

## **If We Are Committed**

*October 18, 2009*

Mark 10: 35-45

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Twenty-five years ago this month, I was committed to attending the Texas vs. Oklahoma football game.

Twenty-five years ago this month, in 1984, the Texas Longhorns were ranked # 1 in the country and the Oklahoma Sooners were ranked # 2 by the UPI Coaches Poll.

Since the Red River Rivalry that year was a rare matchup between the # 1 & # 2 teams in the land, tickets into the Cotton Bowl stadium for the game were almost impossible to come by.

At the time, I was in my junior year at the University of Texas and a committed Longhorn fan.

So, a few weeks before that big game, I began working the phones and my connections to try to snag a ticket.

Finally, on the Thursday before the game, I called my cousin in Dallas to see if he could get me a ticket.

My cousin was a hot-shot real estate developer in Dallas at the time – and he told me that he could call in some favors to get me 2 tickets to the Texas/OU game.

So off to Dallas I went.

I ended up staying that Friday night before the game on the couch of a friend whose parents lived in Dallas.

And as I woke up the next morning, I heard a strange hissing noise outside.

I looked out of the window and saw that it was just pouring buckets of rain outside. So on the way to the State Fair grounds for the game, my buddy and I stopped at a grocery store to buy plastic garbage bags, which we then cut armholes in to fashion make-shift rain ponchos.

The atmosphere at the Cotton Bowl for the hard fought rivalry game was electric. And for over three hours, I pulled for my Longhorns in the pouring down rain, while peering out of a green plastic garbage bag.

For over three hours, I sat in a wet puddle on the bleachers, until the game ended in a 15 to 15 tie.

For over three hours, I was so glad to just be there inside the stadium - and to drink deeply of the experience.

And I remember all of those things, both the glory and the sacrifice,  
Because I was committed.

Jesus' followers, James and John, only want the glory.

Jesus' followers, James and John, want *all* of the glory, but without the sacrifice  
and the commitment.

In a gutsy and brazen moment, James and John come forward to Jesus with a  
request:

“Teacher, we want sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

But Jesus replies to them:

“You do not know what you are asking.

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?”

For the cup that Jesus drinks is not just the cup of glory.

The cup that Jesus drinks is the cup of sacrifice.

The cup that Jesus drinks is the cup of commitment.

And Jesus asks each of us this morning the same question that he asked of James  
and John:

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?

For 8 weeks now in Adult Sunday School, we have participated in an interfaith  
dialogue on religion.

A few weeks ago, Al Siddiq, who is the President of the Islamic Community of  
Waco, came to speak to us, representing the religion of Islam.

Now many of you might already know that Muslims, those who practice the  
religion of Islam, are deeply committed to the practice of prayer.

Muslims are committed to praying 5 times a day, praying in approximately 15  
minute chunks of time all throughout the day.

When Al Siddiq was here to talk about Islam, I asked him if he, personally, was  
committed to the Muslim practice of praying 5 times each day.

And Al answered that, yes indeed, he was committed to praying 5 times a day.

My next question was how he, in our modern American society, was able to find  
time in his busy day to pray so often.

Al's answer was that we find the time to do the things that we consider important.

Because if we can find the time to watch TV shows such as “American Idol” or “Dancing with the Stars,” then we can find the time to pray.

If we can find the time to goof off on our iPhones or on our Blackberries or on Facebook, then we can find the time to pray.

If we can find the time to play a round of golf or to shop at the mall or to tinker around in the kitchen, then we can find the time to pray.

From listening to Al Siddiq, I realized that Muslims are able to pray 5 times a day, Because they are committed.

Imagine what the Christian Church would be like –

If we all promised today to become as committed to the practice of prayer as our Muslim sisters and brothers are?

This morning, Jesus asks us:

Are you able to drink deeply from the cup of prayer?

We are able – *if*, we are committed.

When we were baptized, we all made a commitment, a commitment that we call the Baptismal Covenant.

In that commitment, we made the promise at our Baptism that we will worship God, every week, at the very least.

When we worship weekly here at St. Alban’s, each week we renew our commitment to following Jesus Christ.

When we attend weekly worship, we come up to this altar to drink from the cup of salvation.

When we attend weekly worship, we drink deeply from the cup of sacrifice and commitment.

Now I realize that when we commit ourselves to weekly worship - every Sunday, this means that we will sacrifice doing something else.

When we commit ourselves to weekly worship, this means that we will sometimes tell our friends on Saturday night that we need to get to bed a little earlier, because we have the privilege and the joy to worship Jesus with this community the next day.

This means that we will sometimes cut a weekend trip short, so that we will keep the commitment that we made to God at our Baptism.

This means that we will not stay in bed or grab an extra cup of coffee on Sundays, but we will get up and take a shower- and sacrifice a little more than an hour to worship the God who loves us and forgives us, no matter what.

For it is an interesting commentary on our commitment to the weekly worship of Jesus –

That football stadiums can be packed with thousands of people who will sit for hours in the pouring down rain.

Yet two weeks ago, when we had a rainy Sunday here in Waco, attendance in worship at St. Alban's was almost cut in half.

This morning, Jesus asks us:

Are you able to drink deeply from the cup of weekly worship, every Sunday?

We are able – *if*, we are committed.

There is a great hymn of the Church titled, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” the hymn that we sang a moment ago.

The words of this hymn sing of Jesus' amazing love for us, as the hymn concludes:

“Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Jesus' love for us is so amazing - that our joyful response is to give our soul, our life, our all, to him.

Jesus' love for us is so amazing - that our joyful response is to drink deeply from the cup of prayer and worship,

To drink deeply from the cup of commitment.

This morning, Jesus asks each of us the same question that he asked of James and John:

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?

We *are* able – *if*, we are committed.

AMEN.