

The Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 18, 2018

Text: Mark 10:35-45

Theme: "A Bigger Cup, Please!"

Bigger and bigger, drinks have gotten larger and larger over the years. If you have a few years behind us we can testify to that fact. There have been a few downward trends from health concerns and PR purposes, but the path has been size rise. The progression has been up as you see illustrated with these cups. Is bigger better?

We see this enlarging in many areas. It is bigger homes, bigger TVs, bigger cell phones, and bigger consumer debt. It can be a matter of comparisons and what is considered fair and just. Why should you have a bigger bank account, or a bigger plate or a better cup than I have? This is that more of me and more for me natural bent we all have because of sin. It is pretty hard to get away from such bigger thinking. We really can't get totally away from it in this life. By God's revelation and strength we are aware and try to keep it in check.

Maybe we think, 'why try?' Why not just go for it, be honest about, give others fair warning. Jesus gives us a very good reason. "It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant." His disciples were having their own problems with cup capacity. James and John were asking for the bigger and better.

They were on the road to Jerusalem. They had heard some puzzling and perplexing things from Jesus. Jesus told them how difficult it was to enter the kingdom of God, easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom (10:25). Jesus spoke these words as a rich man was walking away, one whom Jesus had told to sell all, give the proceeds to the poor and follow after Him (10:21). That man did

not need to worry about what he has given up for he would have treasure in heaven. After the man was gone, Peter said they had left all to follow Jesus. Jesus spoke of those giving up receiving 100 fold back in this life with persecution and in the age to come eternal life (29-30). Jesus did have to stick that word “persecution” in there.

Jesus had also spoken words on the same subject He had shared before, that of what was going to happen to Him when they made it to Jerusalem, this is at least the third time He speaks of it. “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. And they will mock Him and spit on Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise.” (Mark 2:33, 34) The first time Mark records Jesus speaking these words Peter tried to rebuke Him (Mark 8:32-33). The second time were are told the disciples didn’t understand and were afraid to ask (9:32). And this time there is no comment reported. And they were getting ever closer to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem looms large. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David, the Christ of the Living God. They didn’t know for sure what was going to happen, but they hoped somehow it would be the throne. Looked like time for the asking, bigger cup would be great, well deserved for faithful service. James and John are quite interested in bigger cups. They lead into the real ask with an setup statement. “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of You.” (vs 36) Now the big ask. “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in Your glory.” (vs 27). Supersize us, Lord, we are ready, willing and deserving! A bigger cup for sure, maybe even a bucket. Why not us? It ought to be us. We are well qualified and would not this son of Zebedee tandem be something awesome to behold there on the left and right of Jesus in glory just a little less than that of Jesus?

They were ready, hopeful, and asking—a bigger cup, please, a cup full of honor, glory, and authority, even big living.

This asking ticked off the other 10. They were, well, simply indignant (vs 41, same word used of Jesus' reaction when the apostle tried to cut off access to Jesus of children, **avganakte , w**, be indignant or angry). Why not a bigger cup or even a bucket for me? Such was the thinking of the Twelve as they journeyed after Jesus.

What's on our minds as we journey? We have many good things in our cups already, all we need to support this body and life. We have the first article blessings Luther writes of: *I believe that God has made me and all creatures...He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.* We also read of those things in our cups from his explanation to the 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer: *Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.* We have even more, those eternal blessings we read of the Second and Third Articles of the Creed. We've been redeemed, purchased and won from sin, death, and the power of the devil so that we might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom. We learn this is so because of the blessings of the work of the Holy Spirit.

We do have cups full, even running over, just like David writes of. But bigger yet could be better. More is more fun, more secure, more to be desired. Certainly we don't need any bad stuff in the cup. We don't want anything like Bartimaeus had whom we read of after our text. And if we do we want Jesus to fix it just like He did for Bartimaeus and pronto. If there is any bad stuff, unpleasantness including that which comes from following after Jesus, then downsizing is quite good, the smaller the cup the better. But

when it comes to the good, I think I'm a worthy candidate for that bigger cup. Yes, bucketsize me!

Jesus has a way of upsetting things, turning on its head wrong thinking (which rights the ship). He asks about James' and John's ability, after He tells them they do not know for what they are asking. 'Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' 'Oh, Yeah.' If they want to be so close then they need to be ready to experience what He is about to experience, the things He has been telling them about. 'If anyone would come after me, then let him take up his cross and follow me.' (Mark 8:34) Then those words about the Jerusalem business of being mocked, scourged, and killed. 'James and John, are you able, ready for that?'

Are we ready for some suffering in our cups for following after Jesus? The student is not above the master as the Master said (Matthew 10:24). If He has been hated what can we expect? Paul writes that those who reign with Christ will suffer with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

James and John answer that they are able. Jesus tells them, yes, you will so drink and so be baptized, but to be at right and left is for those to whom it has been prepared. They are coming nearer and nearer Jerusalem. Soon they will learn about the contents of the cup and the pain of the baptism.

"We are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered..." (Mark 10:33-34). We are well into the going up to Jerusalem remembering time of the year. The reading of the Passion History we do on Wednesdays at our Lenten worship puts before us that cup and baptism. This Wednesday we will see Jesus before Pilate for the second time (after a trip to see Herod) and the crowd crying for the release of Barabbas and blood of Jesus and Pilate finally giving in sending Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus prayed if possible the cup might be removed from Him always submitting Himself to the will of the Father. So the cup is not removed as it is the will of the Father to make Him a sin offering. Outside of Jerusalem the King of the Jews is lifted up on the throne of the cross. We know John is there, were any of the others? If James and John had been there and had seen what it was like to be on His right and His left they would have realized that indeed they did not know for what they were asking.

But there was a better, a more fitting place for James and John and all the Twelve, and you and me, it was the place in the middle, the place of the emptying out to the last drop the cup of God's righteous indignation against sin. But we weren't there, Jesus was. He was there in our place. Here was the epitome of not coming to be served, but to serve giving His life as a ransom for many, even for all.

It is the bitter cup for Jesus, the wormwood and the gall. It is the sweet cup for those who look to Him in faith. It is the sweet taste of forgiveness. Those who come to the Lord's table today do taste Jesus. It is the body and blood of Jesus for you. Whether you sip from the chalice or this little cup, it is Jesus in His blood passing over your lips, Christ in you, Jesus in a tangible, even physical way. The benefits we drink in through faith. That faith takes in that forgiveness be it in the Lord's Supper, in Baptism, or in God's sweet words of Christ for you in the Gospel. With that forgiveness comes life and salvation.

We have the sweet promise of eternal life, Jesus's words, 'whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.' (John 11:25-26). Why can we believe this? Because He lives. Christ crucified is also Christ raised and reigning, even returning.

Life with our Lord is not about striving for a bigger cup of the things of this life or filling your bucket. It's more like cup bearing. Jesus says it's not about being like the Gentiles, that is lording it over others and exercising authority, not about calling the shots trying to control others to satisfy your desires. No, we have been freed from the need to be at the center, or if not the center, at least just to the right or to the left.

Whoever would be great must be your servant and whoever would be first must be slave of all (vs 44). God has given us full cups, cups to use in service. He calls us, equips us to carry the water, to serve from what He has supplied. It's a whole new form of bucket list. Who is on our list to serve from the bucket of blessings? It includes such as spouse, children, neighbors, rulers, co-workers, employees, classmates, friends and enemies.

What do we have in our buckets to meet the needs of others? Do we find time there, time to check on them, take them to an appointment? Do we find talent there, talent to fix a problem they are experiencing? Do we not find the sweet message of the Gospel there? Our cups do overflow. God has made us to be open cups, not sealed containers.

A bigger cup—our old nature is always after that. We have been buried into Christ and raised with Him that the power of the old nature may be checked. Jesus took the bitter cup for us so we may have the sweeter cup, that wonderful cup of forgiveness and life. For Jesus' sake. Amen