

TAKE THIS CUP FROM ME

by Karla R. Jensen



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Take This Cup from Me

A service of remembrance

by Karla R. Jensen

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR — Male or female of any age

MOTHER — Woman in her fifties

YOUTH — Teenage girl

ALCOHOLIC — Middle-aged man

HUSBAND — Older man

SINGLE — Thirtyish woman

NURSE — Woman, any age

PASTOR — Use your church's own pastor,
or the Narrator may say these lines

PRODUCTION NOTES

A tumbler, a Communion chalice, a mug ... every cup tells a story. This unique service uses Jesus' impassioned plea in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Take this cup from me," as the basis for these contemporary slice-of-life episodes. In every instance, there is pain. A mother picks up her heirloom teacup and reflects on a "hand-me-down" family problem. A youth's glass represents the loss of her family's mealtime as their closeness unraveled. A lonely single's chipped cup reminds her of her flawed life. A nurse's medicine cup symbolizes her sadness when patients don't heal. Just as Jesus grew to accept his Father's will for him even when it involved pain, each character repeats a biblical promise seemingly custom-made for his or her situation, concluding the service with hope. Communion may follow.

The only set piece you will need is a small to medium-sized, very nicely decorated table with a cloth draped over it. The table is adorned with various types of cups. The script requires the following props: a china teacup; a plain, clear glass; a beer stein (preferably with a team logo on it); a mug; a chipped cup; a plastic medicine cup; and a Communion chalice. Feel free to add any number of extra drinking devices — plastic cups, paper cups, water bottles, etc. The table with cups should be positioned in front of the congregation so that all may view the various cups.

The characters should dress to reflect their ages. The Nurse wears a uniform. The Alcoholic wears a T-shirt with a professional football team's logo on the front.

This drama is very easy to perform and should fit well with any Good Friday or Holy Week service.

All Scripture is the author's paraphrase based on various versions, including the New International Version, the New Revised Standard Version, and the King James Version.

1 *(CHARACTERS will be seated in the congregation and rise*
 2 *from their seats to approach the table. Each person picks up his*
 3 *or her cup and talks about it. For more impact, and if time*
 4 *allows, the NARRATOR may wish to set up the table at the*
 5 *beginning of the drama as part of the service instead of setting*
 6 *up prior to the start of the service.)*

7
 8 **NARRATOR:** Ah, just right. Look at these cups. *(NARRATOR*
 9 *may pick up various cups to show audience and replace them*
 10 *on the table when done.)* Each very different from the
 11 others. Some are very dainty, while others are quite
 12 sturdy. Some are stalky, some shapely. Some are heavy
 13 to the touch when lifted. Others are incredibly
 14 lightweight. No two are exactly alike. Maybe some of
 15 these cups look like tumblers and glasses in your own
 16 cupboards or china cabinets. Do they look familiar? Oh,
 17 these cups haven't just arrived in your hands — in your
 18 possession — by accident. No, each was given for a
 19 particular reason. Perhaps a gift. *(NARRATOR sits on a*
 20 *stool behind or slightly away from the table, watching while*
 21 *OTHERS approach.)*

22 **MOTHER:** *(Rises from her seat in audience and approaches the*
 23 *front. She chooses a teacup of fine china.)* I could pick this
 24 cup out of a crowd blindfolded. When I got married, I
 25 inherited these fine dishes from my grandmother. We
 26 rarely used them growing up. I never understood why
 27 my brother and sisters and I were never allowed to
 28 drink from them. So beautiful the cups were, nestled in
 29 their matching saucers. I can still hear the clink of the
 30 two pieces coming together. *(Clinks the china against*
 31 *another glass to make noise.)*

32 At first, I thought this cup was the most wonderful
 33 inheritance I could ever want from Grandmother, but I
 34 think I'm ready to pass this on to my own
 35 granddaughter any time now. I want her to have the

1 same privilege of owning this china that I had. (*Puts cup*
 2 *down but returns to pick it up again.*) Oh, I forgot to tell her
 3 that she's not getting all the cups. A few have broken
 4 and many have acquired chips across the generations. I
 5 didn't actually see Grandmother throw the cups at
 6 Grandpa, but that's what Mother swears happened. Oh,
 7 Granny did have a temper! Mother has the same short
 8 fuse as well. And yes, I hate to admit it, but I have the
 9 same anger management problem that all the Kramer
 10 family has. Too bad we can't just inherit cups and forget
 11 passing down all those little traits that ruin holidays
 12 and wreck families. Perhaps someone here would like
 13 the cup instead. (*Holds it out to congregation.*) No? Fine.
 14 (*Puts cup back and returns to seat.*)

15 YOUTH: (*Rises from seat in audience after MOTHER sits down*
 16 *and approaches table.*) It's been my favorite glass of Mom's
 17 ever since I could stand on my tiptoes to reach the
 18 cupboard. (*Selects a plain, clear glass and holds it up.*) Here
 19 it is! Nothing special about it, but it seemed special to
 20 me at the time. This glass, my cup, signaled to me that
 21 my little-girl youthfulness was transforming into an
 22 older, more mature girl. I was finally old enough and
 23 responsible enough to hold a glass glass; real glass, not
 24 just one of those colored plastic tumblers I used as a
 25 child. If this cup weren't clean before a meal, I'd wash it
 26 by hand just so I could use it.

27 But that was a long time ago. There was a set of six
 28 just like this — one for each of us. I don't know what
 29 became of the others. Dinner was so special back then,
 30 like this glass. When I was young, we all gathered
 31 around the table to eat together ... for a while. Then
 32 Dad took that job on the road, and Mom no longer cared
 33 if we ate a meal together or even if it was at the table,
 34 for that matter. My brother and sisters and I came home
 35 from school and just scrounged for food whenever we

1 got hungry. I guess this glass went by the wayside with
 2 the dinners. Maybe I didn't like this glass that much
 3 after all. Anyway, I should forget about those years. It
 4 was so long ago. Perhaps one of you might want it to
 5 match other glasses in your cupboard. Please, take it.
 6 Just take it. *(Sets glass down and returns to seat.)*

7 **ALCOHOLIC:** *(Approaches table after YOUTH returns to seat. He*
 8 *is jovial.)* Ah, my favorite time of the day. Work is
 9 through, newspaper awaits, Monday night football on
 10 the big-screen TV. *(Chooses a cup — a large beer stein or*
 11 *mug.)* This baby has been with me longer than the
 12 house, my friends. Even has my favorite team logo right
 13 there. My wife was always so good to me, having my
 14 favorite cup chilled before I even set foot in the house.
 15 Maybe some of you have a favorite mug too, huh? And
 16 your favorite brew to slide right inside it. *(Caresses cup*
 17 *in his hands.)*

18 Sure, there were times I put back one or two more
 19 brewskies in this cup than I probably should have. It
 20 didn't hurt nothing ... much. The kids got rides from
 21 their friends to school events and my wife took a taxi to
 22 work when I couldn't remember where I'd put the car
 23 keys. I know I had my license taken away a time or two,
 24 but no big deal. It's not like I need AA or something. If
 25 you heard that's where I'm headed, you're mistaken.
 26 Drinking too much is nobody's business but my own.
 27 See here? I'll prove it. I can give up my favorite Chicago
 28 Bears *(Or insert name of your closest pro football team)* mug
 29 to anyone who wants to pay good money for it. How
 30 about five bucks? I could use a beer right now, and I'm
 31 short of cash anyhow. Two-fifty? How about a buck?
 32 *(Puts mug down and returns to seat.)*

33 **HUSBAND:** *(Heads toward table after ALCOHOLIC.)* I can still
 34 smell the fresh roasted coffee my wife put on at five
 35 thirty a.m. every morning after we were married almost

fifty years ago. (*Grabs a mug.*) While I headed to the basement to build the furnace fire, there she was, bustling about the kitchen making breakfast and filling my coffee cup to the brim. Nobody made coffee like Florence. Nobody. She was ... is ... a great wife. The best anybody could have ever wished for. She was ... is ... a good mother to our four kids as well. Doing all that cooking, cleaning, and laundry year after year. ... I worked outside the house and she worked inside.

(*Smells the aroma over the cup.*) Mmmm. The smell of this cup reminds me of the smell of her. We still have coffee together every afternoon. I drive the Dodge up to the Home, the nurses unlock the Alzheimer's wing, and I take our dog, Heidi, down to see my bride. She brightens up when she sees Heidi, but sometimes I have to remind her that I'm her devoted husband. She just can't seem to remember. There were many coffee breaks when I sensed something wasn't right, but I didn't know what to do. I just thought it was old age. You know how it goes. Coffee at the nursing home the last two years just isn't the same as it was at our own kitchen table.

(*Puts cup back.*) I'm ready to give this cup up any time now, God. It's not easy to drink of this pain anymore.

(*Returns to seat.*)

SINGLE: (*Runs enthusiastically forward to find her cup.*) Shopping! There's noboby who can beat me for nabbing the specials. Christmas, Easter, Columbus Day, Labor Day. If the mall is open, I'm there. Yes, I've discovered some doozies in my day. Like that set of dishes — the ones with the matching dinner plates, cups and saucers, and dessert plates — the works! The dishes were half of half off! I don't think that store made a dime on 'em, especially after I requested the sales clerk to open each piece that had been individually wrapped. We found a chip on that one cup that's right ... here! (*Searches for a*

1 *chipped cup on the table.)* She gave me ten percent more
 2 off the top. Who cares if there happens to be a small
 3 flaw, right?

4 Sure, I thought I'd receive a set of nice dishes for a
 5 wedding present sooner or later, but I was always a
 6 bridesmaid and never a bride. If I were really honest
 7 with myself, this cup doesn't represent shopping and
 8 good deals. It represents a bad deal — years of
 9 loneliness. Will I ever meet the right person? I don't
 10 know. Dating services aren't for me. Can't I just swap
 11 this flawed cup for a better one? I'm ready and waiting
 12 to give it up, if the truth be known. I am. (*Shoves the cup*
 13 *back onto the table.)* I should have never bought the darn
 14 thing in the first place. Maybe it was a jinx. (*Returns to*
 15 *seat.*)

16 NURSE: (*Approaches table as if looking for something under the*
 17 *table, in her pockets, etc.)* Now where is that medicine cup?
 18 It was right here just a minute ago. (*Finds it.*) These little
 19 plastic jobs are so sneaky. Get lost right under my nose.
 20 You'd think I'd get tired of dispensing drugs at the
 21 hospital in these little cups with the measurements on
 22 the sides, but I don't. I know these cups are lifesavers.
 23 Without pills and the liquid placed inside this
 24 inconspicuous little container, well, sickness and pain
 25 and death would be all around us now, wouldn't they?
 26 It's probably the cheapest and most expensive cup my
 27 patients will ever drink out of in their lives.

28 Yes, I'd love to see my patients swap this little plastic
 29 pill cup for a nice coffee cup or crystal goblet, but
 30 unfortunately, many people I see aren't so lucky.
 31 Extended, exhausting stays in major medical centers
 32 cost our patients more than money — they cost them
 33 their lives. Just when I've prayed and prayed that some
 34 sick young child or an injured father whose kids need
 35 him might recover, death strikes its fierce blow. When

1 that happens, I wish I could throw the entire box of
 2 these cups to kingdom come. I'm not sure why I haven't
 3 quit nursing, in fact. How about you? Why don't you try
 4 dispensing drugs for a day or two? Come on — I dare
 5 you. Try it. (*Tosses the cup back on the table.*)

6 PASTOR: (*Approaches table.*) If Christ were here this moment,
 7 these would be his words — his thoughts about the cup
 8 with his name on it. He would say: "It doesn't matter
 9 within what congregation or building or home I dwell,
 10 it's easy to find my cup. It's always at the center of the
 11 table, (*Reaches for the Communion chalice at the center of*
 12 *table*) set for you and for all people for the forgiveness of
 13 sins. No, this cup is one I didn't ask for, but a cup to
 14 which I was born to fulfill. The first time I heard about
 15 the cup from my Father, I felt eager to please my Father
 16 and bring his love and light into a dark world. But after
 17 tasting of the cup and witnessing the resistance to this
 18 cup, I shuddered at its importance and its true meaning
 19 for me — the Savior, the Messiah.

20 (*Looking at the cup with distaste*) "Who wants a cup that
 21 brings death, bloodshed, war, or disparity among
 22 nations?" I asked myself. But as the cup grew more
 23 bitter, my determination grew stronger, my preaching
 24 grew more meaningful, my Father's love grew greater,
 25 and my disciples grew more dedicated. But just when I
 26 thought I had prepared myself to face death and to
 27 drink of the cup, I found myself becoming an agonizing,
 28 weak, scared human regretting the decision to carry
 29 through with this new covenant. I begged my Father,
 30 'Lord, please, take this cup from me.' I did not want the
 31 cup. I wished it to be given to someone else.

32 "Yet through God's love and the power of the Holy
 33 Spirit who conquered death, I rose again on the third
 34 day, just as my Father promised I would. Now the cup
 35 came to represent a new covenant, a brighter promise.



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