



Christ Lutheran Church

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

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Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

“You Want This Cup? Don't be Foolish.” – St. Mark 10:35-45

5th Sunday in Lent – March 18, 2018

Pastor Chip Winter

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the Gospel appointed for the day and already read for us from St. Mark's tenth chapter.

My dear family in Christ, in the iconography, or perhaps more accurately, symbolism of the church, St. John is often depicted as an eagle, an association that comes from Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures in heaven: the oxen, the man, the lion and the eagle. We have it here on our screens, for example.

But I learned of another symbol for St. John the other day. Using google image and entering **“the cup of St. John”** you'll find the image of a chalice with a serpent in it. That's the cup that James and John think they want to drink in this scripture, but they don't understand what they've asked for. Jesus is the one, the only one, to drink this cup. It's the cup of suffering, the cup of death, the cup filled with the sin of the world and the cup brimming with the wrath of Almighty God over the sins of the world. Jesus does not do this because He imagines it fun or tasty. Indeed, He does not even do it because He wanted to. He does it because it is the will of the Father in Heaven.

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

That hour is almost at hand. Jesus has been walking ahead of them, setting the pace. He was on a mission to Jerusalem, which was where His mission had always been aimed. But His pace had the stragglers wondering what the rush was all about. Why the determination? After all, there was likely to be a confrontation in the Holy City; this was the stronghold of Jesus' enemies.

In reality, it is a death march. The disciples don't get that, yet, but they follow, nonetheless.

This is journey for which Jesus became incarnate. This is the road that leads to Jerusalem, where He will be condemned and delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, where He will be mocked, spit upon, beaten, flogged and killed. Where He will rise, again. Jesus has said this now three times in this Gospel.

This was not what the disciples wanted to hear. **“Don't be silly. Don't be foolish.”** Success and glory, prosperity and fortune do not look like a dead guy on a cross. How can humiliation and death have anything to do with God restoring His kingdom? No, surely it's going to be beautiful and glorious, this coming reign of Jesus, and there are no ones better to help with it than the twelve!

James and John have the temerity to say aloud what it's quite possible all of them were thinking – “may we have some special privilege in helping you rule, Jesus?”. Even among the elect **“who you know”** is very important, and James and John must have figured they had an inside track; well, along with Peter, for they were the ones to witness the transfiguration. But there are only two sides for the throne – one on the right, the other on the left. Peter will just have to fend for himself.

At this request the rest of the disciples are indignant. Perhaps, in part, because they hadn't thought of it first? They are like children shoving brothers and sisters out of the way.

But the modern day disciples are prone to the selfish and sinful nature wanting the glory, the authority and the power, as well. Like the apostles we get caught up in ourselves. We stop looking

at our neighbor as someone to serve and instead, look inward, asking “What do I want?” the results are fractured churches, husbands and wives divorcing, children and parents no longer talking to one another. This is not how God created it to be. **“For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve”** (v45).

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

They said yes, they were. Did they know the hostility with which they would be received? They will drink the cup. They will all suffer for proclaiming Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins. Most of the twelve were murdered, with James being the first to go – beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12. Future followers would be burned alive, tortured and drowned for taking up their crosses.

Did you know that you would be 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 family and your friends might believe differently? Did you know that you would run the risk of being called narrow-minded, or a hick? Did you know that your confession of faith would exclude you from a world of fleshly delight, unbridled appetites sated by hedonism, 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, illogically, against “science” or “fairness” or even rightly against “human nature” – that is the sinful human nature.

It’s difficult enough to swallow the bitter dregs of illness and death, disappointment and heartache, which even unbelievers experience.

The world has its gods of fairness and being nice and living life to the “fullest.” But all of that leads only to death. All the fairness and equality in the world, all the good deeds cannot keep you alive, cannot forgive your sins, cannot take away your guilt. You will still suffer and you will die.

But you and I have something else. We have a promise, a covenant. We have Jesus Who offers you the cup of salvation. Jesus Who baptized you into His household. The 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 was born into the world to be the sacrifice for all sins. It’s an unfathomable kind of love which cosmically focuses all sin upon one poor, frail, broken human. Mocked, spit upon, flogged; nailed to a cross, lifted up gasping for breath. Unfairly, undeservedly, willingly.

Are you able to be baptized into the Baptism with which Jesus was baptized? Yes, for that baptism baptized you into His death and into His resurrection, giving you new life now and everlasting life in the world to come.

Are you able to drink the cup that He drinks? Yes. For there are not serpents in that cup now; Jesus has taken away the win and the punishment from you so that the cup you drink at this altar is His blood, in, with and under the wine: the blood shed for your forgiveness and salvation.

“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you” they requested. But they and we were taught by Jesus to pray **“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

There has never been the kind of love with which Jesus loves, and this is the place where you receive it – in the cup, in the font, in the promise. The world will not understand it. Your flesh will 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.