

When the World Attacks

Romans 8:28-39

Introduction

Our Gospel lesson is one of the more famous stories about James, who we celebrate today, and his brother John. They were probably closer to Jesus than anyone else, except Peter and they were lobbying for the good seats at the head table. But think about it, how could they flank Jesus when **verse 34** of our Epistle reading and **Hebrew 1:13** say that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father? Who were the two that those places were prepared for? We must understand that while James and John were thinking of the afterlife, Jesus associated His glory with the cross, where He achieved His greatest victory (**John 8:28; 12:32**). Those two places were prepared for the thieves who would die with Jesus.

Baptism & Cup

Jesus turns the tables with a question of His own in **verse 38**, *“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized?”* Baptism here is the same as cup. Cup refers to suffering (**John 18:11; Luke 22:42**). So, all of these, baptism, cup, and glory, are pointing to the cross. The thing we must remember, living on this side of the cross, is that Christ’s glory still points us to the cross.

If God Is for Us

Today, we are tempted to have a theology of victory. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (**Romans 8:31**) *We are more than conquerors* (**Romans 8:37**) “Alleluia! He is risen!” We must remember how Martin Luther operated from a theology of the cross. Yes, He is risen and He’s coming again as the conquering King. But He won the victory on the cross. If we ignore or downplay that, we lose the victory.

Real Suffering

Paul doesn’t discount suffering; he knows it’s very real (**Romans 8:35-36**). He was no stranger to suffering, either (**2 Corinthians 11:23-25**).

The Love of God

Of course, when we face suffering, when it becomes real to us, we are tempted to ask, “Does God really care?” Here is why we cling to the theology of the cross. *He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?* (**Romans 8:32**). Paul is not saying that because Jesus died, we should have it easy. But, because He already won the victory on the cross, He is with us when we face our crosses. Also, He was raised and is at the right hand of God interceding for us (**v. 34**). Biblically, the right hand is associated with power (**Exodus 15:6**). Jesus didn’t just die for us; He lives for us as our Lord (**v. 39**) and intercedes for us in power.

More than Conquerors

We can see that we are more than conquerors when we remember that when we suffer, Jesus has already been there. He has already faced the cross. He won the victory on the cross and lives to intercede for us in power. When we share in His suffering we share in His glory.

Are Ye Able?

Of course, the answer to the question, *are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?* (**Mark 10:38**) is no, not in ourselves. We cannot face our crosses alone. So, He has given us His Spirit to enable and empower us. He has also given us the gift of Communion. When we receive the body and blood of our Savior, He forgives our sins and strengthens our faith, making us able to face the world when it attacks. And it will attack. But we can withstand the attacks of the world and the devil when we rest in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
