

CoffeetoGo | 5th Week of Lent

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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.

Karin Peter 00:34

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the scriptures and seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition? I'm Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on this journey where we ask ourselves each week, "Where are we, with Jesus this week?" Well, this week is the fifth and final week of Lent, which is the week that takes us right on up to the entrance of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. So, we've been in Lent for several weeks. We decided back in the first week that we would turn our face toward Jerusalem and walk that journey with Jesus. We're almost there. As Christians, we know how this journey goes, and we know it will end in the crucifixion, and then the resurrection of Jesus. And we've been preparing ourselves for that whole experience. This particular scripture today that Blake's going to read, it foreshadows that death is part of the extravagant nature of God and of God's grace and mercy. And it does it in a really interesting way. So, we're going to talk about God's extravagant nature. So, Blake, what's the Scripture?

Blake Smith 02:02

Our Scripture today comes from John the 12th chapter, the first through eighth verse. Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There, they gave a dinner for him, Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard and anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, the one who was about to betray him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii, and the money given to the poor?" He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it. Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you. But you do not always have me." You know, this scripture often gets turned into an argument of why we shouldn't help the poor, right? Because Jesus says, you'll always have the poor with you. But as we journey with Jesus through Lent, and we're getting really, really close to Easter Week to Palm Sunday as Jesus enters Jerusalem. And, you know, we've been on this journey of Lent, a time of self-reflection, honest reflection, that is not something that our culture would suggest that we do. It's really

countercultural, as we've mentioned in previous podcasts, but it's also painful, it also can be painful if we're really honest about it. And so, for me, this passage, actually, when we focus on the hope of the extravagant gift of God, extravagant grace and mercy, who puts priorities in the right places, we know from everything that we learned from the gospel stories about Jesus gave preferential treatment to the poor, and the oppressed, and the despised, and the outcast, and those who were considered less than in the society. So, we know that this scripture can't be about, "Ah, forget the poor, you know, put some perfume on my feet, because I'm more important." That's not who Jesus is. It's about this extravagant grace of God and our response. You know, we in the Community of Christ are called to a generosity that matches God's generosity. If we could just really get to, as we've been challenged to do, to get to our true capacity. Judas, in this scripture, picks out the value of what Mary is wasting in his eyes. And, you just don't waste like that. Not as the scripture says, because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. And the money was what was important to him. And Mary in that moment, and Jesus lifts this up in this passage, Mary is focused in the right place. She understands this incredible gift that God has laid before them in Christ. She's responding in kind, with a generosity, not even thinking about how much it costs. It is the right thing. It is the right response. And, it is the way we are called to respond. But even more importantly, is just receiving that incredible grace, understanding just how extravagant that gift is that God gives us. So how do we make choices on how we respond to the presence of God's abundant self, of God's abundant grace and mercy in our life as we approach this final week of the Lenten season and move to Easter? It is an extravagant gift that we're about to journey in the midst of, and for us to receive that and understand the extravagance of that gift is where the power I think of this passage is for me anyway. So, how might we experience that... receive that grace, that extravagant gift, and respond appropriately?

Karin Peter 06:27

So, I have to tell you, when I read the Scripture, I hear and see something completely different. I see Mary, a woman, making this extravagant gift, and Judas, or anybody who spoke up against, a man maligning that gift, denigrating that gift from Mary as a woman, that she had made a poor choice that she had done something wrong. So, when I hear it, my little feminist hackles get up, that Judas probably spoke for several of the disciples who felt that Mary had done something not in the best light, and yet, it was her gift. And she had every right to give that extravagant gift to Jesus and didn't need a man "mansplaining" to her how she was doing something wrong. So that's just how I hear it, which goes to show all the different perspectives, you know, when we look at Scripture, what we hear, so when I think of how we can experience it this week, there are there are lots of different ways during this final week of Lent, that we kind of can return to what's central to our story. And that is, as you explained this extravagant gift of God sent as God's self in the form of life and death and resurrection of Jesus. So, this week, be extravagant and authentic in your praise of others. Whether it's at work or at school or at home, look for the good. Uphold it in friendship, in your collegial relationships, and in your intimate and loving relationships, be extravagant and authentic, in your praise of others. Also, just as a family practice, offer extravagant portions of a favorite treat to your family members this week, whatever it might be, and explain that you're doing it as a way to connect to the extravagant, gracious nature of God. So, whatever your favorite family treat is, offer it in extravagant portions this week. And perhaps take some time each day this week, to empty your own personal awareness, your personal space yourself, of all the pressures and worries and tasks that lie before you, and try to fully center yourself on God's presence with you. Imagine God's grace and mercy as the fragrance that Mary had brought, the fragrance that surrounds and blesses you, and rest with God in that fragrance for a while this week.

Blake Smith 09:16

Well, first of all, let me say Karin, you know, thanks for sharing that perspective. That is a great example of, like you said, the different perspectives. I think we spoke in a previous episode during this Lenten season, about the importance of getting past confirmation bias that we read through our lens. That didn't even cross my mind because I've never been the one that's been diminished from my perspective, or, well, I have but not in the level that we're talking about. And so and I think you mentioned in that episode, the importance of going to different sources. I have found great value in having commentaries, not just from a bunch of different white men, but having, you know, the Queer Bible Commentary and the Women's Bible Commentary. Yeah. And I will, I'll read a passage and I'll, you know, be thinking about that. And then I'll go read one of those and go, Oh my gosh, I never even considered that. So, I just, I really appreciate you bringing that up and "womansplaining" to me. That needs to happen. So, I just I really appreciate that. I wanted to lift that up. So, we get to the part where we talk about what kind of questions might I ask myself this week as I journey with this passage at this time in the Lenten season, as we approach Jerusalem? So one is, Am I stingy or extravagant with my compassion, with my time with my giftedness, with my generosity? Another question is, When have I discounted the gifts, traditions and ideas of others? And that's the point that you brought up from the feminist perspective. Here was a man who was basically discounting the response of another person, I think it's important for us to think about when we discount the gifts, traditions or ideas of others. And finally, I would say, What feelings arise in me when I realize the extravagance of God's grace and mercy? We talk about it all the time, I certainly preach about it, teach about it. But when I really take the time, to allow myself to settle in that and really think about how incredibly extravagant that is, what are the feelings that arise in me, then how will I share it with others? How am I going to return that generosity? How am I going to be extravagant in my sharing of that because of what I have received? So I want to leave us with a blessing from affirmation nine of our statement on Scripture, and I say "our statement" the Community of Christ statement on scripture, live and serve and hope that God's kingdom of justice and peace will indeed come, bringing healing to the whole grown in creation. Put your trust in the risen Christ, present among us by the Holy Spirit. Press on together, giving blessing, honor and glory to God now and forevermore. And thank you for joining us again today and we invite you to join us as we continue our journey here on Coffee to Go through the liturgical seasons and the holy days of the Christian tradition.

Josh Mangelson 12:47

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