

Coffee to Go | Proper 23

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, and I'm here with Blake Smith. And we welcome you on the journey. So, this week with Jesus, we are still in Jerusalem. We are in Ordinary Time, even though it's coming towards the end of Ordinary Time for us. And this is the time in the in the calendar in the scriptures and in the lectionary where Jesus is being questioned by religious authorities who are not pleased with him. And the parables and stories and teachings that Jesus uses keep indicting them, and they are getting more and more frustrated, and they grumble and look for ways to trick Jesus into saying something for which he can be vanquished. He is the enemy to them, and they wish to vanquish him. And so they keep trying all these different avenues to figure out a way to catch him in a trap. So today, Jesus is telling a parable about invitation, which Blake and I both serve in the office of 70, so that is a topic we are very partial to, who is invited to God's table into God's realm. I refer to here and this scripture as the kingdom of heaven. So let's find out.

Blake Smith 01:56

All right, and before I start the passage, I just want to say we've, for the last couple of weeks, as we've gone through these interactions with the Pharisees and the scribes, we've had some pretty graphic pieces in the parables that can be used and quite honestly have been used to describe what God is like. And I just want to point out that the use of hyperbole by the gospel writer is very evident here. And there are deeper meanings in these passages. Quite often, it's actually the the listeners who are interpreting what God's response ought to be based on their own understanding of current culture. And so as Karen said, you know, we're going to focus on the invitation, although there are some words in this that we might find that's a little caustic, that's a little hard.

Karin Peter 02:51

It is. But the hyperbole, Blake, don't you think it's for shock value? Sometimes I read this and I go, Matthew was just hammering, you know, the listeners, because this is, this is decades after Jesus was gone. The writer of Matthew never met Jesus, but boy, Matthew is using a hammer here.

Blake Smith 03:09

Right, right. And actually, they're in their living in this time, where Nero is in charge, and there's a lot of stuff going on, right against the people.

Karin Peter 03:18

The harsh reality, yeah, the harsh reality.

Blake Smith 03:22

of a lot of persecution. So all right, so our passage does come from the Gospel according to Matthew, the 22nd chapter, the first through the 14th verse. Once more, Jesus spoke to them in parables saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he said other slaves saying, Tell those who have been invited. Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready, come to the wedding banquet. But they made light of it, and went away, went to his farm, and other to his business, while the rest cease to slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged, he sent his troops destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, the wedding is ready. But those invited were not worthy. Go therefore, into the main streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet. Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found both good and bad. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." That last line is one that I've heard, used over and over again, of an excuse and a reason to leave folks out. So we want to just again, hyperbole, hyperbole hyperbole in this. (Yeah) What's important here is this, this idea that those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found both good and bad, so that the wedding hall was filled with guests, there was no one too good. There was no one too bad. And there is no one too good or too bad for inclusion at God's table. Goodness and badness are irrelevant here. Everything that has gone before all of our mistakes and justices shame worry. It has no bearing on God's invitation. God's invitation is always there. It's only a willingness to accept the invitation with humility, and an open, repentant countenance that matters.

Karin Peter 06:17

Isn't that the point is not the point of the of whoever the guest was not wearing the robe that we're trying that's trying to be made here. It isn't that oh, there was someone that was too bad. But no, that's not is that that person came in and was not willing to accept the invitation with humility and repentance and, and that kind of thing.

Blake Smith 06:37

Right, right. Yeah. When we, when we think about one of the themes through Matthew's Gospel is this idea of radical discipleship ... taking the laws and the commandments, and the guidelines, and the rules and all of that stuff that the Pharisees had held up, and taking them and going an extra mile in this context of God's boundless love and mercy. So the kindness and the repentance. So what is required here is a transformed heart. The transformed heart brings about a physical, visible change in one's countenance and their attitude, the way they present themselves. When we put on compassion, and kindness, and humility, it's like, putting on a different robe, we are seen differently, we present

differently. And that is, it wasn't the way they came in, it was the unwillingness, like you said, to repent and to accept this grace and mercy and allow it to transform them, (yeah) and get the real meaning of the gift of being invited to the banquet. So some questions that come to mind for me. When have I been surprised by an invitation to someone's home, for dinner or for celebration? And how did I respond?

Karin Peter 07:58

I was thinking about that, Blake. And it's kind of like, what does this have to do with this? But then I thought about what does an invitation entail? It entails my willingness to come and be in relationship with someone, right, and share a meal at the table? And that's part of transformation, I think.

Blake Smith 08:16

Yeah, I was just at a gathering in this last week. And there was someone who showed up to the gathering. That was kind of a surprise, because I knew that a family there was some disagreement between a family member of the host and this other person. And my original thought was, oh, why was that person invited to the party? That's asking for trouble. And so I asked the host, and he said, I intentionally invited that person because I wanted to see them, I wanted to be in relationship with them. And so the other person had to deal with it.

Karin Peter 08:53

Ahhh. Taking responsibility, ouch, for our own actions ouch, ouch.

Blake Smith 08:59

There was some intentionality to that invitation. On a more personal note, I would say, who was invited to my party or my table? Everyone is worthy of an invitation to God celebration. And so I have to wonder, are there some unspoken or unresolved criteria that I use to determine my own worthiness or someone else's worthiness to participate in the sacred community I'm trying to create. And finally just really going on that idea of of our countenance and transforming and robe I would say, what, what do I wear when I show up for God's celebration? Do I bring an attitude of haughtiness and anxiety and animosity or superiority? Do I carry with me grudges, fear or shame? And what would it look like to put on a different robe? What would it look like to come with an attitude of hopefulness and repentance, and anticipation, compassion or forgiveness?

Karin Peter 10:04

Those are great questions for the week. I have an idea of how we might kind of live in this scripture this week. But one of them might be just what you said, Blake, which is to imagine, each day when you get dressed, What is a piece of Your countenance that you probably don't need to be wearing today? If you really want to talk about discipleship and what? What piece, what robe might you need to put on Instead, each day, and to be intentional, I love the Scripture, I think it's Colossians, to clothe yourself and compassion. And imagine that imagine putting on your shirt or your jacket, and that's compassion today. And you're putting your arms through the sleeves, and you are wearing that today and see what it does for you. The other,

Blake Smith 10:50

I'm just gonna be transparent here real quick. And sometimes I have to make sure that my countenance matches the clothes I'm wearing. Because because I've been involved in ministry and been to a bunch of camps, I have a lot of shirts that say, you know, something, a scripture passage or something like that. And it's like, Okay, does my countenance match this? Because if I go in somewhere, and I'm frustrated, and people go, Wow, interesting. You've got "Jesus" on your shirt.

Karin Peter 11:20

I have a good story about that. But it's not suitable for public telling. Say that to another day. So, yeah, yeah. So another way we can experience this this week is to have an experiment with invitation this week. So invite somebody to coffee or lunch, or to even just go for a walk with you. Make your conversation, a celebration, with kind words and hopeful questions and joyful responses. A lot of times when we gather with others, we might fall into gossip or discussions of things that are not always healthy and transformative. So make your conversation with this other person this week, a real positive expression of what it means to be invited together to approach God's divine table with a countenance of humility and repentance, and forgiveness for yourself and for others.

Blake Smith 12:24

All right, well, our blessing today comes from Celtic Blessings for Everyday Life, which were compiled by Ray Simpson. May God who clothes the flowers and feeds the birds of the sky, who leads the lambs to pasture and the deer to water, who multiplied loaves and fishes and change water to wine, lead us, feed us, multiply us and change us until we reflect the glory of our Creator through all eternity. As always, thanks for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us here at Coffee to Go again next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.