

Coffee to Go | Proper 15

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:26

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 this week is proper 15th, or the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, and we are looking around and saying, Where is Jesus this week? Well, Jesus is back on land. Jesus has been traveling for several weeks by boat, and by land, and he is now somewhere near the border of Galilee and other occupied territories. And we know that he's close enough to those occupied territories because of the encounters that he has first with Jewish leaders, and then with a local Indigenous woman, part of a class of people who had been displaced by these constantly shifting borders, and upheavals as national boundaries shifted. So a way to think about it might be to think about the southern USA border, and the back and forth between US and Mexico on that border, or the borders in Europe, I think it's the Alsace region, I'm sure I've pronounced that completely horribly, and somebody's going to call me out on it. But this region that has been shifted back and forth between Germany and France, a million times with all of the different wars and occupations in Europe, or even the continued struggle in the Middle East with Israel, and Palestine. There are displaced people in all of these situations. And, and that's who Jesus meets this week. First, he encounters some Jewish religious leaders, and then he encounters this indigenous displaced person. So let's hear what those encounters look like.

Blake Smith 02:19

All right. So our passage this week comes from Matthew chapter 15. And it is really two stories in one. So we have verses 10, through 20, and 21, through 28, a total of 10 through 28. But there's like you said, multiple encounters here.

Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand. It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" He answered, "Every plant that my Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted, let them alone, they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." But Peter said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever it goes into the mouth, enters the stomach and goes out into the sewer. But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart. And this is what defiles for out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, splendor, these are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile." Jesus left that place and

went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And just then a Syrophenician woman came from that region and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David, my daughter is tormented by a demon." But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him saying, "Lord, help me". He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters table." And then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish," and her daughter was healed instantly.

As I mentioned, this passage is often seen as as two separate stories, I think. Very rarely heard them told together, and yet they create this picture. So you've got, you've got Jesus saying in the first part, it's not what goes into your mouth that defiles. It's what comes out. And that defiles and then he turns right around, and what comes out of his mouth. Even you know that it's not fair to feed the children food for the dogs. (Very offensive, what he says to the woman,) Very offensive. It's incredibly offensive. And so you've got this... And I'm reminded of a passage that we did a couple of weeks ago from Matthew 11, where Jesus turns to God and says, Thank you, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent. And I would add the ones we might consider the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to infants. So here's this woman who would have been outside all of the right ways of being. She's Syrophenician. She's a woman, probably poor. And she has the gall, if you will, to kneel at Jesus feet and say, give me what you got, even if it's the crumbs on the floor. (Yeah.) And it I think it awakens Jesus in that moment. I mean, we see a real sight of Jesus humanity in that moment. He's kind of like, Oh, yeah. And so...

Karin Peter 06:23

Yeah. So when you read that, Blake, I think a lot of times when we read the Scripture, especially when we're reading about Jesus, we want Jesus to be perfect in everything. He wouldn't ever do any wrong. And so we try to rationalize this particular scripture, and to some great moral, you know, truth that we don't fully comprehend, to make Jesus, okay, Jesus didn't do anything cranky here, Jesus made, it had to be something we simply don't understand. But in reality, when you read through this and think about what it was, Jesus, as you said, fully human, fully divine is what we hear talked about Jesus, that Jesus was both. If Jesus was fully human, that means he made mistakes, and he had biases, and he was cranky. And he said things at times that were offensive, because that's what it means to be fully human. And I have to go there with Jesus, because otherwise I can't go with fully divine, if we're going to say fully divine, fully human, and we have to acknowledge what fully human means, as well as, as well as fully divine. So I'm willing to say, this shows Jesus at his worst here. And, and he is insulting to a displaced immigrant or foreign woman. And I'm frustrated by that when I read it. But I'm excited about the fact that Matthew leaves it in here, and that the woman prevails. So I just want to call your attention to this in the interpreters, annotated NRSV Bible, it actually says, but the woman persisted to make her case. And I all you feminists out there, know where I'm going with this. It was no matter what Jesus said, nevertheless, she persisted.

Blake Smith 08:10

Absolutely, absolutely. And thank goodness in so many ways that those who are outcasts are overlooked, persist in seeking justice, and what is God's will for them as well. And because we, my I will

speak for myself and my privilege, I forget, I forget that it's easy. I think that everybody's got what I've got, but they don't, but they don't. So. So again, you know, in what's important, another piece that's important here, in addition to that persistence is just the acknowledgement and the recognition that what comes out of our mouth matters. Does it build up? Or does it break down? And sometimes it's unintentional. Sometimes it's unintentional, but we need to be mindful of that, because it does make a difference. And in this case, what the woman said in saying, Yeah, but even the dogs eat the scraps that are on the Masters floor. It's not necessarily building up or breaking anyone down. But it's important because it expresses a level of faith. That the Pharisees, the educated, the intelligent, the wise, didn't have.

Karin Peter 09:27

Yeah, yeah, that just the smallest bit is sufficient. Yeah. Yeah.

Blake Smith 09:32

So a couple of questions that come to mind. And right at the top of it is how do you feel about Jesus insulting the woman?

Karin Peter 09:40

I already said how I feel so all your listeners will just have a moment of quiet while you figure out how you feel the Jesus you know, have done something like that? Or have you put Jesus in the perfect box? And this must be a misprint. When has an interaction with someone unexpectedly exposed your own bias? Yeah.

Blake Smith 10:11

How can I be more intentional in recognizing the worth of every person? How can I be more intentional? And finally, I think it's important for us to be very conscious and consider, do the things that come out of my mouth build up, or defile and break down.

Karin Peter 10:34

So that last question is where I kind of went with how do we experience this this week? How do we keep this understanding kind of building with us this week? And so I was thinking about what does it look like to draw a visual of what is happening here. So in in the scriptures, when the hardest talked about it's, it's meant it was understood that all of these things that we do and say, and think come from the heart, and the heart is the center of our character, if you will. And so I was thinking about drawing a heart on a piece of paper, and then writing the types of words I want to come from my heart and out my mouth this week. So I want I want affirming words, I want nurturing words. I want. I want words that are firmly speaking truth to power, I want just words to come out of my mouth this week. And if I'm going to be all Jesus, the like, I want compassionate words to come out of my mouth this week. And so write those. Draw a picture of a heart and write the kind of words you want to come out of your mouth this week... friendly, careful, gentle, decisive, whatever it is. And then put that paper where you eat dinner. And each night as you eat dinner, whether it's at a table or standing by the sink, wherever it is. Look at that heart and check yourself to see. Are those the words that came out of your mouth? Or do you have some work to do tomorrow? So we can give that a shot this week and see how it goes.

Blake Smith 12:13

All right, well, how about our blessing. Our blessing today comes from John O'Donohue, and it's titled "The Inner History of a Day."

No one knew the name of this day, boring quietly from deepest night. It hit its face in light, demanded nothing for itself, opened out to offer each of us a field of brightness that traveled ahead, providing in time ground to hold our footsteps and the light of thought to show the way the mind of the day draws no attention. It dwells within the silence with elegance, to create a space for all our words, drawing us to listen inward and outward. We seldom notice how each day is a holy place where the Eucharist of the ordinary happens, transforming our broken fragments into an eternal continuity that keeps us somewhere in us a dignity presides. That is more gracious than the smallness that fuels us with fear and force, a dignity that trust the form a day takes. So at the end of this day, we give thanks for being betrothed to the unknown, and for the secret work through which the mind of the day and wisdom of the soul become one.

Thanks again for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us as always next time on coffee to go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.