

CoffeeToGo | Proper 7

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:26

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're your hosts, and we welcome you on the journey. Today is the seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time and it's called Proper 7. Proper is the word that is used to indicate which Sunday in Ordinary Time, so Proper 7 in Ordinary Time. This is the period between Pentecost and Advent that begins at the end of November. So in the seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time, where's Jesus this week? Well, Jesus is still teaching. And in fact, as we walk with Jesus this week, he is today giving his second lengthy speech, according to the Gospel of Matthew. And much of his teaching in this portion of his sermon concerns the persecution that is to come for the followers of Jesus. So keep in mind that the Gospel of Matthew was written decades after Jesus lived. So the writer was well aware of what had happened. In fact, the writer and the first hearers of this gospel had lived through already much of that persecution. But in the Gospel, the writer has Jesus foretell what was to come in a way that helps those who hear this gospel years later makes sense of the persecution and suffering that they were enduring? So it's a little complicated because it's like a dual timeline novel that we're going through here with the Gospels. But if we just kind of focus on the fact that there's a reason that the gospel writer has Jesus talked about the persecution, even though technically in Jesus time, it wouldn't have happened yet. So the message seems to be in this part, yes, this persecution is awful. Jesus was persecuted in worse ways. Yes, you will suffer. Jesus suffered in the worst way, and you're not asked to endure anything more than Jesus asks you to endure. The cost of discipleship is great. It will cause divisions and culture, families and relationships and through it all, remember to whom you belong, you matter. God cares for you. And even if your life has ended, you are redeemed with life eternal. That's a lot of stuff in this passage of Scripture. We're gonna hear it and then Blake's gonna explain it all to us. So...

Blake Smith 03:08

There's a lot we could probably do several...

Karin Peter 03:09

There's a lot there. Yeah. And, and when Blake and I were talking about this earlier, it came down to this thing. Hey, people who told you this was easy? Because it isn't if we're serious about discipleship, and that's really the bottom line. So let's hear what the gospel writer has to say here Blake.

Blake Smith 03:27

yeah, if you want easy, Christian discipleship, true Christian discipleship is not where you're gonna find it. Our passage today comes from the 10th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, picking up with the 24th verse, kind of where we left off last week, we didn't do all of last week's passage, but this one picks up right after that. "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master. It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master, if they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the night, and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the house tops. Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father, and even the hairs on your head are all counted. So do not be afraid. You are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in Heaven But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my Father in heaven, do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I have not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up the cross and follow me, is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it. And those who lose their life, for my sake, will find it. Wow. Not a happy feel good scripture.

05:52

Yeah, no, not at all. Not at all.

Blake Smith 05:56

Jesus does not sugarcoat this. Jesus knows, as you mentioned firsthand, what it's like to be persecuted. I mean, he was persecuted, talked about, harassed, all for attempting to bring God's kingdom to reality in the midst of this world, with its deeply embedded power structures and systems, many of which have a different idea of how things are supposed to be. This passage is really straight talk, Jesus is being very honest with his disciples about what the cost of discipleship is going to be. Persecution, derision, oppression, alienation from family, tribe, even bodily death. The important thing as you mentioned earlier, Karin, is that he's using metaphorical language. So we want to be careful when we read the passage about Jesus comes as a sword and family member against family member. It's not that he comes with the sole purpose of dividing people and breaking apart families. But he knows that some won't get it. And as a matter of fact, they'll push back or fight against it. And the result will be division and broken relationships, that's human nature. Unfortunately, these words illustrate the emotional and familial cost of the disciples, when others be they your loved ones, friends, neighbors, any of those disagree with your choice to follow Jesus. That's what happens. And the costs occur between Christians as well. When we perceive the path to following Jesus in different ways. And this is not just something that happens among those who believe in those who don't these divisions happen between Christians, because since Christianity, especially in the western culture is the dominant religion, there are many who have used it to espouse hate, and exclusion and genderism, and sexism and homophobia. And quite honestly, in a lot of cases, they're politically oppressive. That's not the case

around the world, because in some places, Christians face persecution by other dominant religious groups, but in the Western nations where Christianity has had reign, if you will, it has been troublesome. The divisions among Christians may be different. But they are very real and costly, as we seek to faithfully follow Jesus the peaceful one. So how can we experience that?

Karin Peter 08:27

Well, I'm just taking a deep breath, because it's like, the scriptures are really hard sometimes to listen to, and then to kind of picture what is this like, in my real life, as a, as a religious person, as a semi religious person, or as a person that's just kind of trying to figure out where I am as far as what I believe? And when we hear these passages on how hard it really is to be thoroughly enmeshed in Christian discipleship, it's like, Matthew, you're not making my job any easier. Right, why? Right? It does, right. But, but in reality, there is a cost and many of us have experienced that cost to different degrees. So we're going to explore that this week. Here's some things that you can do to kind of think about the cost of the choices that you make. They're all loosely connected to discipleship, and I'll let the listener figure out how that is. But let's focus on cost this week. So this week, think about what is the cost of what you throw away? Whether it's food or household stuff or something you've don't need, what is the cost of what you throw away? And this week, what is the cost of asking for a straw with your beverage at a restaurant? It's something many of us just take for granted. What's the cost though, when you really think it through What's the cost of leaving lights on in an empty room? Many of us have fathers who could nail that to the penny. But we're looking in a different way from our own personal behavior. What is the cost of leaving lights on in an empty room and really work that back, do the dominoes and trace it back? And what is really the cost? What is the cost of ...

Blake Smith 10:22

Not only, not only the cost going back, but the huge costs going forward? Going forward? Yeah. What is the impact of these things going to have in the future?

Karin Peter 10:31

Long term? Yeah. What is the cost of not returning a text or a phone call? So that's different if it's a business text or phone call than if it's a personal or family text or phone call? What's the cost of not returning it? What's the cost of telling a small untruth? Or even a large lie? What's the cost of that if you really look at it in context, and then take a broader perspective? And then finally, how does following Jesus the peaceful one change the decisions or choices that I'm making?, is a question that we can think about long term?

Blake Smith 11:17

How does that next last question with the cost of telling a small untruth or a large lie? And there's other an example of a cost that I wouldn't necessarily think of but as you were saying it, when I tell a small untrue, or what I consider to be a small untruth, it may really be a large lie. And so the cost to me individually, personally, is just in justifying that. So I don't know if that makes sense. But it's

Karin Peter 11:50

Oh, yeah, I would see a small untruth that gave us inconsequential, but it might have really a significant impact on somebody else, or on my relationship with somebody else. Absolutely. So all in all, how does

follow me, Jesus, the peaceful one, change the choices that I'm making? Or that you are making? So that those are some things we could do this week to just explore cost... cost of choices and decisions?

Blake Smith 12:14

Well, a couple of extra questions. Those are some great questions in and of themselves, that could you could spend a great bit of time on, but I want to lift up a couple others. First would be how do I understand Christian discipleship? What does Christian discipleship mean? Let me give you a couple of examples. And you can decide whether they're good or bad, or whether they define yours. Or maybe it'll help you think of some other for yourself. One would be defining who is included or excluded from God's love. Is about being good enough to go to heaven? Is it about going to church every week? Maybe it's about having compassion and mercy on others, or helping feed the hungry and house the homeless, or working for justice and the pursuit of peace. Really, some different ways to look at Christian discipleship? But I think it's important that we understand how we see that. So that we can answer the second question, which is, what is the cost of following Jesus in my context? And, you've already really hit that. How does following Jesus the peaceful one, change how we make our decisions, and what's the cost ultimately, for us in that? So our blessing today is from the hymn "May the God of Hope," number 652, and Community of Christ sings and it's the text is by Alvin Schutmaat. I hope that I pronounced that right but will ask his forgiveness if I did not. Listen to these words. "May the God of hope go with us every day, filling all our lives with love and joy and peace. May the God of justice speed us on our way, bringing light and hope to every land and race, praying, let us work for peace, singing, share our joy with all working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call." Thanks for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We hope you'll join us again next time as we continue on our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.