

## An Hour in the Garden

Sunday, May 3, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Luke 22:41-42

“And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’”

- Introduction

Actually Jesus, spent more than one hour in the Garden of Gethsemane that night, but His experience tells us that even He found the choice to do what is right in the eyes of God to be difficult. Sometimes doing what we know is right in the sight of God is easy. We fellowship with people we love, we get together (one way or another), we join in with worship that honors the Lord and unites us as a community. Sometimes doing what is right in the eyes of God is hard. Loving unconditionally when people are unlovable is hard. Turning the other cheek is hard. Practicing doing what is right can discipline us for when the choice is difficult.

- Reinhardt Schwimmer

I don't know if this is a good example or not, but I've been thinking of a fellow named Reinhardt Schwimmer. Schwimmer lived in Chicago with his mother and was an optician. While still very young (29), Schwimmer grew bored with his career and left his practice to gamble and live off of his mother's savings instead. He chose to hang around with men who lived exciting, dangerous and lucrative lives, even if somewhat illegal. I don't think he was ever really accepted by his new friends, but he stuck around anyway. I'd like to think that, at some point, his conscience troubled him and he considered leaving. He might have thought that he needed to grow up, get some help for his gambling addiction, return to his career and take care of his mother, instead of the other way around. Besides, did he really want to stay where he wasn't really welcome? I can only guess, because Reinhardt Schwimmer stayed and was there when he and his friends were rounded up and arrested by the police, except they weren't police. They were assassins sent by Al Capone and Reinhardt Schwimmer, who was not a gangster, died with gangsters at the hands of gangsters on February 14, 1929-the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Sometimes doing the right thing is hard. Sometimes not doing the right thing is dangerous.

- Set the stage

In our passage today, the Lord Jesus is in a very different set of circumstances except that He also is facing a choice in which doing the right thing is hard, but not doing the right thing is dangerous. We know that the Gospels indicated that He was under such anxiety that His perspiration had blood in it and Hebrews (5:6-8) tells us that

He offered up prayers and supplications with cries and tears. As difficult as it was for Him, can you imagine if He had simply said, "no, I won't go"? I believe, because of His great love for humanity, that He was constrained to do so but He had no legal obligation to us to go to the cross. He did not owe it to us to go to the cross, but how dangerous for us it would have been if He had not done so. But He came out of that place of anguish and decision and told His disciple Peter, who had drawn a sword, "put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" (John 18:11)

- The cup symbolizes destiny

There is much to the symbolism of the bread and the cup on the Sacrament of Communion. I've mentioned before that when we take the cup, we are making a statement, saying that when the Lord partakes of the fruit of the vine in His Father's kingdom we want to be there with us. That cup, in a broader sense, also symbolizes destiny. In Matthew, James and John have the audacity to ask Jesus the privilege of sitting at His right and left hand in His kingdom. They wanted authority. But look at the response of Jesus. *But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those whom it is prepared by My Father."* (Matthew 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-39) James was the first disciple to be martyred, and John died of old age, having survived numerous attempts on his life. The cup represents destiny, and when Jesus took the cup, symbolically, He took the destiny of the cross and of hell for our sins. When we take the cup we are saying that we are willing to follow Him all our days, facing whatever comes, in order to be there in His Father's kingdom.

- Conclusion

"Cup" is symbolic of destiny, fate or God's will in your life. A good thing to remember when partaking in Holy Communion. Jesus faced the cross as "the cup the Father has given" Him, and we partake of the cup looking forward to heaven in this Sacrament. We also make a vow with this cup. We will follow Christ, whatever comes our way. We will stay true to Him till death, and look forward to seeing Him beyond death.