

Coffee to Go: First Week of Lent

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SPEAKERS

Josh Mangelson, Blake Smith, Karin Peter

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Blake Smith 00:33

Welcome to Coffee to go, where we center ourselves in the seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Blake Smith here with Karin Peter, and we welcome you on the journey. Good morning, Karin.

Karin Peter 00:45

Good morning, Blake. I wondered like if we might like tell people why it's Coffee to Go, because we're joining Jesus on the journey.

Blake Smith 00:53

Where are we this week with Jesus?

Karin Peter 00:56

Well, this week is the first day of Lent. And the first day of Lent we find ourselves in the wilderness with Jesus. Jesus has been around people too much, and his introverted side has come out, and he heads to the wilderness. And he spends 40 days in the wilderness in a time of preparation. And I wanted to give a little caveat when we use numbers like that. 40 is kind of a way of saying a long time. So it rained 40 days and 40 Nights, you know, that kind of thing it rained a long time. So 40 days of preparation, we tend to take it literally. There's no guarantee it was 40 days. But it also carries with it this idea that it's a long time in which we are preparing for something else. So the Israelites wandered 40 years and in the wilderness as they prepared to enter the promised land. And we're going to be in the wilderness with Jesus for 40 days, as we prepare to enter the city of Jerusalem.

Blake Smith 02:00

So that 40 days isn't just 40 days to go get away from chaos.

Karin Peter 02:06

There's some formation going on in those 40 days as well. And it's actually 40 days not counting the Sundays in Lent, Lent is a pretty intense time. And Sundays are a day to just kind of take a breath, celebrate the presence of God with us, and then be ready to go again on Monday. Traditionally, in the early church, Lent was the time people learned about the Christian faith and were preparing to be baptized to be initiated as Christians. And that will take place on Easter morning. And so let was definitely a time of preparation and catechism. Lent is associated with fasting because Jesus fasted in the wilderness and that doesn't mean he didn't eat at all. Fasting usually took place during the daylight hours, one didn't eat and then come sundown one could have a meal and then go on. You see in many world religions, fasting is still kind of that way. But Lent is associated with fasting and prayer and almsgiving or giving to the poor, setting aside funds for the poor. It's also a time of reflection and renewal. It's a time when we really look at ourselves, at our lives, at our relationship with God with others with the earth and, and prepare ourselves to go with Jesus to Jerusalem. So what's the what's the Scripture today?

Blake Smith 03:44

Our scripture is the temptation narrative from the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew the first for the 11th verse. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted 40 days and 40 nights, and afterwards, he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But Jesus answered, "It is written, one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands, they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him, "again, it is written, do not put the Lord your God to the test." Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all of the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. And he said to him, "all these I will give you if you will fall down and worship me." And Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan, for it is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve only him," then the devil left him. And suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Karin Peter 05:15

So this is a really interesting scripture for a lot of reasons. And I don't, I don't want to dive into a big intellectual discussion of it, I just want us to kind of live with this idea about Jesus going into the wilderness. When we talk about how is the Scripture relevant today, we can get caught up in a lot of kind of peripheral things. But one of the one of the images that come to mind is the way we head into our own version of wilderness. There's people who withdraw into the wilderness of Facebook and social media. There's the kind of withdrawing into the wilderness of excess shopping and consumption and consumerism. There's the wilderness of just burying ourselves in work, or busyness, in order to take our mind off other things. We all have different ways in which we kind of go into the wilderness and and it's not all of them are healthy for us. And so I think when we talk about the relevance today, it's probably good to think about how, how I enter into wilderness and what's, what happens there. When I do that, what kind of temptations come when I'm in that wilderness? And there's no one around to see, what I do? What's the temptation when I'm in the wilderness of social media? Is it to be belligerent because I'm, I'm not face to face with someone and I can say things I would never say in person? Is it the temptation of buying too much? Because no one's there to see my gluttony. What are the

temptations that come when I'm in my own wilderness? And I think about that. I think that's probably the primary kind of image that came to mind for me. And so when I thought about that I thought about those are not healthy wildernesses. So what would happen if I entered into an intentional wilderness of wellbeing period, let's say instead of a, instead of an unhealthy wilderness, what's what would it look like to experience this first week of Lent? By entering an intentional wilderness period of no electronic communication? No phone, no computer, no tablet, no television? For a week, for three days for one day, whatever, whatever you want to set to experience this? What does that look like? And how tempting is it for me during this period to give in? How tempting is it to break the fast from electronic communication? How tempting is it to just sneak a look at a message? You know, you see those red notification badges come up on the phone? How tempting is it to just look and see who posted on Facebook? And how do I deal with that? How do I deal with that temptation once I've tried to set aside an intentional period of wilderness for wellbeing?

Blake Smith 08:32

I want to ask you a question. Because I find myself thinking, when I think about this wilderness and having had the opportunity and privilege, I guess if you will, to work with some folks in some marginalized communities and that kind of thing who might say their whole life is a wilderness. I mean, it's not a matter of going into wilderness. It's, I need a way to get out of wilderness. So what uh, how does that fit with this idea of, of setting aside time and Lent?

Karin Peter 09:05

Yeah. You know, we all process through our own lens, and for many of us, and certainly for me, I process through a lens of I have plenty. And so when I think of wilderness, I think of giving up or fasting but there are people who live in a wilderness of not enough. Who live in a wilderness of violence live in a in a wilderness of, of lack of safety and well being. And so I'm really visual. And I think one of the things we can do is put a visual reminder somewhere in our home or vehicle or our workplace. That calls us back to the reality of wilderness and purple is the traditional color of Lenten. I have a purple cloth that I like to drape over something during Lent, you can drape something purple over a table, or you could put it on a counter and have it as a reminder of those who live in the wilderness of hunger, the wilderness of poverty, the wilderness of racial injustice, the wilderness of food insecurity, the wilderness of no access to clean water. Those are very real wildernesses that people live in. And how can I be reminded of that in a way that, that challenges me to seek positive change with that. So during Lent is a good time to kind of look at both sides of idea of wilderness. So thanks, Blake. So I imagine you've got some questions that we can ask ourselves as we go through this first week of Lent.

Blake Smith 10:56

I always have questions. So, as I think about this, I think about "how am I tempted by those things you mentioned in wilderness?" How am I tempted by hunger? How am I tempted by overconsumption? I don't have to leave my house. I can make a couple of clicks on my phone and have something delivered to my home tomorrow. Not only just a physical hunger for food, also, but a hunger for status. So, you know, how am I tempted by hunger and consumption and status and wealth? Those are... Another question I might ask myself, especially during this week, as we talk about loneliness is how does my own sense of importance blind me to the needs and desires and concerns of others? I realized that there are some people, maybe even some of our listeners, who need to just get away from the wilderness that is life. And so how does my place of privilege and self-importance blind me to those

kinds of needs? And then, when of I have been attempt, when have I been tempted to try to control others, to push my own agenda or to want to win at all costs? So, there are just some questions there, that I think it's good for all of us to ponder as we think about Jesus' time in the wilderness. And as we enter that wilderness, I want to finish this off with a blessing today. And this blessing comes from the 32nd Psalm. "Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in those whose Spirit there is no deceit. While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night, Your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up, as by the heat of summer, Selah. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin, Selah. I think that's a great blessing for us to finish with today. And so, thank you for joining us today. Karin, thank you again, for a great conversation. I invite all of our listeners to join us here at Coffee to Go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and the holy days of the Christian tradition.

Josh Mangelson 13:37

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