

October 21st, 2018

Mark 10:35-45

Rev. Sharon Smith

Giving is our way of life

Objectives:

- Expand the spiritual imagery of drinking the cup – a cup of life, of sorrows and joys.
 - Explore the ways that we experience holding and drinking the cup in everyday life
 - Consider Jesus invitation – Are you able to drink this cup?
 - Examine our call to be stewards of our energy, giving of ourselves for the sake of the world
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A cup.

A cup is a container temporary or permanent that holds substance. A substance of value.
Ever felt the frustration of trying to drink from a water tap by cupping your hands.
And realizing by the time your hands reached your mouth,
all the water had run through your fingers.

Without a cup, we would have no way to collect what is needed for our survival.
And we would be thirsty and dry.

Rumi reflects on this in a poem:

We have a huge barrel of wine, but no cups.
That's fine with us. Every morning
We glow and in the evening we glow again.

They say there's no future for us. They're right.
Which is fine with us.

(The Essential Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks, pg 2)

The world without cups.
Would be a world without sharing.

In Rumi's poem without cups,
Wine symbolic of the substance of our souls, cannot be contained
so as to be offered beyond ourselves.

A cup.

There is something about a cup.
A vessel.
That is most needed.

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I wonder if the cup that Jesus talks about with his disciples, holds something of this meaning.

The conversation we read in the gospel of Mark, follows Jesus third and final prediction of his death. The disciples are walking with Jesus toward Jerusalem.

Jerusalem – A place of significance.

The place where Jesus would suffer.

- Jerusalem - Where Jesus' human life would be offered, and it would model for us how to walk the way of humility, weakness in the face of institutional power AND to do it all with incredible love.
- Jerusalem – the place where Jesus' as God would identify deeply with human pain.
- Jerusalem – the place of Christ's self-emptying.
- Jerusalem – the place where death is somehow transformed into life.

They were on the way to Jerusalem.

Mark writes that the disciples after hearing Jesus talk about his death, were astonished and afraid.

I would be.

The thought of losing something good, or someone that I love is profoundly unsettling.

So like us, in those moments where the truth of a situation is hard to take in; Our fantasies, desires, dreams get projected, so that we escape the present reality before us.

James and John, two of Jesus friends from the beginning. Historic friends are more valuable than gold.

Perhaps they can't imagine losing the intimacy of what they had found with their friend and teacher Jesus.

And so, in an act of denying reality, they turn the conversation toward status and privilege and success.

Teacher we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you?

And Jesus replies:

What is it you want me to do for you?

Let's pause the narrative for just a moment.

And imagine James and John and each one of us is holding a cup.

A cup symbolic of our inner lives, our hearts or souls. *[take a chalice]*

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Sometimes it seems that the cup is brimming, overflowing. Like in the imagery of Psalm 23.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Sometimes it seems the cup is empty. It has been drained to its very dregs.

We have perhaps had to drink a cup of suffering.
Walking the way of pain, of loneliness, of illness, of deep sorrow.

Henri Nouwen puts it well when he says:

Drinking the cup of life means we internalize our unique experience of joy mixed with sorrow.
(Henri Nouwen: Will you drink the cup?)

Take a moment to sit with your cup. Imagine you are holding it in your hands carefully.

Reflect on it. What is in your cup?

(pause)

Now, hear the words of Jesus: What do you want me to do for you?

(pause)

It seems that the levels of our cups are unique and constantly change.

That the life energy inside each of us varies and changes from moment to moment.

Know that there is room in this community for whatever cup you are holding right now.

And, so the narrative continues.

James and John now ask of Jesus for what they need.

And they believe that they need privileged status.

Sometimes affirmation and admiration temporarily fill our cups!

They ask to sit at Jesus left and on Jesus right.

A mentor once told me when I was working in academia: Sharon, your cup needs to be filled.

You cannot keep giving without a rhythm of replenishment.

You see, like James and John, I was running after affirmation and you need recognition for what. His words to me, were: you can't trust everyone the same.

You need to learn who to offer your cup to.

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James and John, offer their cup to Jesus. Hoping he will fill it with affirmation and admiration.
But instead he gives them a more valuable gift.
He offers them his cup, the cup that Jesus is holding.

It is a cup of mixed wine.

Later in the upper room, Jesus refers to it as the cup of his blood.

He mixes two Jewish metaphors.

Wine known as the blood of grapes, was a sign of friendship and unity.

And human Blood symbolized the life energy of a person.

(Ron Hansen in Will you drink the cup by Henri Nouwen)

Jesus' cup is a cup of life offered for the sake of the world.

A cup of purpose and deep meaning. A cup of vocation.

And he invites James and John...

And you and I - to drink the cup that he drinks.

To pour our lives, to pour our energy out, not for our own sakes but for the wellbeing of others,
and for the very life of our world.

Rev. Jessica Schaap at my induction service on July 25th – called the cup Jesus would drink – a
cup of deep purpose.

She addressed us as The St Catherine's community, and asked us to answer the question:

Are you able to drink this cup?

The cup that is our unique purpose, our life energy poured out here in Edgemont.

And we answered:

We are able with God's help. Remember?

You can find this sermon at: <https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/media/2018-07-25-we-are-able-the-induction-of-the-reverend-dr-sharon-smith>

David Somerville wrote:

“That a parish is a group of people who together are learning what it means to be the people of God in a particular place.”

In 1948 this property on Ridgewood Drive was acquired by St Johns Anglican Church. With just \$500 dollars in the bank (a lot then, but still not enough) to build.

And so, the people gathered determined to become God's people in this place.

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The neighborhood was growing and rapidly developing. There was need for a church.
A people who would pour out the life of Christ into the community in love.

And in 2018 Edgemont Village is growing and rapidly developing.
Families with young children are moving in, Amica is here as a haven for seniors, Townhouses
are going up.

And we have a barrel of wine. The choicest of wine.
Christ's love, companionship, sustenance for tough times.

And we, you and I, are the cups.

We are the stewards. We are the vessels.
In this parish. As pray-ers, welcome-ers, greeters, counters, coffee makers, bulletin folders...
And in the wider Edgemont community. Wherever you may take your photo...

As people who follow Christ.

Giving is our way of life.

Self-emptying. Modeled to us by Christ. *(See Philippians 2 – also called Kenosis)*

And so, I invite you to once again to look at your cup.

A cup that is always in a perpetual state of being emptied and being filled.

Being filled in order to be emptied.

In order to be poured out for the sake of our world.

Where is Christ inviting you to pour out?

To steward your life, your gifts, your money, your energy?

Where are you called to offer your cup?
