

5th Sunday in Lent
March 21, 2021

"What Jesus offers you to drink!"
(Mark 10:38-40)
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LSB 440

"Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's text for this fifth Sunday in Lent is from our Gospel reading Mark 10:38-40

"But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."

James and John wanted to be first, didn't they? They wanted to be all the way at the front at the right and left hand of Jesus. Their request wasn't even made with a qualification, "if it be Your will". It was just a flat out "give to us whatever we ask". We want You to agree to a blank check that we will tell You how to fill in! How demanding and presumptuous that they thought this was going to fly.

To somewhat soften this demand, chapter 20 of the Gospel of Matthew, the parallel text, tells us that the brothers were accompanied by their mother and that she spoke the request. She was their intercessor, but Jesus directs His question to the brothers, with patience and love.

And what patience and love! Jesus had just described in detail what was going to happen to Him when He reached Jerusalem. He would be betrayed, mocked, flogged, spit upon, and killed. And it was as if James and John had not heard a word. They were so focused on self, that they didn't understand that how Jesus' suffering and death was the sole reason that any sinner could enter the kingdom of glory, much less sit on the right and left hand of Jesus.

Yes, an intercessor was needed, but it wasn't the mother of the sons of Zebedee. An intercessor was needed to pay the ransom price for all the selfish, self-indulgent thoughts and actions of "the many". And "the many" means the world, every sinner including you and me. For we are all self-absorbed, inward focused people who so quickly gloss over our utter sinfulness, thinking we actually deserve and demand that Jesus entertain our imaginations of glory.

Yes, our Triune God has graciously promised to us, His disciples, that His kingdom of glory awaits us. We can be absolutely assured of this because the ransom price was paid in full by Jesus! His greatest act of service was the giving of His life for the sins of "the many", that is again, "the world". But, our hearts must stay humble and not ever lose sight that we are saved by grace alone!

We are sinful by nature, and our sinning is so great that God's grace has to be even greater, on a daily basis! So Paul says in Romans 5, **"where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** (Romans 5:20-21) Thanks be to God!

I. Jesus gives to us a cup of humility

For our good Jesus graciously gives to us a cup of humility. **"Yes, you will indeed drink the cup that I drink."** And here Jesus speaks of His suffering for the kingdom's sake.

Be assured, that there is nothing that Jesus offers that He doesn't first drink. And, Jesus does not require us to drink the suffering and payment for our ransom. No! Only He could do that!

Again from Romans 5:18-19, we are reminded that there was only One who was worthy to pay the price to give the gift of righteousness to all – Jesus Christ.

"18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."

Jesus' obedience unto death for the sins of the whole world was the cup that He drank. So, Jesus humbly prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed, that is, not demanding that His Father find another solution to save the world,

“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42)

So that as the disciples are not above their Master, but indeed are united with their Master in this life and eternally, we too drink from the same cup of suffering in this world – not for our salvation, for that has been accomplished by Jesus, but for our humility and steadfastness in the faith.

When Paul preached the gospel in Lystra and healed a crippled man, the unbelieving Jews from Antioch came and stoned him, leaving him for dead. Paul indeed drank from the cup of suffering for the gospel's sake – shipwrecks, imprisonments, floggings, including his own life. So, Paul said this to the followers of Jesus in Acts 14.

“21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21-22)

James was killed by the sword in Acts 12. John was exiled in Patmos. So John wrote in Revelation 1:9.

“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

We want to skip right to the glory and avoid the tribulation. We want to pick the cup – sit at right and left – we want, we demand the cup of glory – do what we tell you to do! Yet, Christ graciously gives to us the cup of tribulation to keep us from falling away in our self-pride. He promises to help us through whatever test or temptation we face in this life for our good.

“Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

II. Jesus gives to us a cup of forgiveness

Jesus' purpose for our humbling is to then give to us His cup of forgiveness. Jesus is the water of life. He said to the woman at the well these words.

“whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14)

“Whoever” includes you and me. Jesus has given to us the water of life through faith in Him. It is never ending fountain of grace that continually refreshes us that the ransom for our sin has been paid in full – continually, for every sin we have committed. So, we heard last week that **“whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”**

This cup of forgiveness has been given to us in our baptisms and, today especially, Jesus gives us the cup of forgiveness in the sacrament of the altar. The very blood of Jesus which paid our ransom is given for you to drink to forgive you your sins. The ransom that is paid in full for all people is given to you personally in this very cup of forgiveness with Jesus' very body broken for you!

III. Jesus gives to you the cup of service

And as you have been freed of all sin in this sacrament, Jesus graciously gives to you the cup of service. For this is the domain of the church. This is what the church is all about – service to others. So, Jesus concludes in our gospel reading from Mark 10.

“You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.”

It shall not be so among you! Not you. God has called you out of the world, out of this way of thinking! You're new way of thinking is totally opposite. To be first means to be a servant, a slave. Of whom? All! Service to your family, to your friends, to your coworkers, to your brothers and sisters in the church family here and at large, service to all, when they are easy to get along with and when they are

difficult. Serve them with the love of Jesus and His good news that the ransom has been paid for them for it has been paid for all!

But, what about the people who are coming across the border illegally? Service to all! They're here, because our country is allowing them whether that is being done properly or not. God is giving us an opportunity to serve them with the gospel.

I received a call from a woman that I've known for some time this week who was compelled to service after hearing about the many unaccompanied children that are entering the United States. She has made little booklets before in Spanish and wanted to do something especially that a little child could understand. We worked on some phrases in Spanish like "Jesus loves you" and "Hope in God" that are simple phrases set on a beautiful background. She ordered the printing of these online and will punch the holes of the booklets -1000. And then they will be distributed.

Service to all, to all, in all languages, with the good news that Jesus has paid the ransom for all.

How is God calling you to serve? What does your cup of service look like? Yes, God has graciously given us the cup of humility and suffering to refine us like gold, the cup of forgiveness to absolve us, and the cup of service to joyfully use the gifts He has given to each of us. Drink deeply and thankfully for your ransom has been paid in full. All glory to God! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)