

Coffee To Go | Proper 21

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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 Karen Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith. And we welcome you on the journey. So our big question every weekend here, as we enter October is where is Jesus this week. So we've been on the road with Jesus for some time. And we have finally made our way into Jerusalem. And when we are there, Jesus begins to tick off the religious leaders in the area by doing some things like picking the moneylenders and the sacrifice scammers out of the temple. And he didn't do that in a very nice manner. And so the religious leaders just found that to be scandalous. And so they start asking him questions that in the vernacular of our day might be similar to "just who made you the boss?" and something or something to that effect. And so our Scripture lets us kind of listen in after this has happened in the Gospel of Matthew. So Blake, you want to take it from there?

Blake Smith 01:41

Absolutely. So our Scripture today comes from the Gospel according to Matthew, the 21st Chapter, the 23rd, through the 32nd bursts, Jesus centered the tribal courts. And while he was teaching the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things," they asked, "and who gave you this authority?" Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I'll tell you by what authority I'm doing these things. John's baptism, where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or human origin?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say from heaven, He will ask then why didn't you believe him? But if we say, of human origin, we're afraid of the people." For they all hold that John was a prophet. So they answer Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. What do you think? There was a man who had two sons? He went to the first and said, Son, go and work today in the vineyard? I will not, he answered. But later he changed his mind and went, then the father went to the other side and said the same thing. He answered, I will, sir, but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered, Jesus said to him, said to them, "Truly, I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you, for John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."

Probably not a big surprise here. But the leaders are a little bit of wishy washy. They, they have come to catch Jesus in a trap. And he turned the tables on them. Jesus probably would have been a really good politician the way he was. (Absolutely, yeah.) Yeah, he turns the table on him and they don't know

where to go. They don't want to, they don't really want to ally themselves with the idea that John's authority comes from heaven, the pro-John the Baptist camp, or actually, even the anti-John the Baptist camp, because they're either going to prove that John has authority from God, or they're going to really tick off the people who believe that John's authority from God, so I mean, you know, if it's heaven, if the authority comes from heaven, then John has the authority from God. And if John has authority from God, then so does Jesus. So it's actually saying a couple of things. If human origin is the source of his authority, then the crowds are going to turn against him. So they ended up standing for nothing, which sounds kind of familiar regarding a lot of, and I'll include myself in that in some things have happened over the years just standing up for nothing, because not sure what other people might think. They're afraid to stand up for what's right or defend a person or a principle that is unpopular. But Jesus in this puts them on the spot with this parable, telling them that they will essentially follow tax collectors and prostitutes into heaven. And that's, that's just downright offensive, I imagine, to the leaders of the church. But what he's telling them and what he's telling us, essentially, is how you've responded or acted in the past, doesn't matter in the long run. I mean, yes, it matters. We are called to be disciples and to do what's right. But what matters is how you respond in the moment. So prostitutes and tax collectors, who haven't always followed the law when it was important, they chose to believe. And so how we respond in the moment, particularly in the presence of Jesus, is what matters. So when we find ourselves in similar situations, afraid to speak truth to power, we have to ask ourselves, do we stand up for and articulate this idea that we and Community of Christ believe that God welcomes all responsible interpretation of Scripture is important that love wins? Is that the kind of message we want to stand up for? Or are we going to follow some of these groups that say, Well, God hates this group? And God hates that group? And we should be fearful of immigrants and we should boycott Bud Light kind of

Karin Peter 06:39

Uh, there went half our listeners Blake?

Blake Smith 06:41

Well, you know, not talking about it doesn't get rid of the reality. That's (yeah, absolutely) so in our face these days, and it's not popular to talk about it. So. (Yeah). So it leaves us with some additional questions, I think. I think we need to ask what are some aspects of faith that we feel pretty certain about, that we'd be willing to stand up for? And what are some things that we might have to answer, like they did that the leaders of the church did? I really just don't know. There's a difference, though, and saying, I really don't know. Because I don't want to answer because it'll get me in trouble. And I really don't know. Anyway,

Karin Peter 07:26

The second I really don't know is really a doorway to learning more. Right, right. I don't know. And so since I don't know, maybe I need to find out.

Blake Smith 07:36

Right? Yeah. So it's being honest and introspective, not just an excuse, and a blockade. So another question, you know, when have I stood in silence, rather than take an unpopular stand for something? When did I remain silent? And why? What did I stand to lose, or stand to gain, by my silence? And then

finally, what are some pieces of faith that I feel strongly enough about to share them even in the face of adversity?

Karin Peter 08:09

Ah, that's really getting to the central point of that scripture, isn't it?

08:13

Yeah. Yeah.

Karin Peter 08:16

So how can we live in this scripture and experience it this week? I'm wondering if one way might be to have a really frank discussion about faith with someone you trust and be willing to tackle a tough question or two questions that are out there, maybe in the public realm that you have shied away from. Or maybe in your family or your household group, you can think of one thing you can do together, that would be a step forward on your spiritual journey, like saying grace at meals, or lighting a candle and spending a couple of minutes in prayer, in the evening or in the morning, when you gather or simply rest in silence together and be present with one another for a couple of minutes. Or even try a different spiritual practice. If you have kids, we always point you to allthingsarespiritual.org where there are kids spiritual practices that are fun to do together. But there's also a number of spiritual practices in Project Zion Podcast on I think it's holy isn't holy grounds, like which one is the spiritual practice, Awaken to God's Presence. There we go, Awaken to God's Presence, and you can do some of those together as well. Or maybe it's a different kind of practice. Maybe it's once a week you share something, you know, you take someone to coffee or you bake something and share with someone or you offer money to a charity or do a chore for someone but to be more present, with how you understand your faith journey and what discipleship means for you. Or if you want to live in this week. This is the first week of October, so you can do something that cares for animals. or the environment as part of your spiritual journey. October 4 is the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. And in Community of Christ, we have the St. Francis prayer that's part of our humanity. And St. Francis was the patron or is the patron saint of animals and of the environment. So it's a good time to take a stand on the healing and wholeness of, of our environment of our of creation. And many faith communities have a blessing of the animal service on St. Francis Day. So you know, Gather your friends, gather your pets, and read a blessing that we're going to end with one that you can use here or you can find your own. But donating pet food this time of year to your local animal shelter is also a practice that brings spiritual blessing as we share together in Christian community and figure out what it really means to live as disciples of Jesus.

Blake Smith 10:59

All right, our blessing today is in honor of St. Francis, as you mentioned, it's written by Joanna Macy, and comes from Earth Prayers. We hear you fellow creatures. We know we are wrecking the world and we are afraid what we have unleashed has such momentum now. We don't know how to turn it around. Don't leave us alone. We need your help. You need us to for your own survival. Are there powers there you can share with us. I liken work slowly, very slowly. Time is my friend. This is what I give you. Patience for the long haul. And perseverance. It is a dark time as deep diving trout. I offer you my fearlessness of the dark. I lion give you my roar, the voice to speak out and be heard. I am caterpillar. The leaves I eat tastes bitter now. But dimly I sense a great change coming. What I offer you humans is

my willingness to dissolve and transform. I do that without knowing what the end result will be. So I share with you my courage to Well, thank you everybody for joining us in this episode of Coffee to Go we invite you to join us again next week at Coffee to go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and the holy days of the Christian tradition.