

“What do you want?”

Momma Zebedee knew what she wanted; she wanted the best for her boys. She wanted them to be in the catbirds seat. When the kingdom came, and it was just days away, she wanted them to have the best seats in the new regime; seats of power and influence. Matthew 20:21 (NRSV) “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”¹

Momma loved her boys, and her boys loved their Momma. She would take good care of them. They would take good care of her. Momma would see to that; she knew what she wanted.

Jesus' prediction of his passion; his suffering, death and resurrection, and Momma Zebedee's brazen ambition stand in stark contrast to one another. That contrast illustrates the opportunity we have when we know what we want. When we align our purposes with God's purpose and say with Jesus, “Not my will, but your will be done.” “God, I want what You want.” We are in the catbirds seat. We have power and influence. Ironically, Momma Zebedee will get what she wants, but it will come in a very different form than the one she expects. It will come because first Jesus and then her boys will drink the cup.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Like Momma Zebedee, I took a stand this week. I took a stand for what I want. I joined Jim Wallis of Sojourners and a number of religious leaders in fasting for a just and righteous federal budget. The present proposal cuts WIC and other programs that feed the hungry and aids the poor by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Jim Wallis wrote an article explaining why he is fasting. “Because there is a difference between deficit hawks – some of whom I know, respect, and work with on restoring fiscal health — and deficit hypocrites, who won't go to where the real money is, but go instead to the poor, who have little political clout in Washington to defend themselves, and are an easy targets to score political points with a political base. We do not fast today against fiscal responsibility, but against political hypocrisy”.²

Mark Bittman, food editor for The New York Times has joined the fast. He writes: “These supposedly deficit-reducing cuts — they'd barely make a dent — will quite literally cause more people to starve to death, go to bed hungry or live more miserably than are doing so now. And: The bill would increase defense spending....

In 2010, corporate profits grew at their fastest rate since 1950, and we set records in the number of Americans on food stamps. The richest 400 Americans have more wealth than half of all American households combined, and the effective tax rate on the nation's richest people has fallen by about half in the last 20 years, and General Electric paid zero dollars in U.S. taxes on profits of more than \$14 billion. Meanwhile, roughly 45 million Americans spend a third of their posttax income on food — and still run out monthly — and one in four kids goes to bed hungry at least some of the time.³

1 The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers

2 <http://blog.sojournal.net/2011/03/28/why-i-am-beginning-a-fast-today/>

³ Mark Bittman, “Why We’re Fasting.” The New York Times online. March 29, 2011.

⁴The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. 1989 (Mt 20:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

8 Noah BenShea, *Jacob the Baker: Gentle Wisdom for a Complicated World*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989. 62-63.

5 The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

6 The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

3 7 The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Those kids live in our neighborhoods. Antietam has the second highest percentage of students on a reduced lunch in Berks County. And those kids are probably baptized, maybe in our church, maybe in someone else's, and by their baptism they are no longer "their kids" or even "those kids." They are "our kids."

And Jesus looks at you and at me and asks, "What do you want?"

I want hungry children to be fed. I want women, infants, and children to have the proper nutrition they need to fully develop so that they have the capacity to help build our nation's future. I want a budget that believes in bread as well as in bombs as a way to peace.

I am confident that we spent more money in the last week intervening in Libya than these cuts will save. That intervention is saving tens of thousands of lives. "Thank God!" Our budget as it is currently proposed will harm tens of thousands more. "God forbid!" I want a budget that does both. I want a budget that makes the hard choices a budget should make based on a vision of a just and equitable society and not on the basis of who can hire the best lobbyist's and run the slickest ad campaigns.

So on Monday's, no lunch for me. I fast that meal, and pray for our leaders and the choices they face. I have contacted our legislators and let them know my views. I have used the power and influence I have as a citizen, a tax-payer, and a voter in these United States of America to let them know my answer to Jesus' question – "what do you want?" I will continue to do so. I urge you to do the same.

DRINK THE CUP

Jesus asks us, "What do you want?" Then he asks us, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"
I am about to drink? I want to believe it is the cup of the Psalmist, Psalm 23:5 (NRSV) You prepare a table before me in the presence of

of Jesus, you and I, and I drink that with oil; my cup overflows.⁵

We don't want to think about other cups: Matthew 26:27-28 (NRSV) ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.⁶ Or dark Gethsemane Matthew 26:39 (NRSV) ³⁹ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."⁷

We want the cup to give us position; Jesus' cup gives us purpose. We want the cup to give us status; Jesus' cup sends us to serve. The cup re-orientes our lives, and there are certainly times when it disorients us! We do not understand our cup; we do not like our cup; we do not want our cup! But here is the wonder – the cup of the Psalmist that overflows, and the cup of the Savior that sacrifices are the same cup filled by the same crucified shepherd's hand!

The cup is an invitation to trust, to have faith, to offer ourselves to God's purpose. When life is good and our cup is overflowing, drink the cup! This comes from God's hand. Give thanks, and drink the cup. When life is hard, and our cup is running dry, drink the cup. This also comes from God's hand. This also is a part of God's purpose. Give thanks, and drink the cup.

The following story illustrates what we can be like when we drink the cup. It's a story of Jacob the Baker, a simple sage in a small village who became well-known for his wisdom and how he coped with his new-found celebrity:

"It was always the small, solitary acts of living that brought Jacob peace.

The more attention others drew to him, the more pleasure he began to draw from the commonplace. The moments that the world ignored filled his plate.

He did not seem susceptible to his own inflation. On the contrary, he seemed to relish and grow more comfortable with making himself less. In this process, the subtleties of living grew, their significance enhanced.

The teapot whistled when it was ready. From this, Jacob took that he must be patient until he is called. And when he is called, he must be able to hear the call, and for this to happen he must be willing to pay attention. And when the call came, and he was listening, he must be prepared to act. Patience, calm, attention, and action – these were Jacob’s thoughts in the small kitchen over his morning tea.

When he finished, the circle of the empty cup stared back at him, its rim running endlessly.

Jacob drifted, cradled himself into the silent center space of the cup and found peace.”⁸

“What do you want? “ Use your power and influence. Trust the hand that holds the cup. Be prepared to act. Patience, calm, attention, and action will be yours when you drink the cup. Amen.