

*17While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, 18“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; 19then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised.”*

*20Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. 21And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” 22But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” 23He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” 24When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. 25But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 26It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

God has gathered us here today to drink from Jesus' cup.

What does it contain? Blood, suffering, pain, death. The very things we came here today to escape.

“We are going up to Jerusalem,” he says to those who belong to him. “The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn him to death.”

Handed over. How would you like to be handed over? An object in another's hands. Not in control, like the prisoner in the courtroom, handcuffed, taken by the arm and led. All freedom lost. Every bad mood of the guards comes crashing down on you. No rights, no power. Handed over.

“The Son of Man will be handed over and they will condemn him to death.”

I don't like to be criticized; I erupt with anger when people suggest that I am wrong. What would it be like to be judged so wrong that life itself will be choked off?

If you were all to meet this afternoon and fire me, take my job away I know that there would be a great heaviness upon my being, a weight so great that my heart would have trouble beating. But what if people were to meet this afternoon to take away my life?

“The Son of Man will be condemned to death.”

“Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, and flogged and crucified.”

For Jesus it was Gentiles, the Romans. Maybe today I would be driven to some abandoned warehouse in Cleveland, turned over to a gang to be tortured. Mocked, whipped, crucified. Now the pain would not only be emotional, but profoundly physical.

“And on the third day he will be raised.”

This is the part that has to do with faith. The handing over, the condemning, the mocking and flogging and crucifying, these are not hard to believe, all over the world today people are being handed over, condemned, mocked, tortured, killed. But the being raised from the dead, this part was only a promise. Jesus trusted the Father for this promise.

God has gathered us here today to drink from Jesus' cup.

The mother of James and John did not come seeking a drink from that cup for her sons. She wanted them to have the best seats in the kingdom, the seats right next to Jesus' throne. But the way to the kingdom is through following Jesus, drinking his cup.

“Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink,” he asked the brothers.

“We are able,” they said to him.

“You will indeed drink my cup,” replied Jesus, “but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

They would drink from his cup as he passed it around the table in the upper room. “My blood of the covenant,” he would call the cup, “poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

All his suffering, the being handed over, the condemning, the mocking the crucifying all in that cup - given to James and John and you.

Shared with James and John and you.

We want Jesus' cup because we know it is a cup that brings us to God's kingdom. It is a cup of eternal life, a foretaste of the feast to come.

But first the cup is an invitation to be like Jesus in his dying - to give ourselves in love for others.

Drink, and be like Jesus, love like Jesus, sacrifice like Jesus. Live like Jesus in faith.

Drink deeply; knowing that through your pouring out yourself for others God will be embracing the poor, the lonely, the weak.

Drink the cup to the very bottom, knowing that God will have every last word. On the third day Jesus was raised.

When the cup is finished, God will raise you up too.