

**John 18:11 + Shall I Not Drink the Cup the Father Has Given Me? + Series: Cross Examination
Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY + Lenten Midweek #6 + 21 March 2018**

“I object! Your Honor, I object!” In practically every courtroom drama you watch on TV or in the movies, you’ll find objections. One lawyer attempts to block the question of another lawyer as he questions a witness. Maybe the lawyer objects because the answer will reveal something incriminating about his client. Maybe the question will twist the testimony against his client. When the lawyer raises an objection, the judge either overrules the objection and allows the questioning to continue or sustains the objection and stops the line of questioning.

Now our Lord Jesus was a master at handling objections—not because he was a skilled lawyer, but because he is the all-knowing God. Even during his final days, Jesus skillfully handled every objection. Sometimes Jesus only needed a word or a statement, but tonight right before Jesus is hauled away to trial, he silences one more objection with a simple question. **“Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”**

We find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. A band of temple guards and religious leaders gathered around him led by Judas. Jesus’ disciples stand behind him filled with fear, but it wasn’t fear that filled Jesus’ heart. Minutes before the mob’s arrival, Jesus had been wrestling in prayer with his heavenly Father. Jesus had prayed that his Father would take **“the cup”** from him.

Now to our 21st century American ears, that concept of **“the cup”** might sound really strange. What did Jesus mean? In the Old Testament, God’s prophets often described people who experienced God’s anger as “drinking from the cup of God’s wrath.” When Jesus entered the Garden earlier that evening, he knew that the cup of God’s anger was being lifted to his lips. Soon he would have to drink that cup to its last drop and face God’s holy wrath for the sins of all people. Because Jesus was truly human, thinking of what he was about to endure filled him with great sorrow and grief. So he prayed. **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me...”**

...But what do you hear from the Father? What was God’s response? Silence. You see, there was no other way for Jesus to accomplish the work he had been sent to do. Jesus understood his Father’s silence and willingly submitted to his Father’s will to drink that awful cup of suffering prepared for him. Ready and willing to drink that cup to its last drop, we find Jesus offering himself to his enemies to be sacrificed.

Jesus was ready. Jesus was willing, but just because Jesus submitted to his Father’s will didn’t mean that his disciples were ready to see that happen. As Jesus stepped forward to offer himself to his enemies, Simon Peter drew his sword. He wasn’t no professional warrior. He was a fisherman with no control over where he was swinging that sword. In the process he struck a servant named Malchus and cut off the man’s ear. Immediately, Jesus told him, **“Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”**

Jesus knew beyond the shadow of a doubt what he had come to do. He had resolved to put that cup to his lips and drain it to the last bitter drop, but in a slightly comical, yet violent way, Peter objected to Jesus suffering. That’s why he pulled out his sword, but he should’ve known better!

Peter and the disciples had spent years listening and learning from Jesus. Yet they never could reconcile themselves to the fact that their friend and teacher had come to give his life as the payment for their sins. Peter himself had objected to this very fact months before when Jesus explained to his disciples the need for him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of his enemies. Peter had taken Jesus aside and objected, **“Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!”** (Matthew 16:12) Peter still had the same wrong attitude there in the Garden. He wanted glory and majesty for Jesus. He couldn’t see why Jesus had to die.

Peter’s objections are still alive today. People want a Jesus who is warm and friendly or victorious and successful, not a Jesus who suffers a bloody death for their sins. People want a Jesus who will get you what you want or who will make your life easier or more prosperous or will make your family or your marriage better. People want a Jesus who will cure the world of war and hunger and poverty and violence and division or a Jesus who gives people a good example for living a good life. People usually don’t want a Jesus who suffers and dies under God’s curse to free them their guilt and sin.

Has some of that thinking crept into your mind? Do you ever feel embarrassed about how bloody God’s plan of salvation really was? Do you ever feel ashamed to confess a God who is not a loving grandfather who ignores sin and welcomes everyone into heaven regardless of what you believe, but rather a God who punishes sin with death and whose wrath can only be satisfied by the sacrifice of his Son? In such shame-filled moment, Jesus turns to us and asks, **“Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”** With that question, Jesus silences our objections.

Jesus reminds us that God the Father's way to save you and me had to go through the cross. Jesus had to die for us to live. Our holy God demands either perfect obedience in thought, word, and deed or death for any disobedience whatsoever. Of course, since we are all sinners, not a single one of us has ever lived up to that requirement. So our God, who is not only holy, but also overflowing with compassionate love, came up with a plan.

That plan focused on his one and only Son. Jesus would live under the Law, obey it perfectly as the substitute for all, and then die under the Law to satisfy the Law's demands for punishment. That meant drinking the cup of God's wrath on the cross down to its last bitter drop. When he was done, Jesus cried out, **"It is finished!"** (John 19:30), and God confirmed Jesus' work by raising him from the dead. In so doing, he overruled our objections and declared us not guilty. The Apostle Paul explained it well when he wrote, "[Jesus] **was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**" (Romans 4:25)

So instead of being ashamed of our God who punishes sin with the bloody death of his Son, we proudly proclaim the love of that same God, love that moved him to sacrifice his one and only Son for us. We proudly proclaim the gracious love of Christ that moved him to submit to the undeserved sentence of death in our place. **"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"** With that question, Jesus silences to one of our objections, but that question also answers another objection—the objection of our own suffering.

Jesus wasn't the only one facing suffering. His followers face the same. Jesus once told his disciples: **"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master."** (Matthew 10:24-25a) If Jesus suffered, we shouldn't be surprised when we as his followers also face suffering in our lives.

...But who of us wants to experience that? I don't know of anyone who enjoys suffering. We wonder, "Why do I have to suffer when others seem okay without it?" Suffering comes in the form of an illness or the loss of a job or the death of a loved one. Suffering comes in the way a classmate or a co-worker or even a loved one treats you. Suffering comes when you take heat for being a Christian.

At times like that, we find a bitter cup of suffering pressed up against our lips. Many simply refuse to drink it. They absolutely will not deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus. They will not accept God's will for their lives without grumbling. They refuse to drink the cup that the Lord has poured out for them. How often don't we feel the same?

At times like that, we again need to hear Jesus ask, **"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"** With that question, he responds to our objections to suffering. He reminds us that even as we suffer, we are still in the hand of our heavenly Father, who loves us and who demonstrated his own love for us in this. **"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** (Romans 5:8)

Jesus reminds us that even through suffering, he will bless us and others just as his suffering resulted in eternal blessings for us. Perhaps through suffering, the Lord will help you grow in patience and perseverance. Perhaps through suffering, he will replace your self-confidence with humility. Perhaps through suffering, he will draw you closer to him or his Word or his people or perhaps he simply plans to reveal his glory in your life.

When you face suffering in your life, you can respond as Jesus did, **"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"** You can willingly submit to your heavenly Father's holy will. You can entrust all things, even your sufferings, to the gracious hands of your Savior and trust that he will strengthen you and your faith through his Word. You can pray to your heavenly Father to grant you a willing spirit to sustain you even in suffering.

"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" That clear question puts to rest our objections—our objections to Christ's suffering and to our own. That question moves us to proclaim what Christ's suffering accomplished for us. That question moves us to see that God can even use our own suffering for our good and for the good of his people. Praise our suffering Savior who drank the cup of God's wrath that we might live in him and with him forever! Amen.