

Our Saviour Lutheran Church
February 27, 2013

Shall I not drink from the cup?
The searching questions of Lent Series #3

Maybe I'm stretching a bit far in hope, but it's the third mid-week service in Lent just days away from March so I'm looking for any sign that spring might come soon. I think I've found some. (Before the latest storm. Its just a blip I assure you) The "Got-Junk" trucks are trolling through the neighbourhood. We seem to produce a lot of junk over the winter. I'm curious about what it all might be so I look in the bins as they await the coming trucks. Maybe my neighbours will think I'm related to Oscar of Sesame Street fame or I'll just tell them I'm doing sermon research trying to understand the human condition which is true.

There's the 4 minute Ab machine. It's hardly out of the colourful cardboard packaging. There's a "Learn a language in a day" on CD-ROM. Twenty-four languages included. Now you see pop-up ads for all that stuff surfing the web. Instant download with credit card number. Then there's the ubiquitous microwave cook books promising convenience, economy and great taste. I'm wondering "How can anybody get sucked into that lie"? Haven't we all seen the Mr. Bean cooks a turkey in the microwave video to know better? Microwaves are for heating up yesterday's coffee and leftovers. Period.

But we continue to buy the same sort of stuff year after year. We want instant gratification but that isn't reality even in the spiritual realm. There's no real health in a day program. There's no learning without hard study. And in the spiritual realm. there is no crown without the cross.

Sin has its price and it's steep. The price to be paid must be in the most valuable currency of all. It must be paid in blood and not just any blood. It is to be paid with the blood of the Lamb, that perfect Lamb of God.

Satan was always there however trying to trick Jesus into falling for the short-cut. (He plays similar games with us but let us consider the Life of our Lord first.)

The Devil offered three short cuts to winning the world at the beginning of His Public Life during the wilderness Temptation Scene. Peter, the head of the Apostolic band, tried to deter him from the cross and was rebuked severely with "Get behind me Satan". Then even in the text under consideration for tonight. Jesus had wrestled in prayer in the Garden, even sweating great drops of blood. And there was Peter once again, pulling his sword from its sheath slashing wildly lopping off the ear of Malchus. The draw of a sword. The pull of a trigger. We venerate a line from the Clint Eastwood, tough guy character. Holding our weapon we want to say with confidence "I eliminate the problem. I fix the problem I'm the fixer".

It fixes nothing, Jesus reminds Peter. He who lives by the sword dies by the sword.

Satan would come again. Even at the foot of the cross he mouths through his minions: "Come down and we will believe". Thanks be to God. Jesus is not dissuaded from his mission of sacrifice. He accomplishes his work. That's exactly what the Bible records our Lord as saying and doing in John 19:30

“³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished / consummated or my favourite (accomplished|)”, and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit”.

Jesus warns us who follow him that there is no easy road. Well, there is, but the easy road, the broad road leads to hell. It is the narrow path which few find which leads to eternal life. We are not to consider ourselves better than our master. Do we want heaven? Do we want a satisfying life? Do we want all that is worthwhile and lasting? Then there is the cross of Jesus. And there is a cross for us. Or better to maintain the imagery of the cup tonight. Jesus must drink of the cup. He must drink of all of our sufferings and woes connected with sin. And he bids his disciples that they shall do likewise even as they are bidden to take up the cross and follow Him.

And so Jesus says to James and John, sons of thunder, and aspirants to Eternal power.

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, (Mark 10)

Let me be clear. We do not earn our salvation or contribute to our salvation in any way by drinking our cup of woe or bearing our cross. But nevertheless it is the Christian Way. Free and safe in the cross of Jesus we pick up our cross. Free and safe in the Work of Christ who drank the cup for our salvation first we must follow and drink up our own cups of woe.

I drink from the common cup. And as I did last I thought of this passage. Although the overwhelming thought in our theology as we drink the cup in the sacrament for the forgiveness of our sins there is also the unavoidable challenge of then living the new life we are granted so that we rise renewed from the cup of blessing emboldened to emulate the Christ and drink down our cups of suffering for the sake of the Kingdom.

We who are now freed from Satan's hold may now deliberately with an alert conscience drink from the cup of suffering that Christ gives us. Embrace the cup. It shall not overwhelm you.

Dare to continue contemplating this searching question for Lent: “Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me”.

Amen.

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