

“THE FOUR GLASSES OF THE GOSPEL.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Psalm 23:5; Psalm 116:12-13; Psalm 78:

Introduction.

It has come to my attention that some people are concerned about my drinking. When I first heard it I was wracking my brain for what they were concerned about. I was able to recall three or four times in the past year having a sip of wine. I realize three or four times in a year is a lot for me, but really, some people are concerned.

Then I found out my drinking problem was drinking too much water. In fact it has become so bad that Ron actually put two glasses of water in the pulpit. And now it must be really out of control, four glasses on the communion table.

About my water drinking. After a really bad and long cold and respiratory sickness back in October or November my vocal cords don't seem to be getting better. I have a doctor's visit in April and then hope to see a specialist after that. But I would certainly welcome prayers that God would heal my vocal cords or throat since I would like to keep using them for a while.

So let's talk about these four glasses of water. Four pictures of our spiritual life.

A glass half empty/full.

What do you see here? How would you describe this glass? Half full or half empty?

Most of us view life according to this first glass, sometimes it seems half full and sometimes it seems half empty. If you are an optimistic person, like Tigger, more often you will see it as half full. If you are more of a pessimistic person, like Eeyore, you might see it as half empty.

There are variations on this theme. Do we complain rose bushes have thorns, or do we rejoice that thorn bushes have roses?

Some people go through life like it's an uphill battle all the way. They are disappointed, discontent, grumbling and complaining along the way.

Other people go through life like it's been more good than bad, they look at the positives, they are generally content and satisfied. They are grateful to have something to be thankful for and that's what they focus on.

But we are talking about the Gospel this Lent. We have said that the Gospel changes everything, it is truly, totally life-transforming. One of the things the Gospel changes is our outlook, our perspective, our world and life view. Let's see how the Gospel does that through these glasses.

A glass full of God's wrath.

The Gospel tells us our glass is full of God's just and righteous wrath. When I talk about God's wrath I don't just say God's wrath, I always add that His wrath is righteous, it is just and justified. God is not just some angry, out of control, vengeful deity. God is perfect, pure, holy, righteous and just. His wrath is a holy wrath, without sin.

As our creator to whom we owe everything, to sin against Him, to rebel against Him, to disobey His perfect Law, all of this is a great offense, an infinite offense against His moral purity and majesty and authority, an offense that deserves only His infinite judgment.

Our sin is not just a mistake or an error of judgment or making a poor choice. Our sin is not a misdemeanor, it is the worst kind of felony. Our sin is cosmic treason of the highest order that does violence to God's holiness, righteousness and glory. It makes God our enemy.

How bad is this cup? Jesus pleaded with the Father three times in prayer if there was any other way for Him to satisfy the Father's wrath without having to drink this cup. He was sweating drops of blood over this.

Luke 22:41-44 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." 43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Why was He thinking so much about this and why is He sweating drops of blood over it? What is in the cup? The full just, righteous wrath of a holy God poured out against all sin.

Psalm 75:8 For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed,

and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

Jeremiah 25:15 Thus the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.”

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Revelation 14:10 [Those who don't worship God] will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger.

The cup is full of the righteous wrath and just judgment of God reserved for all sin of all people and nations. It must be drunk down to the dregs, to the very last drop. But Jesus drank all of it for us, as our substitute.

While Jesus hung on the cross from noon until three o'clock darkness spread over the land and for those three awful hours the Son of God drank the cup of God's wrath, until He cried out in utter misery and anguish and abandonment, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”

Isaiah 53:6 The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.

II Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If you haven't taken God at His Word, if you haven't taken your smallest of sins this seriously, if you have not owned the truth about your crime against God, then this is your glass, this is your sentence. If we don't see sin this seriously then we won't see the Gospel for what it really is.

A glass of God's mercy; completely empty, no wrath, no judgment.

Imagine how you would feel if you on the soccer team in Thailand trapped in a cave and the water rising. Imagine how you would feel if you were one of those 33 miners in Chile trapped 2000 feet below ground for 69 days being rescued. Imagine after a yearlong battle with cancer the doctor comes in and says he doesn't understand it but the cancer is all gone. Relief!

Now imagine something more staggering, imagine you didn't deserve to be rescued or save, in fact you deserved the opposite. Image you are guilty of the worse crimes and deserve to be cast into "outer darkness" where there is nothing but "weeping and

gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12; 25:30). Now you aren't just feeling great relief, but overwhelming joy at the mercy.

Mercy is not getting what we do deserve.

So if God in His infinite mercy were to remove this glass of righteous and justly deserved eternal wrath and replace it with this empty glass, would this not be cause for infinite gratitude? Would this not be cause for worship?

Look at what we have been delivered from, look what we have been saved from, look what Jesus bore on the cross and took away, look at the wrath Jesus drank.

Can you even feel the difference? Can you wrap your mind around the kindness of God to give us an empty glass? If God never did another thing for us ever, except give us this empty glass, it would be cause to worship Him and follow Him and love Him and sing His praise in heaven for 10,000 years.

If we lived the hardest life a human could live on earth, with the worst problems and greatest sufferings, if this is our glass, it is vastly better than this glass. Our worst nightmares are better than this nightmare that never ends. This is infinitely better than the hell I deserve.

And then if God perhaps out of great love for us, were to take a dropper and give us just the tiniest drop of extra blessing, should we not be blown away by His unbelievable kindness, His covenant kindness, that He would be willing to do this much for us, after all we did to Him.

Would we not be like Peter when he said, "I am not worthy that you should come to me and my house." What is man, who are we, that God should do even this much?

For the Prodigal son mercy would be just being allowed to be a servant in his father's house, just a room out in the barn, just some table scraps, that would be mercy enough.

A glass full of God's grace; full to the brim and overflowing with every spiritual blessing.

So friends, how do you explain this glass? It's not just a full glass, it is overflowing. There is water in the saucer. This is the Gospel.

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

It's not just mercy, it's grace. It's not just not getting what we do deserve, it's getting what we don't deserve.

Ephesians 1:3-8 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, ... according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us.

Every spiritual blessing. From the Gospel there flows thousands upon thousands of gifts and blessings from the heart of God. All things, everything good for us, everything that glorifies God and His grace.

John 1:14, 16 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Philippians 4:19 My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

The glory of the Gospel is not just the spiritual blessings, it's God and His gift to us in Jesus. Jesus is the greatest gift. God might give us all things, but the giver is the best gift.

All of this without the slightest hint of wrath, judgment, punishment.

That we don't get this glass would be enough.

That we get this empty glass would be more than enough.

That we get a drop or two, would be cause for joy.

That we get this glass, indescribable, incomprehensible, more than we could ask or imagine.

This is grace upon grace.

This isn't just the doing of a God who pities us, or feels sorry for us, or just shows us mercy. This is the work of a God who delights in us because of His Son whom He loves.

This is the Prodigal Son's father, lavishing the riches of redemption and salvation on us, pouring out the fulness of His joy. This is cause for worship.

But do we even know this? Do we think this way? Do our earthly troubles seem to outweigh our spiritual riches? Do our personal trials cloud our perspective?

A southern plantation owner died and left a \$50,000 inheritance to one of his former slaves who had served him so faithfully. That was a considerable sum of money. In today's dollars that's over a million dollars. The lawyer for the estate notified the old slave and told him the money was on deposit for him at the local bank.

Months passed and he never came in for any money. Finally the lawyer contacted him again and told him there was \$50,000 in the bank for him whenever he wanted it. The old slave replied to the lawyer, "Sir, do you think I could have fifty cents to buy a sack of cornmeal?"

The old slave had never had money or handled money. He had no comprehension of the wealth that was his.

Paul speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Do the glorious truths of the Gospel remain unsearched by us, unbelieved, unrehearsed? Are we only asking for fifty cents worth? Are we seeking, praying, pressing in to comprehend this thing God has done for us?

Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44). Can we wrap our head around that?

In our last church there were some people who befriended a young single man who was dying of AIDS and he came to repentance and faith in Jesus. Not long before he died he asked if he could read a poem in worship and say thank you. I remember hearing the poem and thinking it was kind of simple, not very eloquent, but genuine and from his heart. It was called, "I'm drinking from my saucer, Cause my cup has overflowed."

Haven't got a lot of riches,
and sometimes the going's tough
But I've got loving ones all around me,
and that makes me rich enough.
I thank God for his blessings,
and the mercies He's bestowed.
I'm drinking from my saucer,
Cause my cup has overflowed.

If God gives me strength and courage,

When the way grows steep and rough.
I'll not ask for other blessings,
I'm already blessed enough.
And may I never be too busy,
to help others bear their loads.
Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer,
Cause my cup has overflowed.

He was dying from AIDS and seeing God's grace as overflowing. In the midst of your trials and troubles do you see the glory of God's Gospel in His unfathomable grace to you? Do you see the terrifying wrath that is removed, the debt that is paid, the sins that are forgiven, even the ones you haven't committed yet? Do you know your adoption, that you are a beloved child of God, that there is a place prepared for you in heaven? Do you see the Gospel has led you to God?

If you are a follower of Jesus, your glass isn't half full, it is overflowing, full beyond measure. Jesus is the fulness of God and by His Spirit He dwells in us, so we have the fulness of God.

What are we praying for? How many prayer requests do we make to find our greatest joy in our Father's delight over us on account of the gospel? Are you praying that pray God loves to hear and to answer, "Lord, show us your glory."

Psalm 116:12-13 What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?
13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

Prayer:

Ephesians 3:14-21 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.