

Coffee To Go | Proper 14

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to Coffee To Go, where we center ourselves in the season scriptures and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karen Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith. And we welcome you on this journey. So our question each week is, where is Jesus this week? Or maybe even where are we, with Jesus this week. So this week proper 14th, or the 14th, Sunday in Ordinary Time, which is the time that follows Pentecost, Jesus is back in the boat. He's been in and out of boats for a few weeks, as we've been walking with Jesus, and I guess rowing with Jesus. And Jesus has crossed for the other side of the lake, or it goes up a mountain for some time alone. And again, when he does that, Matthew is purposely pointing our attention to the fact just like Moses did. And so I think about that. So when I was a kid, I used to climb the hill by my house. And it when you got to the crest of the hill, that was a giant boulder you could climb on top of and when you sat, there was an open view, which is unusual where I live because the trees are so tall, there was an open view of the entire valley floor. If you climbed up there and sat on that rock, so that's what I picture when I picture Jesus going up the mountain, climbing up that hill, he can sit on that big boulder and look out over the valley. So the hill where Jesus is, or the mountain must jet right up out of the water, because it says that the disciples stay in the boat while Jesus goes up the hill. And so I'm thinking if there had been a whole bunch of shoreline, they might have come in on the shore, but perhaps there just... it wasn't how it was. And so they end up in the boat, unmoored, if you will, or unanchored as the storm comes up. So let's hear what happens Blake.

Blake Smith 02:27

, so just again, for context, as we begin today, we've just finished with the feeding of the 5000, the disciples and Jesus, and we pick up in the 14th chapter of Matthew with the 22nd. And 22nd verse through the 33rd verse. Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. But by this time, the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning, he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, It is a ghost. And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him saying to him, "you of little faith, Why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the winds ceased, and those in the

boat worshipped Him saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." And often when we hear this passage, we focus on what we might call the miracle side of it, the walking on water, and none of us walk on water. So it might be easy for us in this passage to go, this just doesn't apply to me except maybe the Peter part.

Karin Peter 04:26

Okay, I resent that. My last name is Peter, but I really can't because I would, I probably would have done the same thing.

Blake Smith 04:36

I think the one of the important things for me in this passage is what's going on kind of before and after, and in the midst of this so you've got Jesus who, even before the feeding, the 5000 went up to rest and to pray and to be with God and then was fully prepared then for what was to come in the day ahead. And then again, he's done with that. And he goes up to rest and to pray. And whereas the disciples were probably like, okay, great it's done, let's let's get in the boat and go before he changes his mind. And so when we get to the point of, of Jesus' interaction with Peter, you have Jesus who has spiritually prepared. He has taken time to rest, for that self care that is needed, that respite that we all need. And Peter, on the other hand, has just kind of gone on with life. And then in that moment of crisis, cries out to God for saving. And I think, honestly, if I'm being honest, I know I do that, you know, you, you get busy. And in life, you get the day gets going before you know it, you're in the midst of something, and you're like, God helped me get out of this. But I think there's important an important signal here for us, if you will, that, that self care, and respite and alone time is all part of healthy discipleship, especially when we spend time caring for others. And if you're a disciple of Jesus, in some way, you're going to either be expected to care for others, if that's just in the way you treat them, and respond to them and interact with them. Or whether it is you feed them or give them clothing or, or shelter. So, you know, here, in this passage, the boat being tossed about is a metaphor for the challenges and difficulties in a life following Jesus. We've said time and time again, it's not easy. It's not going to be easy. There's a cost to discipleship, and early Christians were persecuted, and didn't always know which way to turn. Even even for non disciples storms come up in life. And faith doesn't mean that we won't have choppy waters or leaky boats, those that's part of life.

Karin Peter 07:07

It's gonna happen. Yep.

Blake Smith 07:09

Yeah, I always remember my dad said, we had a boat for a while when I was when I was young. But the kind of saying about boats is they're just a hole in the water that you throw money into. I mean, there's always something that needs to be fixed. But what it what it does mean for us in this passage is that God is present with us in times of turmoil, and I think, expects and honors our need for self care, and for respite, so God's presence stills and calms the storm. Prayer doesn't change God, prayer changes us. It's a way for us to be present in the calming presence of God.

Karin Peter 07:52

Yeah, I love that. That's an adaptation of a CS Lewis line. Prayer doesn't change God, prayer changes me. That's that's the point of it. That's what Jesus is doing, shaping and forming himself and what we're called to do.

Blake Smith 08:07

So I think there's some great questions that come out of this. One would be how can I better prepare in advance for the crashing waves of life? And what kind of respite do I need? When have I felt, or do I currently feel unmoored, tossed about by life and by the waves? How have I sensed the Divine Presence extend a hand to me in my time of need? And finally, what keeps me from grasping the Hand of the Divine that has been extended because we believe God is always there. We have to be willing to receive. So what's keeping me from grasping that hand?

Karin Peter 08:47

Yeah, that's an interesting question. Especially I think, for people who have grown up in the US, because we are taught to be independent. Yeah. And that's important to us. And being Christian means you're interdependent. You're working in community, you're working with others you're you're working with, with God with the Divine Presence. And that doesn't work with our, our idea of getting to the top on our own. Tough questions this week. So one of the things that came to mind and I thought about it when I thought about how we could continue to experience this idea of being in this boat on choppy water and Jesus walking towards us, was that on the, on the website, allthingsarespiritual.org That's all all one word... allthingsarespiritual.org, we have some spiritual formation practices for kids, and one of them is actually called "Stormy Seas." And it's this wonderful kind of guided short guided meditation and it's written for kids, but adults don't. Don't let that stop you. It's a guided meditation about being on stormy seas and what that brings up inside of us the anxiety and the worry and stress and how we can prepare ourselves through spiritual practice to meet that choppiness. So check it out on all things, our [spiritual.org](https://allthingsarespiritual.org) under spirituality for kids, and then look for "Stormy Seas." The other thing that came to mind is, grasp and extended hand, work on your handshake, my dad made me practice my handshake as a kid, because at church, people were always shaking hands like after sermon or to greet you, after you know, you go walking out. And then whoever preached that Sunday would shake everybody's hand on the way out back when we had manners, which we don't do anymore. We just all get up and head to the local restaurant, but it used to be we shook everybody's hand on the way out. And I remember my dad teaching my brother and I had to shake hands properly and have a good handshake. So think about that, this week.

Blake Smith 10:59

That is something that really I mean, it's amazing how mindful I am of that not, not consciously, but when I'm shaking somebody's hand, I'm immediately taken back to those lessons because grip with a firm handshake, you know, don't don't grab with just your fingertips and all those things I've taught and so when it happens, sometimes somebody will you go to grab somebody's hands and they grab it before you can get like, yeah, all the way engaged, and you're like, oh, no, they're gonna think ... I have nightmares about that, as well.

Karin Peter 11:34

Well, as we do that, keeping in mind, you know, we still are talking about social distancing. And some of those things in our lives as we're kind of working our way out of the pandemic. So, you know, be responsible. And all of those things, but if someone extends their hand to you, go ahead and, and grasp that hand and do so as a way to really experience that person and to honor their presence as you shake their hand rather than just going through the motion. That's what I've got. Blake

Blake Smith 12:06

How about a blessing to send us off today. Our blessing comes from when I can't sleep by arienne Brathwaite lane.

Karin Peter 12:15

So maybe the disciples on the boat needed this. This is the blessing for the disciples in the boat.

Blake Smith 12:23

When I can't sleep, they could not sleep. So here we go. Quieting God, I asked for your gentle strength to cover my fears tonight. I'm afraid of the darkness, afraid of the uncontrollable, afraid of the unthinkable I'm afraid of tomorrow. How will I make it through the day? How will I care for people who depend on me? How will I perform to meet expectations when I cannot think clearly, or fall asleep on the job? I despair, I will never sleep again. Caught in the fear of coiling around my heart, and anxiety compressing my mind. I asked soothing one that your presence would fill me with holy calm, that you would lift this pressure and deepen my breathing. I asked that your Spirit of peace would whisper your truth in my ears, reminding me I need not be afraid. The fears feel so convincing and so real. In my heart and in this world. Though the fears may not dissipate, your assurance strengthens me to face them, to name them for the small things they are in comparison to the great one within me. Regardless of how I feel come tomorrow morning, you will not leave me to face the day alone.

Karin Peter 13:47

A marvelous blessing.

Blake Smith 13:49

Just a great way to capture what is often missed in this passage, but is really at the heart of it. So ... So thanks, everybody, for joining us again this week on coffee to go. We're glad to have you with us and we hope that you'll join us again here at coffee to go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.