

Coffee to Go | Proper26

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SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the seasons, the scriptures and the 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 we asked the question, "Where is Jesus this week?," and this is still part of this really intense period of teaching that we go through. And then in the last few Sundays of Ordinary Time, it's like the tension is escalating around Jesus. And so he's really trying to share with us those things that are really important. So here, Jesus is actually gonna be talking about something that I think it's probably really relevant to the listeners of Coffee to Go, because we tend to speak maybe more to folks who want to not who are willing to say that there might be some difficulties in being a disciple and following the Christian tradition. And we're pretty open about those here on Coffee to Go. So today's teaching is about hypocrisy. And to be more specific, the hypocrisy of religious people. And I think, unfortunately, I fall into that category more often than I would like to do so. But this teaching is kind of a I don't know, it's a way to explore maybe what I hear is a common complaint from people who don't want to participate in organized religion. They'll say Christians are hypocritical. I don't want to go because Christians are hypocritical. Which is true, sometimes I'm hypocritical, I acknowledge that. But I'm trying really hard not to be but I'm human. So you know, deal with that, and let's move on. That's not exactly what Jesus says. (No) So what did what did the gospel writers say about it?

Blake Smith 02:35

The scripture for today comes from the 21st chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, the 1st through the 12th verse, and Jesus is pretty clear about what he thinks here regarding hypocrisy. So here it is.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you, but do not do what they do. For they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders. But they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for people to see. They make their phylacteries wide and their tassels on their garments long. They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues. They love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi. For you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth Father, for you have one father and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors. For you have one

instructor, the Messiah, the greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Karin Peter 04:04

Okay, before you start, like ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch. Okay, now go.

Blake Smith 04:13

Well, my first reaction will be well, I don't have tassels or phylacteries. So this isn't talking about me, right?

Karin Peter 04:19

You might want to explain for our listeners, what those are.

Blake Smith 04:24

So phylacteries are leather boxes containing text from the Torah and the phylacteries were worn, or are worn by men during morning prayer. They were one on their head and one on their arm, and it reminds them of God, and to keep the law in their life every day. The tassels on the other end represent the 613 commandments found in the Torah. Now there's one tassel on every corner of the prayer shawl. All. And it's the combination of the strands and the knots added to the numeric numerical value of the Hebrew word for the tassels, Tzitzit, that equals 613. And I won't go any deeper into that, when they were the prayer shawl though, the tassels being on each of the four corners of the shawl represents symbolically that they are surrounded by the commandments. So the point there is, is to make a show so that everybody knows how holy and righteous you are. And to be speakers and preachers have the law and cast that burden on everybody else as if they had already achieved those things. And Jesus's saying ... aaaah.. he's kind of like the people you talked about the people that I have met on the streets who say, you know, I don't, I'm sure I want to have anything to do with Christianity. It's just a bunch of hypocrites. They look really nice when they dress up and go to church on Sunday, but then you should see them. That's not what I experienced when I see them on the streets the next day. So yeah, you know, and we have a lot of that going on around us. In our political, social and religious circles. It's not, it's not just politicians. It's in social groups, it's in our social gatherings. It's an even in our churches, where people want to achieve status and power. It's human. It's human, we do that. And you mentioned that you have times of hypocrisy. So I'll just join that I'm not going to list all of them. But I will be willing to claim because we are, we try to be transparent here, like you said, on coffee to go. That, as hard as we try, we're human. And some people don't try as hard as others obviously. But Jesus is saying, you know, we need to try because to be servant is to be in line with God and with the ways of Christ. It's important for us to try to as disciples to truly follow the ways of Jesus which are not about power, and status, or oppressing others. They're about humility and servanthood, and compassion and mercy and offering grace and all of those things, which are contrary to the political world, the social world and even religious world that oppresses and mistreats and impoverishes others for the sake of saying that they're better than or they have more authority. Discipleship isn't about status. And so we shouldn't try to fit discipleship into cultural norms. Rather, it's more important that we allow discipleship to reshape the culture into something that brings blessing for others. Yeah. And there's a lot of criticism, in the conversations about hypocrisy that, you know, Christianity, and discipleship is just trying to, to submit to

culture. But reality is discipleship ought to work to transform culture, because it's a different way, different way of living in the world.

Karin Peter 08:32

Well, it turns our cultural what we think is normal in our culture upside down, because our culture, what's normal is to climb a ladder, it's to get to the next highest position, it's to have some kind of power or control or authority over others and, and it's so steeped into who we are that we don't even notice that that's kind of what we do, but it goes along with the, you know, the coveting that, that people you think about Don't covet what your neighbor has, well, we tend to covet status. Or we want that. That's our our cultural norm. And so what I'm hearing you say and reading here is that, no, it's a matter of changing that norm so that what we try to achieve is a deeper sense of servanthood.

Blake Smith 09:27

Yeah, so a great example for me, and we talked about humility. And I think in normal culture, humility is seen as a weakness. Yeah. Yeah. So not something that we would aspire to. When our discipleship is consistent. Hopefully we can begin to change the norm of culture.

Karin Peter 09:47

Yeah, yeah.

Blake Smith 09:51

So we have to consider them you know, this week as we're thinking about that, a question for us to consider would be what part of following the way of Jesus ... that humility and mercy and compassion and servanthood... which of those are the hardest to follow?

Karin Peter 10:07

Hmmm. Yeah, pick a day. Oh my goodness.

Blake Smith 10:12

So yeah. Are there areas where our pride of status have too much power in our life?

Karin Peter 10:19

Oh, I was thinking about that, Blake. Yeah, yeah, that's hard. And it's kind of one of those things like, what do I want to be known for when I die? And so is it power and status, Or is it do I want to be known for humility and serving others? That's where I'm looking at that. So do I had areas of pridefulness? Yes. Let's go on to the next question.

Blake Smith 10:48

The last question that I would have is, what are some aspects of your current culture and context that upholds your beliefs about following Jesus? So I think, you know, we think about all the things we do wrong, but what are some of the things in our culture and contexts that help us stick to our beliefs, uphold our beliefs, and following Jesus?

Karin Peter 11:11

So in my neighborhood, on my street, there are probably a dozen houses. And this neighborhood functions as a little community where everybody helps each other. Everybody serves each other, everybody takes the time to check on each other. It's really, it's interesting to live here and to have it be that context. That's the kind of the water we swim in here, which is very different than other neighborhoods I've been in.

Blake Smith 11:38

Yeah, that's amazing. That's amazing.

Karin Peter 11:42

So going back to the phylacteries and tassels, because

Blake Smith 11:48

I don't have any!

Karin Peter 11:50

favorite parts of these scripture, those were symbols of status and, or knowledge even. And so that's where I get my pridefulness. Because I'm knowledge based. I, that's my, that's my spiritual way of connecting is through intellect and reading and acquiring knowledge. So what are yours? Think about that. This week, what is a symbol of status or knowledge that you take a great deal of pride in displaying to the world and put it away this week? Just pick one, maybe it's that fancy car you just got put it away this weekend, ride your bike, or maybe it's a purse that has a great designer label on it, we'll put it away this week and carry something else. Whatever it is, whatever it is, put it away, and instead put in its place humility and servanthood. And see what your week is like to live without that symbol, status and power.

Blake Smith 12:56

Wow, wow. Well, how about a blessing to close this out today? I think we need that at this point. Yeah, I know I do. So our blessing comes today from "For Cultural Humanity," excuse me, "For Cultural Humility" by Terry J. Stokes. And this is adapted.

Oh, Holy Spirit, the tonic for toxicity and the repair of fragility. We beseech thee for a radically humble and contrite Spirit, with which to approach a cross cultural encounter, reveal our privilege, unconscious bias and blind spots to us and make us heartbroken at the ways in which they are evidences of a broken world, give us capacity to engage new perspectives receptiveness to rebuke resources with which to educate ourselves and resolution to become better allies through the work of Jesus Christ. Amen.

As always, thanks for joining us this week here at coffee to go. We invite you to join us next week for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.