

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

### 13 Scott Powell Can You Drink the Chalice I'm Going to Drink

Hi, everybody, welcome back to the Pray More Lenten Retreat, this is Scott Powell. And today I want to talk about a rather odd question that the disciples ask of Jesus and a rather odd answer that Jesus gives back. So, we'll get there in a minute. Let's open in prayer.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Jesus, thank you for the gifts of this Lenten season. Thank you for the gift of this retreat and all of those who are walking along side of us as we journey through this season together. Pray that you would open our minds, our eyes, our ears and our hearts to what you have to teach us. Be with all the retreatants, with the speakers and with all the organizers and we pray that we would understand what you have to teach us in this beautiful season. So we pray all these things through Christ, our Lord, amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, amen.*

All right, so in the gospel of Mark, chapter 10, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He's been ministering, He's been teaching, He's been preaching, He's been healing, He's been doing all these amazing things. And now with His disciples, He's starting to make His way towards Jerusalem where He will be crucified and He will go through His passion, He'll get into debates with the religious leaders, He will give His life for us and He'll rise again. But on His way, you can kind of follow the progression of Jesus' journey down there with His disciples, that as He goes along, Jesus' teachings get more and more intense, the closer He gets to Jerusalem. And a number of times, three specifically in the Gospel of Mark at least, He will predict and He will tell his disciples precisely what's going to happen to them, to Him, rather. And each time he does this, they won't get it. They'll be totally blind.-Which is not super surprising if you read the gospels at any length, cause the apostles, often, are kind of blind and deaf to stuff. But this one's an interesting, particular case of it.

So, I want to read from Mark, chapter 10 and I'm going to look at verse 32. It says this, says *"They were on the road, the way, going up to Jerusalem and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were a little bit afraid because some people are starting to catch on. In talking with the 12 again, He began to tell them what was going to happen. He said, behold we are going up to Jerusalem and the son of man will be delivered to the chief priest and the scribes and they will condemn him to death and they will deliver him to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit upon him and scourge him, and kill him.*

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

*And after three days he will rise. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee came forward to him, and they said to him, teacher." You ready for this? "We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."* Jesus has just given the most explicit pronouncement of His passion and His suffering and His crucifixion that He's given yet. It's the third time He's warned them about what's to come, and this is by far the most R-rated version of them. They're going to spit and mock and scourge and all of these horrible things, and Jesus has just conveyed to His closest friends, this horrible thing that's about to happen.

And his closest friends response to him, is, "Hey, we want you to do stuff for us." Which is kind of absurd if you actually read what's going on here, but the apostles, one of the things that they sort of demonstrate throughout the course of their travels with Jesus, is that they really do begin to understand that Jesus is King. They really do understand that Jesus is a Messiah, but I don't think they understand yet what kind of Messiah and what kind of king Jesus actually is. -Because they're expecting a political Messiah.

Now they seem to understand that God is doing something significant with this guy, that He has the power of the Holy Spirit, that there's something more here. He's different than their other political leaders. But their eyes have not fully been opened yet. That's going to happen later on at Pentecost. So for now, they're still confused. And so Jesus is talking about these things that are going to happen to Him, and they are tunnel visioned, they are like: King, power, glory, going to Jerusalem, that's the capital city. He's finally going to make a move, maybe he's going to call out the powers that be, maybe we're going to start a battle, go to war, we don't know, but we want the good stuff. Once this kingdom that he keeps promising comes to fruition, we want the thrones, we want the glory, we want the authority, Jesus.

So they say: "we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you". We're coming along with you, we're following with you, and we're trudging along this path. So we need you to give something back to us. And Jesus, after having pronounced the worst thing that could possibly happen to Him, to his closest group of friends, has the almost ridiculous response of, "All right, what do you want me to do for you? Let's hear it. Give your request."

So Jesus said, *"What do you want me to do for you?"* Verse 37, they said to him, *"Grant us to sit, one at your right-hand and one at your left, in your glory. We want the thrones, we want the authority, we want to sit on the big, fancy chairs to the right and the left of the king. Because that's gonna show everybody how powerful we are. We want the association, we want to sit at your right and at your*

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

*left when you become king.*" Or, "when you come into your glory," rather. -That's important.

It says, But Jesus said to them, *"you don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink? Or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized"*? And they said, yeah, sure, we're able, no problem. And Jesus said to them, *"the cup that I drink you will drink, and the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But to sit at my right and my left, is not mine to give but it is for those who it has been prepared"*.

And ironically, when Jesus begins to come into His glory, when He's elevated on the cross, He is surrounded on His right and on His left by rebellious thieves, murderers, and revolutionaries. One of whom has the eyes to see him, one does not. That is what has been prepared. He says to James and John, *"There's something else for you, there's something more."*

But I want to unpack what he says here. He says, *"Can you drink the cup and can you be baptized with the baptism"*? So I want to talk about the cup and I want to talk about the baptism because the cup seems like something a little bit abstract, but for many of us, baptism is something we actually do have an association with. Many of us have been baptized; maybe all of us have been baptized. But Jesus seems to have a particular view of what that baptism means, so we need to unpack that.

Now, the cup, let's talk about that just a little bit first. There's a handful of different times throughout the course of the gospels that Jesus mentions the cup. The most significant one or the most prominent one perhaps is when He's in the Garden of Gethsemane. The night before He goes through His passion and He's praying in agony, knowing what is waiting for Him and He prays to the Father that this cup may pass. *"If it be your will, may this cup pass me, but not my will, but Yours be done."* And it seems very clear that the cup that He is talking about is the cup of the passion, the cup of the crucifixion that's on His way.

And so when the apostles say, "Hey, we want the good stuff," He says, "Are you able to take what comes along with it because you cannot get to Easter Sunday unless you go through Good Friday. The cross is what leads to the resurrection, are you able to drink it?" And he says, "Actually you will drink the cup. You guys don't see it yet, your eyes are still closed." He doesn't say that but that's what we see. *"But you will drink the cup,"* and he says, *"you will be baptized."* And that's what I want to talk about for the rest of our time, the baptism.

Now I want to turn back to Mark's account of Jesus' baptism. It's in chapter one, it's how he begins the whole Gospel. And I just want to note a couple things about it because knowing how Mark portrays Jesus' baptism; I think can actually give us

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

some insights into our own baptism and how Jesus sees our baptisms. So in the very beginning of the Gospel of Mark, it says this, it's in do-do-do, chapter one of Mark, I'm going to start in verse nine. So John the Baptist, is out in the wilderness in the Jordan, baptizing people. And the baptism that John the Baptist is performing is not a sacramental baptism as we understand it. We think that what he's doing is sort of a symbolic baptism. People are coming out, they're repenting of their sins and John is baptizing them with water saying, "This is symbolically washing you away of your sins, of all these things that you've done." So it's an external sign of an internal reality, an internal change. It's how many of our protestant friends think of baptism- sort of an external, symbolic reality. But he says, somebody's coming who's going to totally change the game, he's going to flip it on its head. I'm baptizing you with merely water, he is going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

So he sets it up, and then in chapter one, verse nine, it says, *"In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and he was baptized by John in the Jordan."* And you know, Matthew and some of the other gospels give us more of the conversation where John kind of hems and haws and he's like, "Oh, I can't baptize you, you're so much greater. You need to baptize me." And he's like, "No, baptize me" and the straps of the sandals thing. John hems and haws for a while but eventually he concedes, and he's like, "Fine, I'll baptize you, even though it really should be you baptizing me." But Jesus says, "No, you need to do this". And when he came up out of the water of the Jordan river, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove and a voice came from heaven and said, *"Thou art my beloved son, with thee I am well pleased."* And it says from there, *"The Spirit drove him into the wilderness and he was tempted for 40 days by Satan."* - Which is where we get Lent, the 40 days that we fast and walk with God through it. It comes from this moment.

A couple things about the baptism, though. It is believed that the spot where Jesus was baptized is, elevation-wise, the lowest place on the face of the Earth. -Which the first time I heard that fact, I was totally taken back by it. The fact that Jesus' baptism takes place, we believe, at the lowest point on the face of the Earth is incredible. Because what it means is that Jesus enters into not only our humanity, but our smallness, our weakness, our frailty, our sinfulness and He takes on our humanity, and He begins to bring it up, out of the water, up the mountain, up to Calvary, where we actually see our humanity elevated and that elevation becomes the ultimate gift of sacrifice. But it's significant that He's baptized where He is, I think it's kind of beautiful. But as He comes up out of the water, what Mark tells us is a couple of things. Says, "He immediately saw the heavens opened." Now, the word that shows up in Greek, Mark was written in Greek, and the word that shows

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

up in Greek for open is not the same as like, you open a door. That's a different word in Greek. The word that shows up here in Mark is the work *schizo*. -Which is kind of a fun, Greek word to know.

*Schizo* is where we get schizophrenic, or schism. But it's a very visceral word, and it doesn't just mean to open something, it means to rip or tear or shred something. And that's the way that Mark portrays what happens at the baptism. The heavens were ripped open. And as the heavens are ripped open, the Spirit descends on Jesus. And who else is present with him? -John the Baptist. Who is John the Baptist? Well, Jesus tells us later that John the Baptist is like a new Elijah.

The Old Testament said, "*Before the Messiah shows up, Elijah will come back and prepare the way.*" Jesus says, "Hey, John was Elijah." So at Jesus' baptism, you have the heavens opened, you have the Spirit descending, and you have Elijah present. And that baptism, you have the words of the Father, actually, I wasn't going to mention this, this is the first place in the whole Bible, this is cool. This is the first place in the whole Bible, where the entire Trinity is explicitly present. So you have God the Father speaking from heaven, God the Son being baptized in the water, and God the Holy Spirit descending upon him in the form of a dove. -Which is beautiful. The whole Trinity is explicitly present. They all show up for Jesus' baptism. It's like the family all coming out for the baptism.

But for Jesus, it's not just a baptism, there's something else going on here as well. When the Father speaks, what the Father says from heaven is actually a quote. He quotes Psalm 2. And Psalm 2 says, "*Thou art my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.*" And it's believed that Psalm 2 was written by David, Israel's most famous king. And it's believed that he wrote Psalm 2 on the occasion of the coronation of his son, Solomon. So that this line, this Psalm which God the Father says, is what all Israelite kings spoke over their sons when they received their crown, - their identity as king.

So we're not just talking about Jesus' baptism, I think we're also in a certain sense talking about his coronation. That's what the Father says which is why the whole family comes out, the whole Trinity's there. Jesus is crowned. And as soon as he is crowned, so to speak, He's going to receive a crown of thorns to make it even more explicit later, but this is his coronation with his Father. And as soon as that happens, what? He goes out into the wilderness.

Well, what's the wilderness? Well, for the ancient Jews, the wilderness was where they believed was the domain of Satan. Where the evil one dwelled, it was scary, there were wild beasts who could eat you, there were thieves that could rob you. It was terrifying. And so Jesus goes there because every good leader, every good politician. What's the political slogan you hear all the time? No matter who the

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

politician, right. "I'm gonna fight for you," right. From the local mayor to the President, to, it's such a common theme in campaigns. "I will fight for you." So what do we expect our king to do once he becomes crowned? -To fight for us. And so Jesus goes from his coronation into the wilderness to pick a fight, which is really what he does. That's where he believed the evil one, sort of reside over, people believed he resided. And Jesus goes to pick a fight. He doesn't have the full fight. That will happen on Good Friday, but he picks it on the day of his baptism, or right after his baptism. That's what we're actually living in Lent, is Jesus going and fasting. And some saints made the analogy it's like a boxer tying one arm around his back so that when he actually has the huge fight, you realize how powerful he actually is. He fasts for 40 days. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, most of us we're all required to fast and, you know, by like 10 o'clock on Ash Wednesday morning, I'm ready to kill everybody. I'm miserable, I'm grumpy. Fasting's hard. And so imagine doing it for over a month, is insane. That's amazing to me. And then, Jesus goes and picks a fight, which is amazing. To demonstrate how powerful He is. It's like tying an arm around His back and going into the battle.

So what does that have to do with the disciple's question? Well, fast forward. At the very end of Jesus' Earthly life before his crucifixion, the way that Mark portrays the story, is very similar to the way that he portrays the baptism scene. So with Jesus' crucifixion, a couple things happen. We're told that as Jesus was crucified, He breathed out His Spirit, and as He breathes out His Spirit, Mark tells you that the veil in the temple, the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies, the presence of God, from all the rest of the temple, it was, what? It's the only other time this word shows up. It was *schizo'd*, - it was ripped. And we know from some Jewish historians that if you were to look at that big curtain, that veil in the temple, what it had on it was a picture of the constellations, the heavens, the stars. So as Jesus breathes out his Spirit at his crucifixion, the heavens in the temple are ripped open. And who is there?

Well, there's a weird line in the gospel of Mark where as Jesus breathes out his Spirit he says, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani". -Where he cries out to God. There's some random dude, who's standing around the cross and he says, "Oh, look, he's crying out to Elijah." Remember that? -Which has always struck me as strange because it's wrong, Jesus wasn't crying out to Elijah. But I get the impression that Mark really wanted to include Elijah in the story because he wanted you to tie together Jesus' baptism, where you have Elijah, the heavens being ripped open and the Spirit descending, to the crucifixion, where you have Elijah's name present, the Spirit coming out, and the heavens being ripped open. And what that means is that Jesus' baptism, what Mark is trying to tell you is that Jesus' baptism is what

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

pledges him to the cross. It's what ties him to what is to come. Which kind of sounds depressing, unless you realize that the Gospel of Mark was believed to be written to a Christian community, living in Rome in the first century, who were being utterly persecuted and really beaten down. And you have a community of new believers who are getting persecuted and terrorized and everything is horrible, who may be thinking in themselves, "Jeez, I thought I followed the right guy".

If we're following the true Savior of the world, the real Messiah, why is it so hard? Why do we keep getting so beat up? Why does the cross keep showing up? And what Mark wants you to know is that if you feel like you keep carrying the cross and it feels too heavy for you, and you feel like everybody's out to get you and you feel like nothing is working out the way it's supposed to, well you're in good company. Because your baptism, pledges you to Jesus and Jesus is pledged to the cross. And if we're baptized, we get to walk with Him. But not in a way that leaves us alone. Not in a way that we're left alone with this big, heavy cross and we just got to suck it up. No, this is the point of Christianity, when we receive our baptism, we also have the echo of those words of God the Father to his son, and we become His beloved sons and daughters with whom He is well pleased. But it also means we're united with Him on His way to the cross. And we're going to face the cross and we're going to face trials and hardships and it's the one thing Jesus assures those who follow him.

He doesn't say, "If you follow me, you're going to get a really nice house, and a super fast car and a bunch of money and a well-paying job and everything else," no. He says, "If you follow me, you're going to have the cross and you got to take it up, and if you really want to come after me, that's the way to do it." And so he promises his disciples, James and John, who ask a bone-headed question. He's like, "You are going to be baptized, and you are going to enter into this." But what he's implying is you're not going to have to do it alone. You're not going to receive the glory that you think you want right now, but eventually your eyes will be open and because of the baptism that you share in me, the son ship that you share in my identity, I'm going to give you the grace to do the impossible.

Jesus doesn't come and suffer so that we don't have to. Jesus comes and suffers and carries his cross so that we are able to. He empowers us, he doesn't just, and it's not a get-out-of-jail-free card to follow Jesus. It's not a "Follow me and everything'll be awesome." It's, - Follow me and I will give you the ability to do what seems impossible. And actually have joy so that you can face trials and face down the cross and know that the cross cannot defeat the son of the living God, the cross cannot defeat the one who came into the world because the cross is not the end.

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

Good Friday leads to Easter Sunday and without Good Friday, we can't make it to Easter Sunday. And without Jesus, and the grace given to us in our baptism, we can't make it, either. So this is actually really, good news. And when Jesus reminds his apostles that, "Yeah, you're going to have these things, they're coming, it just won't look like what you thought it was going to look like." He also gives them the power to do it. He gives them that grace. And so as we trudge through this Lent, as we accompany Jesus, let's pray that we can see the grace that He gives us to do the impossible-seeming things in our lives, too.

Thanks, everybody.