

“Jesus, Henri and the Cup of Life...”

29/7/18

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

This is my cup.

It is my favourite cup.

It is small, stained, blue and white. It is made in China.

I acknowledge that it doesn't look like much of a cup but it is my cup and furthermore, it is my favourite.

Why would this cup be my favourite when teachers are given so many cups as end of year presents?

Well, this cup represents so much of my life journey. It was originally part of a set of eight given to Shannon's Mum and me as a house warming gift by my mother-in-law. There are only two left in my home today. This cup is my favourite as it has travelled through so many of my life adventures with me... my marriage, my first home, the birth of Shannon, my various teaching posts and even my ordination. It is also scarred. It is stained. It is not perfect, much like my life...

This morning I would like to explore the idea of Henri J.M. Nouwen's book entitled, "Can you drink the cup?"

This is a powerful book presented to us by the Revd Erica Murray on our recent Community of the Resurrection Retreat held at Schoenstatt.

Before we can appreciate the message that Henri has for us this morning, we need to appreciate a bit of his background.

Henri was a Dutch Catholic Priest, professor, writer and theologian. His interests were rooted primarily in psychology, pastoral ministry, spirituality, social justice and community. He writes books that are intense, deep and reflective, as well as personal. What stands out for me is his specific ministry

working and living with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the L'Arche Daybreak Community in Richmond Hill, Ontario. These experiences is what give Henri the "grit" and "experience" of seeing the love of God in action...

This little book challenges the way we see ourselves as Christians.

Henri begins the book by posing the same question that Jesus posed to his friends James and John, the sons of Zebedee, "Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?"

Can you and I drink from the cup that Jesus drank?

What does this question mean for us as Christians living in the world today?

Firstly, as Christians, we need to be able to hold the cup before we can drink from it! Holding our cup is deeply symbolic of us being able to "hold" our lives too. This means we have the capacity and maturity to reflect upon our lives, who we are, where we have come from and where we are going to. You see, a life that is not reflected upon is not a life worth living. We all have the gift of reflective consciousness. Do we exercise it?

Reflection is essential for growth, development and change. It is our unique power if we choose to use it. Part of holding our cup is looking critically at what we are living. This requires discipline. It is hard. It takes courage. You may be holding your cup of life and be asking questions like:

What am I given to drink?

What is in the cup?

Is it safe to drink?

Is it good for me?

Will it bring me health?

You see, we don't always know what our cup of life holds, BUT it is our cup of life and ours alone. Only you can drink from it.

I am reminded of a Face Book post I wrote last week...

In life, we are all dealt a set of cards. It is our legacy and inheritance. There will always be people with a perceived "better" or "worse" set of cards than ourselves. The difference is, the cards we have in our hands are ours and ours alone. We can either choose to play them in the game of life to the best of our ability, using all they have to offer, or we can spend our lives wishing for another set, hiding one card under the table or even cheating. The choice is ours. Play wisely. We only have one set...

You see, we need to understand that the same cup of life that we drink from can also be our cup of sorrow... it is part of being human and a Christian. When Jesus drank from His cup, he was not only partaking in His own sorrow, but also the sorrow of the human race. Our cups are also cups full of physical mental and spiritual anguish. Our cups may hold starvation, torture, loneliness, rejection, abandonment and immense anguish.

But, it is part of our journey to drink our cup of life to the dregs... we cannot bypass or exclude any pain that our cups of life may hold.

But, our cups of life can also be cups of joy!

You see, as much as our cups can be full of sorrow and heartache, they can also be full of joy. When we drink our cups to the lees, we partake also in the risen and glorified Christ whose actions saved the world and ensured salvation for humanity. We become part of His joy and victory when we partake of our cup of life. Sorrow and joy cannot be separated. They are part of the same journey.

Secondly, when we lift our cups we are saying a BIG yes to life, to life in Jesus and to one another. When we lift our cups to our lips to drink we are affirming our faith in Jesus, as well as setting an example to those around us who are hesitant or nervous to lift their cups of life. Lifting our cups together is part of embracing and celebrating our lives together.

Thirdly, our cups should also be seen as our cups of blessings! When we partake in our lives in a full and meaningful way with Jesus, we will always be blessed with His presence and love. This is a blessing that no-one can ever take

away from us. It is our legacy and heritage. We need to cherish and appreciate being able to hold and drink our cups so that we can be blessed.

When we drink from the cup of life, we acknowledge and take on our unique journey and life in Jesus. We accept that we will all have ups and downs. We take full responsibility for ourselves and our journey of faith. You see, by partaking of the cup of life, we become part of the salvation story.

How do we become part of the salvation story?

We drink our cup in silence, as this gives us time to reflect upon our lives and our journey together in faith.

We drink our cup in community, sharing and loving one another.

We drink our cup in action, living our lives in the world and making a difference.

I would like to close with a quote this morning directly from Henri's book:

"Jesus' inviting us to drink the cup without offering the reward we expect is the great challenge of the spiritual life. It breaks through all human calculations and expectations. It defies all our wishes to be sure in advance. It turns our hope for a predictable future upside down and pulls down our self-invented safety net. It asks for the most radical trust in God, the same trust that made Jesus drink the cup to the bottom." (1996:107)

We all have a cup of life in front of us.

We all have the choice to drink from it freely and boldly, or timidly and with great anxiety.

Jesus drank from His cup of life so that we might drink and live freely in His name.

This takes courage and faith.

Are you ready to hold, lift and drink your cup to the lees?

May God bless you this week ahead as you drink from His cup of life.

Amen.

