

# Coffee to Go | Second Sunday of Advent

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

wilderness, immersion, prepare, Christ, Spirit, John the Baptist, Advent, Christmas, love

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **Karin Peter** 00:27

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons 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 this week, where are we? Well, it's the second Sunday of Advent, the preparatory period of time before Christmas. And this week, we are actually out in the wilderness. So think of wilderness as kind of out in a desert area away from the city a bit. And, and I don't know, Blake, what I found is that when you look at wilderness, kind of in Bible commentaries and such, they'll say that when gospel writers used wilderness, they were trying to evoke kind of the sense of what the people went through during the Exodus, the time in the wilderness to give some continuity, and flow to their gospel traditions with that. So take that if you will. They're out in the wilderness. So they're with their with kind of a rock star preacher, guy. And his name is John the Baptist. And John the Baptist had multitudes of followers, and he was kind of a thorn in the side of the religious leaders, which I really like because John is known as the forerunner. And Seventy in Community of Christ are known as a forerunners of Christ's peace. And that's kind of in the model of John the Baptist. And we too, at times, can be thorns in the side of religious leaders. So you know, I think maybe that's a good thing to have that moniker on us as well. I don't know Blake, what do you think?

### **Blake Smith** 02:24

As long as I don't have to eat locusts, I'm more than happy to be a forerunner.

### **Karin Peter** 02:29

Eat locusts and wear hides Yeah, well,

### **Blake Smith** 02:32

that's right. That's right. although it is getting cold here in Chicago. So the Campbell hide might be good.

### **Karin Peter** 02:41

That might actually work. Well, let's hear what John the Baptist has to say to this large group of followers out in the wilderness.

### **Blake Smith** 02:51

All right, well, our Scripture today comes from the Gospel according to Mark the first chapter, the first through the eighth verse, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in the prophet Isaiah. See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord make His path straight." John, the Baptizer, appeared in the wilderness for claiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem, were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Now, John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "the one who is more powerful than I is coming after me, I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Every time I read this passage, I think about clearing the way, I'm one of those I love to cook. But the kitchen has got to be spotless. And let me just be clear, it's not going to be spotless when I'm done, because I can use every pot in the whole kitchen. But, I cannot start until the kitchen is clean. And so in this passage, and a lot of what we read about what John the Baptist is called to do, all has to do, has a connection with justice issues and making sure that systems are just and things are just to make way for this path that Christ is going to make on his on his appearance, if you will, on Earth. And so it's really important that John is trying to level the playing field and there are a couple of things about it. I mean, first of all, You can't Help I get captured by here's this man. He's in the wilderness. And as you mentioned, you know, the wilderness that time after the Exodus, where there's uncertainty, you don't know what's coming. For some of the wilderness might be chaos and absolute pandemonium, whatever, and we live in different levels and varieties of that. But here's this guy in the midst of this thing, something's got to change. And when you know, so he's calling the people to baptism and repentance. And in by repentance, here, it's talking about just turning and going a different way. So change the way of your life, change the way you treat people, change the way you interact, because Christ is coming in Christ is bringing something new... I (John) am not him. I'm just getting things ready. The other piece for me is that, you know, here's this guy in the camel's hair. He's eating locusts. Though we're reminded, of course of Elijah. He represents kind of this individual who's not. I mean, we talked in a previous episode about the Pharisees with their phylacteries, and they're long tassels, you know, and you think of them perhaps in robes, or whatever. And here's the guy, I mean, he's in the wilderness, he's probably maybe a little dirty, I don't know, I just kind of imagine that. And for me, that is this representation of ... he represents everybody, not just what we might consider the righteous, but God calls all of us and John is calling all nations to be in this process of preparing the way for the Lord and creating systems that are just. So, you know, it's, it's really important for us to hear that. As is typical with God, God doesn't work in expected ways. So here's this unexpected guy, drawing people in. And we will hear in future weeks a little bit more about what John does in his testimony. But, preparing to receive the Spirit as we enter this time of Advent, I think is what's really important for us to hear in this passage. But I'll open it up in with some questions because I think for everybody that might be different. So the first question would be, What do you hear n John's message, preparing the way for Christ? What does that mean for you at this particular point in your life, in this season this year? What is it that you need to do to prepare the way? What does it look like for you, you might also ask, and I'll ask, I'll just put this in the first-person terms rather than point the fingers suggesting that anybody else might need to repent?

**Karin Peter** 07:59

I don't know. I'm thinking this applies to me, too. So ...

**Blake Smith** 08:02

So, I'm gonna say, what might I repent from? What might I turn away from... head in a different direction... on this second week in Advent In order to prepare? And what do I need to do to prepare the way to fully receive Christ's presence in my own life as we come closer and closer to Christmas, and continue to travel through this Advent season? Finally, and this is something that we haven't really touched on. But I think it's important here, because John is John the Baptist. And he is immersing people in water. So what might it feel like to be immersed in the Spirit to truly feel spiritually embraced, and welcomed, excuse me, by the Divine Presence as we move toward Christmas?

**Karin Peter** 08:56

Well, I think that last question of like, really resonates with me. I can kind of sense you know, immersion in water. If you've ever been in a soaking tub, or a swimming pool or a lake, we have kind of an idea in our mind about being immersed, but immersed in the Spirit is a different deal. So I think a way that we can kind of experience that a little bit this second week of Advent is to practice immersion or, well sort of immersion, I guess, for this practice, but practice immersion of the Spirit, in the sense of the Spirit being a lavish gift of the senses. It's a lavish gift from the Divine One to us, this comforting presence of the Spirit. So this week, with keeping in mind that we are trying to experience being immersed in the Spirit with some warm body oil, or baby oil, or hand lotion, or even good soapy water when you're washing your hands. really immerse your hands in whatever that substance is. Lavish it on. So your hands are completely covered, completely immersed, luxuriating in the warmth, and the moisture of that experience. Really allow yourself to rest in that moment. And then after you rinse your hands, note the difference in your skin. How does it feel? How does it look? How does it smell? And how does that inform what immersion in the Spirit might mean for you?

**Blake Smith** 10:55

I love that. A little secret confession. If I had a superpower, it would be to be able to stay underwater. I love being in the water. I don't know if that has anything to do with being raised in Florida by the beach. It doesn't really matter. I just love being underwater, and I wish I could hold my breath longer. I was fascinated when the latest movie of Avatar came out. And they were talking about how the actors and actresses trained to be able to hold their breath for long periods of time. And I'm like, how do I take that class I would just I don't know what it is. But I really love so that feeling of being enveloped. I love that image and that's great.

**Karin Peter** 11:37

That whole feeling of being immersed and we can all do that. Your kids can do that. You can do it several times this week with different substances and just see how your skin reacts to that immersion and make that comparison for your own life.

**Blake Smith** 11:55

Thanks for that. Well, let's have a blessing, shall we? Our blessing today comes from Meta Herrick Carlson, we've heard from Meta (she's one of my favorites) before and it's from "Ordinary Blessings for the Christmas Season."

Do not holler over your shoulder or crane your neck to see a portion of where you have been. But rather, turn your whole body around and plant your feet anew prepare for something whole, healing and restoration that summons your posture and attention. Listen to the distance and longing. Squaring your shoulders for repair and careful motion in this direction. Come home to yourself by way of truth about who's you are. Reclaimed by a relentless mercy that awaits.

(Beautiful) Yeah. Well, thanks for joining us here at coffee to go this week. We invite you of course to join us next week for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.