

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

³² They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was leading them. The disciples were amazed, and the others who followed were afraid. He [Jesus] took the Twelve aside again and began to tell them what was going to happen to him. ³³ “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the experts in the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ They will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, “Teacher, we wish that you would do for us whatever we ask.” ³⁶ He said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to him, “Promise that we may sit, one at your right and one at your left, in your glory.”

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am going to be baptized with?”

³⁹ “We can,” they replied.

Jesus told them, “You will drink the cup that I am going to drink and be baptized with the baptism that I am going to be baptized with. ⁴⁰ But to sit at my right or at my left is not for me to give; rather, these places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they were angry with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But that is not the way it is to be among you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

I like things that are clear cut – black or white; yes or no; on or off – you get the idea. And so when I was in college, I had some trouble with philosophy class. Philosophy is one of those areas where things are more abstract and not always so clear cut. After I failed my 1st test in the course, I had to meet with the professor and he told me that philosophy was not “my cup of tea.” By that expression, “my cup of tea,” he was telling me that philosophy did not fit into my “cup” or realm of understanding; it did not fit in with this part of my life.

The Bible uses the picture of a cup a number of times. In Psalm 23 we hear, **“My cup overflows,”** to describe the blessings that come to a believer as a result of God’s grace. Psalm 116 talks about, **“a cup of salvation.”** This cup is the faith the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts so we can believe and trust in Jesus our Savior. The **“cup of salvation”** leads us to another **“cup.”** The cup of suffering and death that Jesus endured on the cross.

This **“cup of suffering and death”** is necessary for our spiritual life. It is part of the “cup of salvation” all believers have. As we consider this portion of scripture before us this morning, we want to focus on the cup Jesus is talking about. We want to consider this in the context of **“The Cup of Life.”** First we will see that **“The Cup of Life”** is **“The Cup Our Lord Drank for Us,”** and then we will see, **“The Cup of Life”** is **“The Cup Our Lord Shares With Us.”**

I. Jesus describes this cup of suffering he is going to drink in detail for the disciples, **“He took the Twelve aside again and began to tell them what was going to happen to him.”**³³ **“Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the experts in the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles.”**³⁴ **They will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”** When Matthew recorded this event, he included that the method of killing Jesus would be crucifixion (Matthew 20:18-19). Yet, it seems that James and John were not paying attention to what Jesus had said or simply chose to ignore it.

Mark tells us, **“³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, “Teacher, we wish that you would do for us whatever we ask.” ³⁶ He said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to him, “Promise that we may sit, one at your right and one at your left, in your glory.”** Their question reveals a number of things about them. They were thinking in earthly terms and thought Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom. They had forgotten an earlier lesson about greatness when Jesus had connected “greatness” to humble service and yet they seemed more concerned with glory than humbleness. But notice that Jesus did not condemn them for their question.

Jesus took this opportunity to once again teach his disciples. He asked them, **“You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am going to be baptized with?”** Jesus knew what was coming – to put his question another way, **“Can you drink the cup of sorrow I will be experiencing or be baptized with the cup of suffering I will experience?”** Their answer was a simple, **“We can”** but little did they understand what they were acknowledging. They would experience sorrow and suffering as followers of Christ. James would be the first disciple put to death as a follower of Christ and John would endure persecution until the day of his death as well.

Sometimes it is hard to figure out why the disciples acted the way they did. Why did James and John make that request? Hadn't they been listening to Jesus for the last 2 ½ years? They had and it had been good. They had seen Jesus perform miracles and heal people and cast out demons and he always had the perfect answer for the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who were trying to trip him up. Life was good and the disciples wanted it to stay that way.

We like life to be good too. Some churches even teach that now that you are a Christian God will bless you and life will be great. But we should take these words of our Savior to heart also. We are thankful that Jesus was willing to drink this cup of suffering for our sins. We are thankful that he was willing to experience the baptism of suffering we deserve. We are even more grateful for the gift of the Spirit that brings us God's “Cup of Salvation,” that is spiritual life and the forgiveness of sins. But we, like the disciples, might have to share in this cup of suffering – not to the extent our Savior did – but we may have to endure persecution for being a disciple of Jesus.

The good news is that like the disciples, our Savior is with us and he will help us through whatever this cup might hold for us. And while we share in this Cup of Salvation may we also focus on the cup of service our Savior has given us as well.

II. “Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Sometimes Christianity turns the ways of the world upside down. To be great in the world you lord your power and position over someone but here Jesus tells us to be great is not about position and power but rather about humility and service. That is hard for us to do. We all have an ego and pride and humility isn’t something that comes easy for everyone but Jesus reminds us that he came not to be served but to serve. And he set the example for us in so many ways throughout his ministry – he was always about serving others – even to the point of humbling himself and giving his life as the ransom payment for our sins.

Do you look for ways to serve in your life? Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, explained that God not only saved us because of his grace and by the gift of faith, but even before he saved us, he also created works of service for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10). God puts opportunities for us to serve before us in many different ways.

Some of those opportunities to serve occur here at church and some occur out in the community. I hope this might whet your appetite to see what opportunity God is going to give you this week. And always remember, our Savior was willing to serve us and bring us the cup of salvation so that we can serve him and others.

There are a number of things that are not my “cup of tea,” but I am thankful that my Savior was willing to drink his cup of suffering for you and for me. And I am glad that he shares this cup of salvation with us through the gift of faith. May that encourage us to take up the cup of service and follow our Savior’s example to serve others in humility. Amen.