

## TAKE THIS CUP

*“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”*

What is this cup -- this cup that Jesus refers to in His prayer? This cup that is such a bitter pill, such a horrible toxin, such a painful blow that even He, the Lord of Life, chooses to request its removal as it's outpouring draws near?

Is it the rejection of his friends, who leave Him alone to face trial and abuse? Is it the agony of suffering the blows of torture, the indignity of scorn, the venom of hatred, the pain of crucifixion? Is it the nails, the thorns, the down-deep thirst as Jesus' own knowledge of His future takes front stage in His mind?

My answer is, yes, I believe it is all of that.

But also, yes, I believe it is more than that.

Jesus' first words on Calvary's cross make clear that the cup He is to drink will not only include all those things, but will also include the outpouring of His Father's own judgment against sin. "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" He will cry out, indicating that Jesus, as our representative, as our substitute, as our sacrificial Lamb of price, will, on that cross, experience the fury of Judgment Day against all sin and every evil. Because, You see, He's carrying it -- all the sins from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Joseph, from Joseph to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to Daniel, from Daniel to Matthew, from Matthew to Paul, from Paul to Luther, from Luther to you and me, and from you and me to those who come later on from generation to generation until, finally, the end comes.

Can you appreciate the weight of this guilt? This is not just a lifetime of unfaithfulness -- the guilt that each one of us deserves to bear because of our fallenness, our selfishness, our greed and hatred and lust and lies. No. This is the guilt of billions and billions of people -- the sum total of every murder and every act of abuse and every misspent moment, misguided dream, the sins too evil to even speak aloud, the sins too vile mention by name. Jesus took it all. Not just the sins of dear old Grandma Schmidt who seemingly did her level best to serve God and to serve their family and to serve the people around her. No. This is the guilt of Pharaoh and Ahab, of Nebuchadnezzar and Nero, of Ghengis Khan and Atilla the Hun, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and Osama Bin Laden. Charles Manson, Jeffrey Dahmer, Bashar al-Assad -- and yes, all the people

that we love to love and we love to hate. All of it was Jesus' that day. He was held accountable. And the wrath of a Holy God would be poured out on Him with the fury it demands.

This is the cup -- the cup that cries out for justice -- the cup that cries out for the proper penalty to be exacted against the guilty.

And Jesus, in our place, declares, "Yes, Lord, it is I. I who bear the guilt. I who face the consequences. I who will be forsaken by You for sins I never committed and guilt I never earned."

Last night those who attended our Maundy Thursday worship received a red coin symbolizing the blood money that Judas received for his betrayal of Jesus. This coin was intended to remind you of your own personal betrayals of Him who deserved nothing but praise and worship.

You dropped that blood money in a chalice in recognition of the fact that Jesus welcomed you to His table anyway and offered you, through His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, forgiveness of all your sins.

Tonight I will return that coin to you, but this time embedded in a small communion cup made out of olive wood and purchased by me in Bethlehem last summer when I journeyed there.

This cup will remind you that Jesus, motivated by His deep love for you and for all people, did not shrink back from the cup that was His to endure. He did not withdraw from the horrors that lay within. Rejection by His Father. Scorn and abuse from mankind. No. All of it, He would drink, willingly and voluntarily, so that He could pay the price for you to be set free from the law of sin and death.

The red coin is a US nickel with the face of Thomas Jefferson on the outside. Jefferson makes us think of the Declaration of Independence and the nickel makes us think of five cents. So, I include with your cup a mini-declaration of your freedom from sin and death that became yours because Jesus was "sent" for you.

The Declaration reads as follows: "I have been set free from the law of sin and death

because of five “sents.”

1. God SENT His only begotten Son to be my Messiah.

Even from the day when Adam and Eve fell into sin, God planned our rescue. He declared that He would send One who would crush the head of the Serpent -- One who would, Himself, be subject to suffering and pain, but One who would ultimately bring victory against this Evil One.

2. Jesus was SENT to perfectly obey God’s laws for me.

No way could any of us lead a perfect life. But God Himself could, and Jesus, who is God in the flesh, did. And because of that, He could indeed be the perfect atoning sacrifice for me.

3. Jesus was SENT to be a Servant for me.

The Lord Himself said it. “I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom.” Imagine, He who participated in the creation of all things showed his love by washing the feet of His disciples. He came to humble Himself and be obedient unto death. Even death on a cross.

4. Jesus was SENT to pay the ransom price for my sin.

The debt we owe was a price too high for any of us to pay. Who could ever make restitution for the cup of suffering that we brought to Jesus? But when He declared “It is finished.” and gave up His life, He declared the insurmountable debt to be paid in full.

5. Jesus was SENT to bring me salvation.

Jesus himself said it to Nicodemus: “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.” So take heart on this dark night. Your inheritance from Jesus means that you will not spend eternity in this world of sin, sickness, suffering and death. No. You will live forever in glory with Him who loved you and gave Himself up for you. As He says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. I go there to prepare a place for you.”

Yes, my friends, Jesus took Your cup of suffering. He did it to set you free. As you take your cup tonight remember again how great is His love for you. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.