

## Fed by Grace | Food in the Gospels

### *The Cup*

Mark 10.32-45 and 14.36

4.18.14 – Good Friday

They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, <sup>33</sup> saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles.<sup>34</sup> "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again." James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." <sup>36</sup> And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup> They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory." <sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" <sup>39</sup> They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. <sup>40</sup> "But to sit on My right or on *My* left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." <sup>41</sup> Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Mark 14.36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

Over the last several months we've looked at the theme of food as a device used for teaching in the Gospels (and as an occasion)...and there's no shortage of material as we conclude here on Easter and GOOD Friday.

The phrase "Good Friday" troubles some people. WHAT could be good about this torture and death? Why "good"?

AND in the text before us the topic of discussion is not so much "good" but "great". The disciples are seeing the possibility of being GREAT...and...shouldn't they GO FOR IT? If you had the opportunity to be GREAT shouldn't you seize it?

I wonder if YOU ever think of greatness... You may think, "it's too late for me because my path is determined – I'm NEVER going to be Lebron James" OR you may think "I'd be happy just to have my dryer fixed -- or just to get a parking place on Sunday morning (I think that'd be great) - or just to pass my algebra test...get to summer break."

Maybe you don't want to be great, that is rich/powerful/famous/ "best in show"... but I think - at the very least - all of us want - to say that our lives...mattered, that they were... significant...made a difference...life had depth, fullness, meaning.

So let's talk about THAT kind of greatness (not rich, famous & powerful - magazines) but a life that matters (let's say THAT'S the definition) and let's look at THAT in this passage under 3 headings: 1. The Clueless 2. The Cup and 3. The Calling (3 "Cs": clueless//cup//calling)

When I say "clueless" concerning this passage I mean the disciples – you can't miss it in all four Gospels.

This is the third explicit announcement of Jesus Christ's impending death-and after each one-the disciples demonstrate: they are clueless.

Let's ask this time--A. Who's clueless? B. Why are they clueless? C. How we feel about these clue-less people?

The clue-less ones HERE are John & James - two brothers to whom Jesus gave the nickname "sons of thunder." They were fishermen. They were, along with Peter, in the inner ring, with Jesus in some of the most significant moments of His ministry.

Luke says they were the ones who wanted to call down fire from heaven when the Samaritans wouldn't give them a room and they...are the ones this time who - right after Jesus Christ predicts His death (which would take place only about a week later) right after this very clear death announcement, James & John-the sons of thunder begin to rumble again about having high level cabinet positions in Jesus Christ's new government in Jerusalem -- He says: "I'm gonna die..." they say: "Let us sit on the right & left of Your Glory" --- clueless.

Now why so clueless? Well, they saw the crowds - here 4,000, there 5,000 -- one minute these guys are unknown mending their nets/minding their business--and now they're in the entourage of a superstar--the #1 candidate--they're convinced Jesus is the Christ (though they don't really know what a Christ is)

And they see this apparent, wild popularity and they -judging by what they see--they assume that Jesus will somehow set up this government and miraculously dispose of the Romans. Jesus is telling them not to be fooled by what they see but they see the crowds and they have stars in their eyes.

AND the only leadership style they've ever seen (prior to seeing Jesus Christ) is the greatness-grabbers.

That's how people become great in this world: it's by ambition and "You gotta grab what's yours and make it happen and vie for position and take the reins!"

And that's really--pretty standard fare for life on planet earth--that's the standard, normal way of achieving or getting greatness. So--they're only being... assertive ...manly and "It never hurts to ask"--isn't that what our well meaning moms tell us (in fact Matthew says their mom was involved...).

So--look—"opportunity only knocks once"--and "he who hesitates is lost" and "put your best foot forward"--and all those adages are how it's done--on planet earth...conventional wisdom.

So that's who...and why..now let's think of how we feel about these clueless "sons of thunder" and people like them and...My own initial response (maybe yours too!) is: these guys are clowns, clueless clowns and imbeciles. And I'm thinking to myself--as I roll my eyes "How could anyone be so incredibly obtuse and clueless?"

I'm sure I have my moments..but this is ridiculous! Your friend and teacher predicts His death 3 times and you respond by asking a favor...I just don't think I'm that thick or socially insensitive or...dull...

I know some people like that...--screaming into the cell phone in the middle of the restaurant--pushing into the elevator before anyone gets off--they pay you a compliment...and yet you feel like you've been insulted and the fact that I can recognize that kind of insensitivity in others means that I'm sensitive. Right?

Well--one basic idea that Jesus Christ taught was that we are far better at seeing the faults of others than we are at seeing our own--He told the best men of His generation (the moral-giants, the most ethical people): "You guys can see a tiny splinter in someone else's eye and somehow miss the 2' x 4' jutting out of your own--it's like that party game where someone tapes the name of some famous or historical figure on your back --you can't see it but everyone else can...and you have to ask "Yes-and -No" questions to find out who you are (everyone else sees who you are...but you don't)

So ...you may be a lot more clueless than you think you are (scary!)

The other disciples were watching these dense sons of thunder--and when they heard Jesus tenderly correct James and John--the other guys got all indignant and self righteous and they tried to get the moral high ground--and THEY never saw how clueless THEY were...(saw it clearly in others--couldn't see it in themselves!)

So-we're sitting here 2000 years later--laughing at these clods/numb skulls...but maybe...had we been there, we would have been just as clueless.

Maybe future generations will look back on us and ask, "Why didn't they address these moral issues? What were they thinking? They were clueless!"

And even really important things... even ultimate things like the meaning and purpose of life. Not just being oblivious to social cues but being unmoved, insensitive and dull. Maybe not even asking, "Why am I here? What IS the goal of life?"

OR what if it's all true – I mean that there IS a God...we were created in His image and to know Him...we are all fallen and messed up beyond what we know and this God has actually come seeking us (a Good Shepherd) and in this Human Being named Jesus of Nazareth GOD HAS DONE SOMETHING TO WIN US BACK...and what if that doesn't fill us with joy and overwhelm everything else in our daily routine? What if we're dull to THAT?

So what is Jesus Christ's answer to dullness...Well He engages them by questions and by a big question "You want to sit on my right and left hands--in My greatness, in My glory? Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?"

And in using these words "the cup", Jesus draws on this rich stream of Old Testament ideas. Think of Isaiah chapter 51: "Arise, O Jerusalem: you who have drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger, the chalice of reeling (of staggering) and have drained it to the dregs!"

Jesus comes for Jerusalem -- He comes AS Jerusalem's substitute to drink the cup of justice, the cup of retribution for the guilt of God's people. He takes the cup from the Father's hand. It's the cup of responsibility.

Becomes obligated to fulfill my responsibility to God...He lives the life of love that I have failed to live--His every thought was only love--was only God first-- love to the Father and love to others.

He loved this way--as a real flesh and blood man and He lived this life of pure obedience in my place.

And even when His obedience led Him to that most distasteful and horrible task--to be cut off from the One He'd loved from all eternity--He was handed the cup of wrath and reeling-- He staggers before that cup in the garden and He becomes pale and weak with fear and sick with anguish and the pressure and weight of that cup is so heavy it squeezes blood from His pores and makes Him cry out for some other way.."Father remove this cup from Me and YET...not My will but Yours be done."

And His desire to obey overwhelms the terror and for the joy of obedience He mocks the shame and drinks the cup.

And for the joy of having me...being the ransom for messed up, selfish me -- He endured the cross and somehow that act of drinking the cup and being baptized with the justice I deserve...Somehow that cup that no one else could drink -- that He drank--THAT becomes the key to true greatness.

So...let's end tonight with THAT question: How does His drinking the cup become the alternate way to greatness in the upside down kingdom?

We've looked at the clueless...and then the cup...let's look last at the CALLING--notice twice here Jesus Christ is "calling" them to Himself (vv. 32/42) and it is in this act of intimacy and contact that Jesus Christ confers this attitude or power or animating principle of His kingdom.

What moved Jesus Christ is transferred through intimate contact with Him -- we become truly great--truly loving--living lives that really matter by responding to His calling, by believing Him, becoming attached to Him.

He kept calling them away from the curious crowds and to Himself—some went away sad or just busy. But Jesus Christ is calling His disciples and when He calls them to Himself they keep on coming--and in this way- though they remain obtuse in lots of ways but they who keep coming - keep believing, keep trusting—His disciples continue to drink in the truth of this Good News. They become united with Him and moved by that same core principle, they're baptized into His sufferings and drink this cup.

In other words, they become willing to give up their lives for the benefit of others--they come to see that contrary to the basic operating principle of the world--greatness (the life that matters) doesn't consist of dominating people and getting people under you but rather in serving.

Because even the greatest person who ever lived did not come to BE served but to serve, "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve--and to give His life a ransom for many."

Alright, one final thought, a question: Are you clueless?...Well according to you T.J....I guess I am and I don't know it...Yeah...I wish I could take credit for that but that was Jesus' idea. We're all more inconsiderate and dull and out-of-tune than we think -- and most tragically -- we all tend to be clueless to ultimate things

Some say--"Oh well...that's just how I am-I don't worry about other people's opinions of me..if that's being "clueless" then so be it" (good not to rely on other people for your significance....but selfishness is not the cure for people-pleasing)--others may think-"Wow-I'll have to try a lot harder this week to be attune to people/situations and especially to God" (good-listen to others who see you clearly...good to ask your wife about what she

sees...)--But see-on the one hand it's not about trying harder-nor is it about disregarding feelings of others-because Jesus Christ makes it clear: real greatness consists of serving others.

But the real answer - unique answer that Jesus Christ offers is for us to come away with Him and behold and listen and receive Who He is and what He has done and is doing. He is my ransom; by His self-giving on that Good Friday I am accepted and recognized by God Himself. and when I hear that from Him it makes me secure enough to give my life, my time, my energy my attention for others and that's the great life, the life really matters.