

## Lenten Devotions Created for Community In Community With Christ -Rev. Adam D. Wutka, Director of Lay Ministry

## Mark 10:[29-31]32-45 Jesus reminds us that we are walking the way of the cross

As this passage opens, we see Jesus walking ahead of his followers, who lag behind in fear and amazement. Jesus has laid on them some pretty heavy truths about the costs of discipleship through the first half of this chapter. In the preceding verses, Jesus has said that for each thing we give up in our normal life – in every way we deny ourselves – we receive back a hundred-fold in this age, houses, siblings, mothers and children, and fields. But then he also tacks on the end "...with persecutions." Truly, the life of a Christian is full of blessings, including family beyond measure in the Church. However, the life of a Christian is not, has never been, and will never be easy. Driving his point home, Jesus describes the fate which awaits him ahead in Jerusalem.

For some reason it is at this moment that the sibling disciples James and John decide to come ask Jesus to make them his "right-hand men" in his new kingdom. Haven't they been listening to all of Jesus' humbling words up to this point? Jesus has just told them that they must be like a child, and in the last few verses here (43-44) he says "...but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all." In the moment, however, Jesus coolly asks James and John a question, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They respond affirmatively, most likely thinking "Sure, we can share a cup and have a drink with Jesus. Oh yeah. . . we can enter the same river and be washed in the same way as Jesus." However, what is the cup that Jesus drinks?



Jesus drinks the cup of God's wrath – the cup which he later prays about in the garden is the suffering Jesus undergoes at his death. It is also the cup of blessing, as Paul points out (1 Corinthians 10.16), the same cup of blessing that we share in the Holy Supper. But there is also one more thing. By sharing in the cup of Christ, God's wrath, Christ's suffering for our redemption, and therefore our blessing in his blood, we enter into community with Jesus Christ himself, in a direct connection: our burdens become his and his burdens become our own as well. We do receive all of the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that have been made real for us on the cross. And we do get blessings a hundred-

fold in this life... as a living part of the Church, the Body of Christ itself. And yet, all of these things still come with a price – with persecutions. The true life of a disciple and follower (and apostle) of Jesus Christ is fraught with the same cup – the same burden and struggle of Christ himself in this life.



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The same goes for the other part of Jesus' question, "or [can you] be baptized with the same baptism I am baptized with?" In his baptism, the Holy Spirit entered into Jesus, empowering him on his earthly ministry and trials. And yes, this is the same Holy Spirit which empowers us into that same faithful ministry. But remember that the first thing the Holy Spirit did with Jesus after his baptism was to drive him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. This same Holy Spirit of God drives us out into the wilderness as well – out into the very midst of the trials and persecutions we face in this world – to proclaim the risen Lord and make new disciples.

As Jesus says for both circumstances, "The cup that I drink you <u>will</u> drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you <u>will</u> be baptized." Indeed, the apostles later received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and though they, like us, have been redeemed by the cup of Christ, his holy and precious blood, they also received terrible persecutions for their participation in it.

So, how could that possibly be any different for us? Are we somehow part of a different Christian Church than the original apostles were? Do we somehow have a different Christ, who protects us from all harm and hardship in this life? Of course not! While it's true that we live in a different time and place than the original apostles, for better or worse, the life of faith to which we are called has not changed. We share in the very same community with Christ. Most of us are (thanks be to God) not actively punished and put to death for our faith like the apostles, but this life is still awash with persecutions.

To be a Christian means to bear the cross of Christ, making sacrifice in our work and at play, among family and friends, in order to live out the calling to make more disciples and repeat. The gain for us is real, but so are the persecutions. To play it safe is to deny our ministry and calling, and to think that God will protect us from experiencing hardship is simply naïve. God is with us, indeed, in every moment, between every breath Christ is there. God gives us every good thing here, together, in the body of Christ: the Church. Then, God sends us out – always with us, never alone – to walk in the way of the cross: with hundred-fold blessings . . . and with persecutions. Amen.

## Mysterious One,

In Jesus you redeem us and invite all people to a place in your glory. Draw us closer to you, and in so doing, draw us closer to one another, that we may be strengthened to follow in the way of Jesus' cross and resurrection. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.