

Coffee to Go | Ordinary Time, Proper 5

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the seasons, scriptures, and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter here with Blake Smith, we are your hosts, and we welcome you on the journey. So as every week, we ask, Where's Jesus this week? And where are we with Jesus this week? Well, we are following Jesus starting last Sunday, Trinity Sunday, but now, we'll talk about it a bit more. We're following Jesus through what's called ordinary time. It's a season on the Christian calendar that lasts a long time, about half of the year. And ordinary does not mean ordinary as in boring, although, we'll get back to that a second. But it's called ordinary time because it's ordered, it has numbered Sundays called Propers. Proper 4, Proper 5, Proper 6, is how the Sundays are numbered or ordered. And so it's called ordinary time. But it's also the period of time between Pentecost the awareness and arrival of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire, all the way through early summer, summer, fall, and into the end of the fall season and the beginning of Advent at the end of November. That's a long period of time. And one way to kind of compare it is in our secular calendar. We know that all the fun holidays, you know, kind of come around with Halloween. We have Halloween, and then Thanksgiving, and then Christmas, and New Years, and Presidents Day for a 3-day weekend, yay. And so we have this whole half of the year that has all these kind of festivals and, and happy days. And then we hit summer, late spring and summer. And it's like there's this long stretch with nothing, I mean, Fourth of July, but that's, you know, that might give us a 3-day weekend. but it's not, it's not Christmas. So we have this long summer stretch where there's not a whole lot to kind of divert our attention from the simple the process of planting, growing, harvesting that takes place in the summer. It's the same thing with ordinary time. It's this stretch of time where we don't have holy days and celebrations and, and flashy feast days to divert our attention. We are simply learning to follow Jesus as he teaches, and heals and models compassion. And as we trek through this ordinary time, we are focused on following Jesus. The author, Michelle Van Loon, puts it this way, "We grow in discipleship as the life of Jesus takes root in us" during ordinary time. So it's a growing period. In this scripture, today, we are with Jesus as Jesus is doing one of my favorite things, and that is he's hanging out with blatant, obvious, despised sinners. And the one who gets the name here, the named sinner is the tax collector. Jesus is having dinner with tax collectors and sinners. So let's hear this story. Blake.

Blake Smith 03:43

Before I read the passage, I just want to say another thing for me about ordinary time. I mean, that's where life happens. We get into the feasts and the celebrations and it becomes sometimes more about the celebration. I'm reminded, because I have done some work with food pantries, they say, you know,

everybody gives at Thanksgiving and Christmas, but people are hungry all year long. So this ordinary time is still really important. Because when Jesus does his ministry, and as followers of Jesus, we get a chance to spend some time with him doing that. So this comes from Matthew chapter nine, the 9th through the 13th, and the 18th through the 26th verse.

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the text booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he said, at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice, For I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners." While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him saying, "My daughter has just died. But come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus got up and followed him with his disciples. Then suddenly, a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years, came up behind him, and touched the fringe of His cloak. For she said to herself, "if I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned and seeing her, he said, "Take heart, Daughter, your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well, when Jesus came to the leaders house and saw the flute players, and the crowd making a commotion, he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up, and the report of this spread throughout that district.

So why does all this matter? The most important piece of this is the radical inclusivity of Jesus. So you have the, you have the contrast, because you've got the Pharisees, and those who are standing around the house laughing, who don't believe or believe that Jesus should be doing something else. Jesus should be hanging out with them, why waste your time with sinners and tax collectors and women who are "unclean." And I say that in air quotes, because in that culture, a woman at that particular time in her life, would be considered unclean. And so to have the audacity to come and touch Jesus, but Jesus not only recognizes, hangs out, spends time with those people, he does it without any thought of, well, I need to go do this first. I mean, he stops, one of the things about this passage that that captures my attention is that he's in the middle of something, one thing and something else comes up and he stops and turns his attention to that. And he doesn't seem frustrated, doesn't seem distracted, he just is intent on inclusivity. I think that is really, really important. And the women's Bible Commentary points that out to us, that this is a passage about the inclusive nature of Jesus. You know, the religious leaders, like I said, and maybe those who are standing outside of the house laughing, they want him to stick with the good folks, with those who are righteous and doing the right thing. But Jesus, welcomes and calls all kinds of people. He hangs out with men, women, saints, the leader of the synagogues, and the sinners, a tax collector. Now tax collector, it's interesting that the passage says tax collectors and sinners, because in that culture, the tax collector really was a sinner. He was defrauding the people, he was taking advantage of others and, and that would be considered sinful as well. But those who trust, the bleeding woman, those who doubt, the ones who laughed at him, all of those were included in Jesus' life and ministry, He didn't leave out anyone. And that really, I think, is what matters most about this passage.

Karin Peter 08:41

So Blake, we were, as Blake and I were talking earlier, one thing that came up was the idea that God includes you whether you include God or not in your life. So it is that radical inclusivity of every single person. So a way to experience that this week. Is twofold. And one is think of a time when you have not been included and what that feels like and then turn that around and include people this week, welcome people into conversation, especially people you might not usually speak with, and include them in your presence this week, be inclusive, practice radical inclusivity, like Jesus did, for this week of Ordinary Time.

Blake Smith 09:35

So a couple of questions that we might ask are, do I see Christianity following Jesus as avoiding bad things and bad people? Or is it more about inclusivity, compassion and seeing the best in people?

Karin Peter 09:52

Okay, so I want to stop here at this question, Blake, because I think a lot of people see Christian discipleship as avoiding bad things and bad people. As long as I avoid bad things about people, I will go to heaven. Period. Done. Discipleship accomplished. So that's easier. That's way easier to do then, including people being compassionate to people and trying to see the best in people. That's harder. And I think, as humans, we default to the easy, easier to accomplish thing.

Blake Smith 10:25

If I never leave my house... Yeah, and don't engage in bad things with bad people. You know, I'm in good shape if I ever get in a car because I don't get mad.

Karin Peter 10:37

Or, you know, I'll just stick with church people, all my friends are from my congregation, all my friends, you know, I go to church with the people, I hang out with everybody. And then then I know I'm hanging out with air quotes, "good people." Well, is that really what Jesus would want for us? So anyway, that just came to mind when you offered that first question.

Blake Smith 10:58

You know, there's a Greek scholar Sarah Ruden, and one of the things that's important about this particular piece is that Sarah is steeped in Greek. That is her field. That is, she's an expert in Greek language. She's not steeped in all of the religious tradition, and the ways that we've come to understand this passage. And there's a piece of this passage I want to get back to it is when Jesus turns to the woman who has touched the hem of His garment. And he, he says in the passage, the way we have it, "take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well." But Sarah gives us an alternative reading. And again, it's one based just simply on straight translation from the Greek and she says, "Be brave, your trust has cured you." Be brave, not take heart, be brave, your trust has cured you. And I wonder when I'm thinking about the questions to ask this week is, how does that change the passage for you to be brave? Because we don't often we're not often encouraged to be brave. What does that mean? What might it have meant to hear that in that way? So the last question I would ask is, How do I participate in sin? It's not really a question we like to ask might uncover some things we're uncomfortable with or we would like to just keep in the closet. The reality is in everyday life, sometimes

knowingly, sometimes just completely unknowingly, we participate in forms of sin, that are systematic, industrial sin, consumer sin. Consumer sin is probably one of the biggest, I think, for me, from overconsumption and purchasing things that are just not necessary. Institutional sin, institutions and organizations with hiring practices and employment practices that are just not equal and fair, the way people are paid, the use of slave labor. And then finally sinned against creation. But there are so many things that we do from getting in our car and taking a quick ride up to the store is perhaps a stretch for some, but it is affecting our environment in our creation, taking an extra plastic bag or two at the grocery store, instead of using reusable bags. How often do we use disposable straws and not even think about it. So those are just some ways and I think it's important for us to consider spend some time considering how we participate in sin. Today, the blessing comes from prayers of the people from vanderbilt.edu and we'll put that in the show notes so that you can check that out. Here's the blessing, redeeming Sustainer visit your people and pour out your strength and courage upon us, that we may hurry to make you welcome not only in our concern for others, but by serving them generously and faithfully in your name. Amen. Amen. Thanks again for joining us on this episode of Coffee to go we invite you to join us again next time as we continue our journey through the liturgical seasons and the holy days of the Christian tradition.