

Coffee to Go | First Sunday of Advent

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

waiting, blessing, Advent, light, darkness, awake, Jesus, christian tradition, hope

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. And it's a new journey this week because this is the first week of Advent in what's called year B. There are three years in the lectionary cycle. So B, year B. And we are starting again with the four Sundays of Advent as a season. And then we're going to move through that same calendar that we moved through last year of Advent, then Christmas, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter in the same cycle. So this is a happy New Year Day for this since we're starting the new calendar year of the Christian tradition. So where are we with Jesus of this week, and it is the first week of Advent, so Jesus hasn't been born yet, but let's all pay attention. So this is how the scriptures work in the lectionary is that they move around to help us understand more fully what it means to be in a particular season. So in this first week of Advent, we are actually with Jesus standing outside the temple in Jerusalem, with some of the disciples. And it has been noted that the temple has been refurbished and is quite impressive. And the disciples make some comments about it. And Jesus kind of takes that and runs with it with a little bit of a startling commentary to come at it. So let's hear what Jesus has to say about this impressive structure.

Blake Smith 2:07

Startling commentary, that's an appropriate way to put it. So here we are in the Gospel of Mark the 13th chapter, the 24th, through the 37th verse.

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken, then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory, then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth, to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree, learn its lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near at the very gates, Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things have taken place, Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But about that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge each with his work and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come in the evening or at midnight,

or at cock's crow or at dawn. Or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you, I say to all keep awake. But we might not like the fact that this passage begins with these comments about the sun being dark and the moon not giving light. But what it does for us is that creates this stark contrast to the light that is coming. We live in a world that is in a lot of places in sufficient darkness. I mean, not literal darkness, but the darkness of oppression and all of the things that come with it. And so it's important for us to acknowledge the reality because in acknowledging the reality, we can also move toward the hope that is in this Advent season as we await the coming of Christ. And so this mini apocalypse, if you will that starts off this passage. It signifies There's going to be an end to this current world. And because that end is going to take place, it makes room for God's reign, we talked a little bit about the reign of Christ last week as we finished ordinary time, but God's reign on earth. And I'll just say, God's reign. The apocalyptic language and just in case there's anybody, apocalyptic language is end-time language, about the end of times, and that, too, is not something that's seems very joyful for us. But we want to note here, or we need to note here that it's used by people who have for centuries, been occupied and overrun and oppressed and exiled. I mean, they've had a pretty tough run of it. So it's not meant to be literal. But it does point to the seriousness of the situation. And to remind listeners, both then and today, that this show will end, that imperial powers will be dismantled, and we ought not to give up hope. Sure, there's suffering that we go through. But we need to keep going. Because in the end, if if we stick with it, because God sticks with us, exhaustion, gives way to vigor, despair is overcome by joy. And that, again, is where hope begins to be born in this Advent season. In the darkness we wait, but the light will come.

So as we enter into Advent, it's a good time to reflect on what are the hopes that sit within us, as we wait in darkness into the coming light? And that will give us a couple of questions to think about? What are the signs and symbols that bring me hope? In a world of chaos and craziness, where a lot of people don't even want to watch the news anymore? Think about for yourself, what are the signs and symbols that bring you hope?

Karin Peter 7:17

I love this scripture, Blake, the sign there with the fig tree that it was the little, the little branches and a little leaf starting to come. You know, we can see that in our own world. If you have a tree or a plant, those little tiny, fresh, light green shoots come up. And that's the symbol of hope that's used in that Scripture. And I just think that's lovely.

Blake Smith 7:41

Yeah, as a Florida boy who is so ready for snow to be over when that time comes. I'm always looking out my window for the new growth.

Karin Peter 7:50

And it makes me wonder what the signs are, like in the southern hemisphere? What are the what are the kind of signs in the natural world that begin to bring hope? So maybe some of our listeners from the southern hemisphere can message us and let us know.

Blake Smith 8:07

That's a great point. Well, the second question would be, what parts of our current reality, our practices, our habits, our fears? What is it in our life that needs to be dismantled, to allow us to move more fully into the light to be able to fully receive that light?

Karin Peter 8:29

That's a good Advent question. Yeah, as we wait in darkness, knowing the light will come, it's a good time to prepare that and have those reflections ready. So this week, as we do that, as we think about our own current reality, spend some time waiting. And rather than darkness, let's transfer that to silence for our practice this week, and spend some time waiting in silence. So I don't know about you. But for me, and people I know when we wait, we get out our cell phone and we start to scroll through Facebook, or we tap our fingers and get antsy, or whatever. So this week, when you're faced with some time to wait, maybe you're doing an office visit and you're waiting in the waiting room, maybe you're waiting for the bus or in the line at the grocery store to check out or perhaps you're just waiting for your work day to end. Whatever it is. Wait in silence and allow yourself to settle into that darkness of the silence with no distractions. No cell phone, no magazine, no talking to someone. simply wait and be attentive or awake to the Spirit waiting with you this week.

Blake Smith 9:59

I don't know if you're and I think that the Spirit has already moved on looking for something to do, because I...

Karin Peter 10:06

I'm gonna want to hear next week like how you

Blake Smith 10:11

Oh, thank goodness, the Spirit is not as impatient as I am.

Karin Peter 10:16

Yeah

Blake Smith 10:18

How about a blessing?

Karin Peter 10:19

Yeah, this is a blessing for waking, which is great for a scripture that says what I say to all keep awake. This is from Jan Richardson, and it's in Circle of Grace. This blessing could pound on your door in the middle of the night, this blessing could bang on your window could tap dance in your hall could send a dog loose in your room, it could hire a brass band play outside your house. But what this blessing really wants is not merely your waking, but your company. This blessing wants to sit alongside you and keep vigil with you. This blessing wishes to wait with you. And so, though it is capable of causing a cacophony that would raise the dead, this blessing will simply lean toward you, and sing quietly in your ear, a song to lull you, not into sleep, but into waking. It will tell you stories that hold you breathless till the end. It will ask you questions you never considered. And have you tell it what you saw in your dreaming. This blessing will do all within its power to entice you into awareness. Because it wants to be

there to bear witness to see the look in your eyes on the day when your vigil is complete. And all your waiting has come to its joyous end.

Blake Smith 12:01

Now that is a phrase that I like, waiting joyous end. I can do that. Oh goodness. No, I do like that. I hope for that kind of blessing of I have to wait somewhere this week. So.

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