

October 17, 2021

Texts: Isaiah 53: 4-12; Mark 10: 35-45

Title: “Can You Drink the Cup That I Drink?”

If you are employed these days or were employed at one time, did you get any employee perks in your workplace? I mean, in recent years some places have “casual Fridays,” where the dress code is less formal. For most workplaces, that’s as cutting-edge as they get when it comes to employee perks. But right now there are quite a few offering hiring bonuses. And for some, the permission to work from home might be considered a perk.

In doing some searching I found a company in California that’s offering pet health insurance. How about that? But the most interesting one I found is offered by a law firm. They have a yearly “luggage party.” On a certain day, they encourage all their employees to show up with a packed suitcase. Then they draw a few names randomly and send the winners on an “all-expenses paid holiday to Las Vegas . . . right there and then.”

Our Bible passage for today is the one where James and John, ask Jesus for a favor. They ask him to allow them to sit on his right and left hand in glory. They want the best seats in the house—places of honor and prestige. But they wanted to be appointed to these choice places not because they’d earned them or deserved them, but because they may have thought they had influence with Jesus. They wanted some special “employee perks” for being two of his closest followers. Does that sound familiar?

Jesus said to James and John, “You don’t know what you are asking. Are you

able to drink from the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” In other words, he was asking, “Are you willing to go through all I have to go through to see my kingdom established?” To their credit, they answer, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink, you will drink, and the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right or left hand isn’t mine to grant...”

So **what does it take to drink from Jesus’ cup?** What does it mean to be baptized with Jesus’ baptism? We are his followers are we not? What is being asked of us? **For one thing, it means you’re willing to pay a price no one else will pay.**

Liz Ryan, a former VP of Human Resources for a major company, wrote an article titled, “Ten Signs You’re Not Ready for a Leadership Job.” She wrote that a person shouldn’t try for a leadership role if they were just doing it for the money, if they care more about the job title or perks rather than they do the work, if they just like telling other people what to do. And her final piece of advice was, “Don’t take the leadership job because you think it looks easy.”

I think that’s exactly what Jesus was trying to tell James and John in this passage, “Don’t ask to be leaders in the kingdom of God because you think it looks easy.” Jesus fully accepted the sacrifice God required of him. And he wanted James and John, and us, to understand that if we choose to follow him, then we’re asked to follow him all the way to the cross. Jesus’ glory wasn’t the glory of power and authority and respect nor was it the glory of getting the best

seat in the house, being first in line, being the center of attention. Jesus' glory was in doing the will of God, no matter what it cost! That's the cup **he** drank from.

And that's the cup he offers to you and me. How do you know if you are ready to drink from his cup? When you are ready to die to your own agenda, your own privileges, comforts, preferences, and orient your life around the will and the works of God. That is, the willingness to pay a price no one else will pay.

And here's the other thing. **Drinking from his cup means being willing to give more than you expect to get.** The late Calvin Coolidge, former President, once put it like this: "No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave." Jesus, according to the apostle Paul, said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The cup from which Jesus and his disciples drank meant giving everything they had. Everything!

Are you able to drink from that same cup? Are you willing to do whatever is necessary—whatever Christ may call upon you to do? Are you willing to pay a price greater than others are willing to pay, and to give more than others are willing to give?

Need I say to you that this church has been built through the years because at its heart were a group of people who were willing to drink from Christ's cup and be baptized with his baptism. Their names are not known like Paul's or Simon Peter's. But they are truly disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, and whether they sit at the right and left hand of Jesus or not, they are most certainly in his presence.

What about us? Are we made of such stuff? Will our contributions to this

church in the months and years ahead and to the community we live in live long after we are gone? Will this world be a better place because you have walked upon it? Your church and this world we live in today needs you, you who will drink the cup Christ drank and be baptized by his baptism. Amen.