

Coffee to Go | Epiphany 2

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SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

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 Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith. We welcome you on the journey. So today is the second Sunday after Epiphany, we're in this season of light. And last week, the light shone on Jesus as the Beloved Son of God. And today it illuminates Jesus in kind of a new way. And so when we ask ourselves, where are we with Jesus this week, we are actually in Galilee, Jesus has traveled there, and us with him. And in Galilee, his follower, Philip wants to introduce other people to Jesus. And so here, we learn a little bit about culture at that time that not much is expected out of this teacher from Nazareth. So let's hear what this is about Blake.

Blake Smith 01:25

All right. Well, our passage comes from the Gospel according to John and it is the first chapter, the 43rd through the 51st verse. The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee, he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, "We have found him about who Moses in the law, and also the prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him, he said to him, "here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit?" Nathaniel asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathaniel replied, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel." Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, you will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "very, truly, I tell you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." So why does this matter? There are probably groups of people that any of us might, just because of the nature of where they're from, the way they dress, or the culture we perceive that, that they are from that we might go, what did they have to offer? Who are they to say that they're the expert in this and so here's this cold splash of water in the face of Philip, who is so excited. He can't wait to tell Nathaniel that he has found the Messiah, the Son of God, and Nathaniel's like, well, What good could come out of Nazareth? And so there are just a couple of things here. I mean, first of all, Nazareth. In all honesty, it wasn't a place of high reputation. Jesus was from a poor family. And there were people who dismissed him due to his origins and his lack of status. I mean, this was, as we said, many, many times, not what you might expect of a coming king. He wasn't born into royalty, it was no big fanfare, there was just this guy that people were claiming was the Son of God. And Nathaniel wasn't ready to buy into it until, until Jesus acknowledged knowing him before he even showed up. But I want to just before I get

to that, I want to pick up on this piece of Philip being so excited. And I think there are times in our lives when, when we're excited we've had an encounter, we might be hesitant to share it with someone. But it was a meaningful experience for us that may have affirmed the presence of God and then we share it with someone and their reaction might not be what we hoped for. And I think that is probably the case here with Philip. And so I would just say that we need to persist in those moments and acknowledge that, that God or Christ shows up to us in different ways. And I would even say in ways that we individually need it, and so everybody's may not they may not believe even in a particular type of encounter, but if it is the encounter that you have experienced, don't let that cold water dissuade you from the joy and excitement that you have gotten from having that encounter and, and don't be hesitant to share it, that's likely going to happen, you're likely to run into that kind of response might be cynicism, or just outright nastiness even. So, from that point, then again, we have this encounter with Nathaniel and Jesus. Jesus has to actually kind of come and talk to Nathaniel for Nathaniel to get it. And it is in a quick and simple sentence, that Nathaniel's doubt, and question is taken away. And it is this simple phrase, "I saw you under the fig tree," Before Philip called you. And Karin, I know you've done a lot of work on this idea of fig tree. But the one of one of the things about the fig tree is in this culture in the Palestinian culture in these days, to go to say, you're going to go and sit under the fig tree is, in a way, an invitation to conversation. So if you take your Talmud and you go sit under the fig tree, and others see you there, it is an acknowledgment that you are there to learn and converse and to grow. And so for Jesus than to acknowledge to Nathaniel, I saw you under the fig tree. I know what's in your heart, I know that you want to learn, I know that you want to grow, I know that you are ready. And that connection, I think between Jesus and Nathaniel really opened that doorway for Nathaniel to understand exactly the authority and, and importance that Jesus had so that he wasn't just some easily dismissed individual from some unknown or unworthy town.

Karin Peter 07:10

There, it is really interesting, Blake because he actually says you're a person with no deceit in you, or no, you know, evil intention in you. And it's so opposite from what Nathaniel said about Jesus at the beginning. Yeah, it's quite a contrast. Yeah.

Blake Smith 07:27

So another piece out of that is that Jesus knows our potential and sees our potential, even before we might see it. And so that's important for us to, to understand. Some questions we might ask ourselves, starting with this idea of there being groups of people, sometimes whole groups, or maybe just individuals, and again, maybe because of a characteristic or where they're from, or the color of their skin, or what we perceive to be their lifestyle, we might ask ourselves, when have we dismissed someone else without taking the time to get to know them? Or understand what they bring to the table? And when have we felt, when have you felt, looked down on due to your circumstances or status or place of origin? Those are some important questions. It's kind of a two way things I know that, that we all experienced that as well, the the side of being looked down on, that kind of helps, for me, I think when I'm able to think of those times that helps inform me about how I feel, and makes me less apt to do that to someone else. Another question, when have I had an encounter with the Spirit or with God, or Jesus, that I really wanted to share with someone? And then did I share it? Or was I afraid to share it? And why? What was the response? If I did? What was the response?

Karin Peter 09:00

Yeah, so we've talked a couple of times like that you and I both serve in the office of 70. And so we're, we're pretty practiced, I guess, at sharing about God, about this walk with Jesus. But even as practiced as we are, I still feel that sometimes. I still sometimes hesitate because I'm not sure how my words will be received. Or I'm super careful about how I word it, right? So that nobody takes offense. And I don't want to be confused with this kind of ugly Christian discourse that's out in our society. And so i i Back away from saying some things that I might have said before, so yeah, it's it's an interesting reflection question.

Blake Smith 09:47

Oh, here's a quick confession for me. I moved into the home I'm living in now about three years ago, and it was well into a year before I allowed the conversation between myself and neighbors to go far enough to talk about what I did. Because I wanted to get to kind of get a feel of them first. Because I have been in places where, you know, I was rejected by seeing, I feel like once people knew what I did, they were like, kind of avoiding me. So now I'm even as a full-time long-term Minister, a Seventy in the church, I still have times of hesitation. [that's human] So yeah, yeah. So the last question that I think we might consider this week is, what potential might be seen in me that I had not yet acknowledge about myself?

Karin Peter 10:46

Yeah. Why didn't discover about himself? What can we discover about ourselves that Jesus illuminates in our lives? Yeah. Yeah. So I was giving some thought to that, Blake. And so I had a conversation with my dad, several years ago. And he didn't want to continue the conversation. He told me that from his perspective, I no longer valued his opinion. And he said that because of our radically different political perspectives, just like many families are experiencing today. And I was really caught off guard by that, because I do value his opinion and insights, just not his political ones. I tried to make a point to name that and, and I did at that moment, I made a point to name what I valued right then so he knew that I was not dismissing all of his opinions and ideas and insights and wisdom that he had, just in the political realm did I disagree with him? So from that experience, I would say this week, friends and listeners, listen for the goodness in others and make a point to really try to see past things that annoy you, or divide you, and look for what has value in that person. And even what denotes the potential you see in them, and name it, say it, share it, offer that as a gift to somebody else this week. All right. Today, I'm gonna offer the closing of blessing before Blake signs us off, and it's a little bit long, not too bad, but it comes out of a blessing. Let's see it comes out from Ash and Starlight: Prayers for the Chaos and Grace of Daily Life by Arianna Braithwaite Lehn. And it's called, "When I've been running from what God asked." So I think it kind of fits a little bit after Philip and Nathaniel, but let's see. "When I've been running from what God asked." Patient one, I can be so reluctant, so resistant, I can hear your call and flee in the other direction. I can receive your vision and hide from its hope. I can see your sweet grace, and then whine that it's not fair. I can stand so ready to judge those around me when my ground is no higher than theirs. And then patient one, you come again. You come to my fearfulness, arrogance, and boundary lines with your mercy, compassion, and steadfast love. You come to my small vision with an eye, a word, a touch, and can swallow the universe in love. You come and share how forgiveness is always an unlocked door. What lies behind it might be unexpected, but it promises to unbind my hurt with welcome, strength, and affirmation. You always give me a chance to change, as

many chances as I asked for and more. So, patient one, please restore in me some love, trust and hope, a clearer picture of what my life might look like if everyone were a sister and brother, because they are. Open my relentless grip on what I've always known and been, that I might embrace the calling before me here and now.

Blake Smith 14:53

I wasn't liking that too much at the beginning because I was seeing myself way deep in that, but I love the blessing. I love the blessing and the request. So, thanks for that, Karin.

Karin Peter 15:06

It pulls it out at the end.

Blake Smith 15:09

Yes. I was starting to sweat a little bit. Well, thanks for that Karin and thank you to all our listeners, as always for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us again next week for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.