

# Shepherd of the Mountains

Lutheran Church (LC-MS)

2035 S. Penrod Lane, Pinetop, AZ 85935

Ph/fax: (928) 367-1183 E-mail: shepherdpt@frontiernet.net

www.shepherdofthemountains.com

Pastor: R. Wayne Morton

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 18 2018

“I’m Gonna Die!”

Text: Mark 10:38

“Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’”

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:2).

Since when did people start saying it: “I wanna die,” “I’m gonna die”?

According to the Urban Dictionary (urbandictionary.com), “I’m gonna die” is “what you shout when you are riding a huge roller coaster, just a second before it flies down with a speed of 150 km/h.” (Kilometers? Must be urban *Toronto*, eh, or urban *London*!) Also from the Urban Dictionary, “I’m gonna die” is you “overreacting by saying that you are dying but are actually [just] in . . . pain” or discomfort - for instance, after you’ve been out for a long run. (Or, for many of *us*, when we’ve simply had to climb a lot of stairs or tackle a long uphill.) “I’m so tired! I think I’m gonna die!”

Yes, sometimes you *do* hear it when there’s some *real* pain. Like in the movies. (And it doesn’t get any more real than *that*, of course!) Like in *Shrek*, after the lovable green ogre of a namesake is hit by an arrow!

Princess Fiona: Shrek’s hurt.

Donkey: What? Shrek’s hurt? Oh, no, Shrek’s gonna die!

Shrek: Donkey, I’m fine.

Donkey: You can’t die on me, Shrek! I’m too young for you to die! Keep your feet elevated! Turn your head and cough! Does anybody know the Heimlich?

Oh, but I realize that we don’t *all* turn to the same news and information source. So maybe *you* prefer to get *your* truth from a more, let’s just say, *sophisticated* source - something like . . . well, okay, . . . *Pinterest*! So, I don’t need to tell *you*, but you can find page after page on Pinterest under headings like “It’s so cute I’m gonna die!” or “It’s so *fluffy* I’m gonna die!” or even “It’s so *chubby*. I’m gonna die.”

So, like I say, what’s with the whole “I wanna die,” “I’m gonna die,” meme? When did everyone start doing this? Like if I hear it one more time, right, . . . I’m gonna die!

“I’m gonna die.”

There! He *said* it. *Jesus*, I mean.

“I’m gonna die,” Jesus said. And no sooner than He had said it, then, well, His disciples were *killing* him, *weren’t* they?

“I’m gonna die,” Jesus said - the *first* time, back in Mark, chapter 8 (vs. 31-32):

“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly.”

And you know how *that* turned out! You know just how *Peter* reacted. He immediately interrupted, “*That’s* not going to happen! Not on *my* watch! Over my dead body!”

“I’m gonna die,” Jesus said - the *second* time, back in

Mark, chapter 9:

“. . . *The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise*” (vs. 31-32).

And you might *also* remember how *that* turned out! None of His first followers makes a peep. They all just stand around looking at each other and shrugging their shoulders and holding up their hands. Oy vey!

“*But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.*”

“I’m gonna die,” Jesus said - this is now the *third* time, here in Mark, chapter 10:

“*And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise’*” (vs. 32-34).

And now I *know* you know how Jesus’ posse reacted, for you just *heard* it. Johnny and Jimmy immediately wanted to ask about the seating at the banquet.

“*And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’*”

“*And he said to them, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’*”

“*And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory’*” (35-37).

Okay, so maybe we’re being a little too hard on Johnny and Jimmy. For nobody said they came right up to Him and asked him. Not *immediately*!

*Mark* never said that. And Mr. Gospel-in-a-hurry, Mr. Not-afraid-to-use-the-word-immediately-more-than-forty-times-in-his-short-book sure knew the *word*! So maybe the brothers didn’t do it *immediately*, . . . but there’s no getting away from the fact that they still *did* it. And maybe that’s even *worse* - that even after they had had some time to think about what Jesus had said, to let it sink in, they *still* went ahead and asked Him what they asked Him.

Surely it was one of those times when, had you been in the room, not only would you not have wanted to be a fly on the wall, but you wouldn’t have wanted to get out as fast as you could, when the awkwardness would have been so thick you could have cut it with a knife, when you . . . you . . . you might have thought to yourself, “I’m gonna die!”

For, really! What kind of a question was *that*?

It wasn’t even a *question*, of course; it was a *request*. A *solicitation*. A *demand*, even.

Now, I don’t think I’m making too much *out* of it, for look at how the two brothers approach Jesus. They knew full well it was a big ask. They softened Him up by setting the stage for Him to write them a blank check, right? And no sooner had He agreed to *that*, then out they came with it:

“*And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory’*” (35-37).

Johnny and Jimmy want to be at the head table. They wanted to be Mr. Left and Mr. Right at the Great Feast.

Well, that’s how they *saw* it, wasn’t it? Jesus’ coming in glory? Like one big *banquet*?

Oh, they got the *glory* part, all right. No mistake there. And no wonder! He had just given them a *foretaste*. He had just taken them aside, along with Peter. He had just taken them up on the mountain. He had just allowed them to be witnesses to His *transfiguration*. They had seen with their own eyes Him talking with Moses and Elijah. They had heard with their own ears the Father’s voice from the over-

shadowing cloud, “*This is my beloved Son; listen to Him*” (9:7).

Only clearly they hadn’t listened? Clearly, they hadn’t heard a thing, had they? They had turned a completely deaf ear.

“I’m gonna die,” Jesus had tried to tell this pack of twelve on three different occasions. And three different times - in three different ways - they like to have killed Him with their response. I can’t help thinking He had to be saying to Himself, “I’m gonna die. I just wanna die.”

Oh, but not yet, as we know. It was still too soon, of course. For if there was one thing that all this made perfectly clear, it was that Jesus still had a whole lot more work to do - with His disciples! So, He turned to Johnny and Jimmy, and said to them,

“*You do not know what you are asking.*”

And to make his point, then suddenly *He* was the one asking the questions:

“*Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?*” (v. 38).

These two didn’t *listen*, but they sure could *speak*, couldn’t they?

“*And they said to him, ‘We are able’*” (v. 39).

And then - after *that*, maybe sometime *later* - they each said to themselves, “I’m gonna die.” They might even have said *it together*; we can’t say for sure. But we sure know that they *said* it - they *both* said it - both James *and* John: “I’m gonna die!”

They said it the minute the realization hit them . . . what they had just said. They said it just as soon as it hit them what they had said by saying “Yes,” what they had said by saying, “*We are able.*”

Now, to be honest, we have no idea when that moment might have been. It could have been right after Jesus said what He said next: “*The cup that I drink you will* [emphasis

added] *drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will* [emphasis added] *be baptized.*” Or it could have been long after *those* words - along with all His thrice-repeated *earlier* words about what lay before Him - had all had time to sink in. As I said, we can’t be sure. But we can be sure they said to themselves, “I’m gonna die! That’s not what I meant. I didn’t agree to that. . . .”

For what ultimately “clicked” in their minds was what Jesus all along had been trying to tell them:

“Uh, . . . boys, . . . this is not going to be a picnic - this thing when I come “*in [my] glory,*” this thing the two of *you* are picturing as this grand party, this royal banquet. It’s going to be more like a *roast* - only with *me* on the *spit!*”

Now the concept of “*drink[ing] the cup*” *should* have been familiar to them. It’s the way the Psalmists and the prophets *often* talked about the fate lying ahead of a person, what he or she - *or they* - were going to be receiving from the hand of the Lord: “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup* [emphasis added] *overflows*” (Psalm 23:5). “*Thus the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me,*” Isaiah penned, “*Take from my hand this cup* [emphasis added] *of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink* [emphasis added] *it. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them*” (Is. 51:15).

And, in all honesty, the same should have been the case with the whole “*baptism*” thing, as well. For while *of late* all the “*baptism*” talk had been from John the Baptizer, all the talk had been of that washing with water that the unorthodox one was loudly urging on all Israel, throughout *history*, those same Psalmists and prophets had often used the picture of passing through turbulent waters to describe undergoing trials or experiencing danger. Again, remember Isaiah?

“*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have*

*redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you”* (Is. 43:1-2).

So James and John *should* have known what they were asking. But clearly they didn't.

“Are you ready to accept *my* fate?” Jesus just out-and-out *asked* them.

“*Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?*” (v. 38).

And without hesitation - without thinking, I want to say - “*they said to him, ‘We are able.’*”

“Well, that’s very *good*,” Jesus answered back, “for you’re *going* to! You’re gonna *die*! Just like *I’m* gonna die!”

The Bible records the death of James - at the hands of Herod (Acts 12:2). It records the death of Jesus, too, of course - at the hands of Pilate; at the hands of the Jews; let’s just be honest, at your hand and mine.

Back at what Donkey was scared might be the death of that favorite lovable green ogre of yours, Fiona had the overwrought burro “boil water.” She told him to “breathe into a paper bag.” She sent him out to get help:

Fiona: [grabs Donkey] Donkey, calm down! If you want to help Shrek, go into the forest and look for a blue flower with red thorns.

Donkey: Blue flower, red thorns! Okay, I got it! Blue flower, red thorns! Blue flower, red thorns! Don't die, Shrek, and if you see any long tunnels, stay away from the light!

Shrek: DONKEY!

[Donkey runs off]

Shrek: What're the flowers for?

Princess Fiona: For getting rid of *Donkey*!

Dear friends in Christ, your favorite Pinterest isn't just all “cute” or “chubby” or “fluffy” on this whole “I’m gonna die!” meme. For I found this surprisingly serious post there, too - for a world in which, tragically, *death* is increasingly being seen as a solution for what’s wrong with *life*:

“Desiring death is just an easy way of saying you don't want to deal with this cruel and absurd world anymore. . . . No one wants to die, but everyone wants to kill something inside . . . .”

When Jesus died, it was for getting rid of not donkey, but serpent; not donkey, but the devil himself. When Jesus died, it *was* to kill something *inside* - something inside *us*, something inside *all* of us, something called *sin*. For we have all been hit by Satan’s arrow, and as a result we *were* all gonna die; but Jesus plunged an arrow through the evil one’s very heart.

With His life. And with His death. With His death on Calvary’s cross. Where He was shot through with arrows - where He was shot through with all the sins of all the world.

Only, don’t panic, Donkey. Jesus *is* going to die; but he’s going to rise again from the dead. He lives. And by baptism into His death, you and I are gonna *die*; we’re gonna be dead to sin, dead to death, dead to the devil himself.

But we’re gonna be alive - alive in God. Yes, know that by that washing with water and the word . . . we were buried with Christ Jesus in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6).

And know that that’s the point of our passage this morning. For as soon as the ten heard the two asking for special favors, they erupted, didn’t they? They blasted Johnny and Jimmy: “How *dare* you beat us to the punch! How dare you demand the best seats in the house even before we thought to *ask*!”

“*And Jesus called them to him and said to them, ‘You*

*know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.*

Just like I, as I've been trying to tell you all along, and now going to serve you. You and all the world.

And with *that*, for the very first time their Savior and Lord not only tells them *what*, but He tells them *why* - not only tells them that He's gonna die, but tells them why it has to happen:

*"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (32-45).*

To give his life as a ransom (a ransom is the price, of course, to buy back - to set free - those who have been kidnaped, made slaves, taken prisoner) for (in the place of) many. Now, if that's not "service," what *is*? Not to *be* served, but rather to *serve*.

"I'm gonna die."

That's right: "I'm gonna die!" I'm gonna die to *self* that I might live for *others*.

Today - *this* day, *every* day - may that be our constant prayer. And may God who hears and answers all prayer grant it for Jesus' sake.

Amen.