

“I am thirsty,” said Jesus.

He's been up all night and he's probably tired. His closest friends proved to be undependable and I imagine he's lonely. He's been mocked, beaten, and nailed to a cross. He's been hanging on that cross for three hours. Of all the things he might say ... the truly *human* things to say ... he says he is thirsty.

What is it that Jesus is thirsting for? What is it that he needs?

Dehydration is most likely adding to his suffering – in addition to the lacerations and abrasions, welts and bruises, he probably has a raw/gritty throat, a tackiness in his mouth, and maybe a headache, too. It's no surprise that Psalm 22 is on his mind.

Certainly, a large mug of cool water would quench his physical thirst. However, the only liquid within reach is sour wine. It is wine gone bad. No physical thirst will be quenched this day; no human need will be satisfied.

He must feel an eternity away from Cana, where he performed his first miracle. Remember that? There was a wedding taking place. In order to spare the family from the social *faux pas* of running out, Jesus turned the water into wine. And that wine, we are told, was good.<sup>1</sup>

That was wine that helped bring two young people into a new life together. Wine that celebrated a covenant that two of God's beautiful creatures made to one another and to God to walk side by side, trusting that God would hold them up and hold them accountable to their sacred union. It was the wine of joy, of passion, of lifelong union and communion. Jesus turned plain old ordinary water into the good wine of new life.

But that is not what is offered to Jesus now. No, he is given sour wine. Vinegar on a sponge at the end of a flimsy branch of a bush. It seems as though things have gone awry: Jesus hangs on a cross below a sign proclaiming him King of the Jews.

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<sup>1</sup> John 2:1-11

This, it seems, is the wine of death. One more insult – one more opportunity to mock the Son of God.

Those of us who choose to take upon ourselves the cross of Christ and follow Jesus know that the wine of covenant and new life is also the wine of death. Just as we are baptized into the life of Jesus the Christ, so too are we baptized into his death. But this path, this Way of Love, is none other than a path to eternal life, participation in the communion of saints, and everlasting union with the Holy.

As such, we understand that when life gets hard and God's good wine tastes sour in our gritty, parched, needy mouths ... when we find ourselves walking in the Way of Love through the valley of the shadow of death ... God is still with us. At these points in our life, we followers of Christ Jesus straddle the paradox of two realities: that the good wine of new beginnings and the sour wine of death on a cross are simultaneously the wine of eternal life.

This is the wine God perpetually offers us to drink. And this, I believe, is what Jesus is thirsting for: Jesus thirsts for our willingness to drink of God's cup. Jesus has poured himself out so that we might begin to understand and permit ourselves to perceive God's longing for relationship with us. We are so completely and utterly beloved that God desires eternity ... with *us* ... a broken and sin-sick creation.

Presbyterian minister and theologian, Frederick Buechner, describes it this way<sup>2</sup>:

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD," John writes, "that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That is to say that God so loved the world that he gave his only son even to this obscene horror; so loved the world that in some ultimately indescribable way and at some ultimately immeasurable cost he gave the world himself. Out of this terrible death, John says, came eternal life not just in the sense of resurrection to life after death but in the sense of life so precious *even this side of death* that to live it is to stand with one foot already in eternity. To participate in the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ is to live already in his kingdom.

Or said another way, it is because Jesus thirsts that our cup overflows.

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<sup>2</sup> Originally published in *The Faces of Jesus*, copied from [http://day1.org/5826-good\\_friday](http://day1.org/5826-good_friday), italics mine