peter. But since there's only a right hand and a left hand, Peter would just have to fend for himself.

It seems so shady and underhanded; elbowing your way to the top is hardly loving your neighbor. The other apostles were indignant.

They were probably annoyed that they hadn't asked first!

Like the rest of us sinners, they craved the attention, the recognition, for their own accomplishments.

Like children shoving their brothers and sisters out the way, we want the important people and the world to notice: “Hey, Dad, look at me!”

Pastors and congregations are not immune to this.

Our selfish and sinful natures want the glory, the authority; the power that we perceive comes from being the one in charge. Or even if we don’t want to be in charge, we want to have input, and we definitely don’t want to be ignored or treated as if we don’t really matter.

Like the apostles, we get caught up in ourselves. We stop looking at our neighbor as someone to serve, and instead look inside and say, “What do I want?”

In this way, the church becomes fractured, congregations split, husbands and wives divorce, children, parents and even friends stop talking to one another.

That’s not how God created it to be.

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (v 45).

Jesus dismissed their request. It’s not His to grant, He says, but the Father’s.

They will drink the cup. They will all suffer for proclaiming Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins. According to tradition, most of the twelve were murdered.

None of them had the celebrity life of a televangelist, the fast cars, the luxury houses; instead they were often hated and reviled, stoned, stabbed, and crucified. James was the first to go—beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12. And tradition has it that an attempt was made to kill John with poisoned wine, which is another reason for the snake in the chalice as his symbol.

John died in exile for daring to preach Jesus.

Jesus said to them: “*You do not know what you are asking, Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?*” (v 38).

They said yes, they were.

Did they know the hostility with which they would be received?

Did they know that they and future followers of Jesus would be beheaded, burned alive, tortured, and drowned for taking up their cross?

Did you know that *you* would be mercilessly ridiculed and derided by the world when you were baptized? Did you know that when you were confirmed?

When you stood up here and said that you would rather die than to fall away from the faith?

Did you know that your friends and family might believe differently, that they might call you narrow minded, just some misled Bible-believing chump?

Did you know that your confession of faith would exclude you from a world of fleshly delight, and “immoral fun” and sleeping in on Sundays, your conscience unburdened of any guilty thoughts?

It’s not easy when the tide of world opinion turns against you, when the shouts of “Hosanna!” change to “Crucify!”

It’s not easy when those around you pit you against “science” or “nature” or “fairness.”

We certainly have our own bitter cups to drink from.

It's hard to choke down the dregs of illness and death, disappointment and heartache that can come with this life.

It's hard, but not impossible.

Even unbelievers experience suffering in this life. But you have something else.

You have a promise. You have a covenant, a *new* covenant.

The world has its gods of fairness and being nice and living life to its "fullest."

But all that leads to is death. All the good deeds in the world can't keep you alive. All the fairness and equality in the world can't forgive your sins, can't take away your guilt.

You will still suffer. You will still die.

Jesus is different. Jesus is life. Jesus offers you the cup of salvation; Jesus baptizes you into His household. Our Father in heaven sent His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Jesus marches on to the cross in order to save you, in order to serve you. Jesus enters into Jerusalem in order to be the High Priest who offers up the once-for-all sacrifice for your sins and for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus was born into this world to be that sacrifice, for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

Our song is love unknown because we cannot comprehend that kind of sacrifice. We cannot understand the kind of love that loves to the point of suffering God's wrath for our sin—all the sin of the world, cosmically focused on one, poor, frail, broken human body. Mocked, spit upon, flogged; nailed to a cross; lifted up and gasping for breath.

Unfairly, undeservedly, yet still willingly endured.

Are you able to be baptized into the Baptism with which Jesus is baptized? I hope so. For that Baptism baptizes you into His death, killing your sinful flesh. And that Baptism baptizes you also into His resurrection from the dead, giving you new, bodily life in heaven.

Are you able to drink the cup that He drinks? Thankfully yes! For there are no serpents in that cup now; He has taken away the sin and the punishment from you so that the cup you drink at this altar is only His blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, for your salvation and eternal life.

By grace, Jesus comes to you by these means—not to lord it over you, but to serve you. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are brought to faith and sustained in it—not to lord it over one another, but to serve one another.

“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you” (v 35), they said. But Jesus has taught you to pray, *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”* (Mt 6:10).

There has never been the kind of love that Jesus loves, and this is the place where you receive it—in the cup, in the font, in the promise.

The world will never understand. Your flesh will still fight you. Satan will rage at you.

But Jesus will serve you in perfect love, to guide you through the suffering and temptations of this life, to lead you to paths of righteousness and holiness, so that you can face your own stingless death. He has already accomplished it, just as He promised.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

Are You Sure You Want *This* Cup?

Mark 10:35-45

- I. This cup is the cross—neither Jesus nor His disciples really wanted it.
- II. This cup is suffering which we really don't want
- III. But this cup is the cup of salvation, which we do want.