

This morning, Jesus asks us a question. **“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”** Let’s consider that question as we gather here today.

Some context to this question, James and John, two of Jesus’ disciples in the inner circle have a bold request of Jesus: **“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”** By the way, these two men were given the nickname Sons of Thunder. The shock and awe pair, they are living up to their names asking an outrageous question. Jesus then says, **“You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”** James and John answer, **“Yes.”** 1. (oops!) James and John think they're able to drink Christ's cup.

But 2. (ugh!) We who know the rest of the story want nothing to do with that cup. This may not be spelled out in the text, but it is pretty clear from context that this baptism of Jesus is not just the baptism of a cute baby on a Sunday morning. The cup of Jesus is not filled with apple juice.

Even a few verses earlier, Jesus explains it. Verses 33 and 34, Jesus took the disciples aside **“...saying, “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 flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.””**

The baptism that Jesus is talking about is the baptism of blood that He would undergo on the cross. The cup Jesus is talking about is the cup of God’s wrath. One of the only other times the word “cup” appears in Mark’s Gospel is in Mark 14:36 where Jesus is pleading with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. **“And [Jesus] said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.””** The cup is not only the physical sufferings of Jesus, but the spiritual sufferings Jesus faced as He took on the sins of the whole world. He faced all of the Father’s righteous wrath over sin.

So which one of you wants to drink from that cup? Which one of you wants to be baptized with that baptism? Any volunteers? If we had the choice, we would never choose that. We would never choose to undergo the accusations, the suffering, and death that Jesus underwent.

**“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”** What were James and John thinking!?! Of course not! No, thanks, Jesus! That’s not for me.

There’s another place in Mark’s Gospel we see the word “cup.” **“And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them,**

**“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”** At the Last Supper, Mark records that not only James and John drank from the cup, but all the disciples. What if I told you that the cup of Jesus’ suffering and death is related to the cup of the Lord’s Supper?

3. (aha!) Drinking from the cup is a participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Paul writes, **“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”** We believe that the Lord’s Supper is not just a mere symbol of a greater reality. It is that greater reality. In the body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, Jesus Christ is truly present and we are united with Him. We drink the cup which He drinks. **THE LORD'S SUPPER UNITES US WITH CHRIST SO WE CAN ENDURE ALL EVILS.**

4. (whee!) Drinking from the cup unites us with Christ's salvation. And so it is we have this key teaching of the Bible here in Mark 10, **“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**” A ransom is a sum of money that you pay to free a prisoner. We as Christians know that we couldn’t pay the price for our freedom. That’s why if given the choice to drink the cup of God’s wrath, we would run away screaming. Rightfully so, we could not do this! We could not take on the sins of the world or even our sins, for that matter.

That’s what so amazing about Jesus. His life is that ransom for you. He paid the price we couldn’t pay. Sin just doesn’t go away magically, it has to be paid for in blood. And so it is that Jesus paid. He was handed over to the chief priests and scribes and condemned to death. He was baptized with a baptism of His own blood and the Romans mocked him, spat upon him, flogged him, and killed Him. He drank the cup of God’s wrath as He hung there upon the cross bearing the sins of the whole world.

But on the third day he rose. Easter isn’t too far around the corner, and even in Lent we keep an eye out for the resurrection of our Lord. We do so because we realize that because Christ rose from the dead, He has transformed the cup of God’s wrath into the cup of God’s salvation. Instead of being condemned to death as a sinner, you are declared righteous by your Heavenly Father because Jesus was condemned for you. Instead of a baptism of blood, you have a baptism which makes you pure as snow because Jesus underwent that suffering.

**“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”** Yes, yes, yes! Jesus, I want your baptism of forgiveness and the cup of your blood that unites me to you. I need you in my life. As a branch is to a vine, wrap yourself around me. As a sweater covers me and keeps me warm, I need you to cover my sins and imperfections. I need you to be baked into me like fruit in a fruit cake that you cannot pick out those fruit without

tearing apart the cake. Jesus, you and I need to be together like peanut butter and jelly, like stink on a monkey, like two pieces welded together.

And that's what true Christianity is. It's a participation in Jesus Christ and His life. It starts with being baptized with the baptism of Jesus with which He was baptized and continues month after month with hearing God's Word and drinking the cup that He drinks. It's knowing how toxic that cup was that Jesus drank for you, knowing you couldn't do it yourself, so thus calling upon Him in prayer, listening to Him in His Word, and drinking the cup of salvation from this altar.

5. (yeah!) Drinking from the cup is a confession of our faith and unity with Jesus Christ. And so it is that we have a confirmation Sunday. Heather and Linda are about to confess before God and man their faith in this Christ who has done all this for them. They are proclaiming that in Christ alone, they are able to be baptized with the baptism of Christ and drink the cup that He drinks. In fact, as their first communion, it will be the time when they drink that cup of salvation with us, the fellow redeemed. Confirmation is an affirmation of the gifts that God has given them in baptism. Confirmation is where the baptism meets the cup.

Confirmation Sundays are always a good opportunity to explain our belief of closed communion. Closed communion may sound cruel, but it simply asks the question of our text. **“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?”** We want to make sure everyone who is participating in this meal receives the cup of salvation rather than the cup of wrath. Communion is an encounter with the Living God, and we want to affirm that all those who encounter God in this way do so to their benefit and not to their detriment.

If you're a guest here who has not previously communed at a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregation, we're so happy you're here. Keep coming back! Let your life be changed by the freeing Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, we ask that you hold off on joining us at communion until you're ready to make that same confession of faith that Heather and Linda are going to make today. Let's sit down and talk more because I want you at this meal to receive union with Christ to your salvation. I want everyone who is here to join us for the Lord's Supper, but I care enough about each and every one of you to invest the time and energy to teach, to disciple, and to walk alongside all those who are not yet on the same page.

Because as we gather around here eating the bread of Christ's body and drinking the cup of Christ's blood, we confess a new way of looking at the world, **“You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,”** The logic of the kingdom of God is not about being the strongest, the smartest, or the most powerful. The kingdom of God is not shown in a race to the top, but it's

shown in a race to the bottom. It's displayed through humble acts of service week after week. It's manifested through faithful regular participation in these ordinary means of grace: water, wine, wafer, and word.

**“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”** If it were up to us, certainly not, but Jesus comes to us and gives us what we need. The cup of wrath and the cup of salvation are tied together: because Jesus drank the cup of wrath, we get the cup of salvation. If the day comes that God would have us die for our faith, may we go boldly. After all, what's waiting for us when we die? Although we don't actively seek out death, death brings with it the promise of heavenly bliss and eternal comforts, reunion with fellow saints and Christ Himself, and the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom. The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the feast to come!

Jesus' comforting presence in Word and Sacrament forms us so that we can go the Lord's Supper as to death, and go to death as to the Lord's Supper. Amen.