

# Coffee to Go | Fourth Week of Epiphany

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus, sabbath, synagogue, compassion, God, astounded, Christ

## 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, and we welcome you on the journey. So our question is, where are we with Jesus this week, and it is the fourth Sunday after Epiphany. And we have traveled with Jesus to Capernaum. And it is the day of the Sabbath, which would have been Friday night. Sabbath begins at sundown and lasts until sundown on Saturday. So on Friday night, everyone heads to the synagogue, and that's where Jesus is going. And that's where we're going because we, we, this helps us keep in mind that Jesus was Jewish, he was an observant Jew, and his disciples were Jewish. And so when it was Sabbath, they all went to the synagogue. And we are going along. So let's hear what happens there. Blake...

### **Blake Smith** 01:29

Yeah, all right. Well, our Scripture today comes from the Gospel of Mark the first chapter, and it's the 21st, through the 28th Verse,

They went to Capernaum. And when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at His teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue, a man with an unclean Spirit, and he cried out, "what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him saying, "Be silent, and come out of him." And the unclean Spirit convulsing him and crying with a loud voice came out of him. They were all amazed. And they kept on asking one another, What is this? a new teaching with authority, he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him at once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

This is an interesting passage, because it's actually probably if we take time to think about it, it's kind of a favorite of the rebels in the Christian world who like a little bit of a Jesus who's not always doing the popular thing, but maybe causing a little trouble. So I love this that Mark says that Jesus taught as one having authority and then throws in the little jab, not as the scribes.

### **Karin Peter** 03:07

I made a note on that too Blake. I was thinking, how many times have we listened to somebody teach a class to do a presentation, and it's so dry, and it's so boring, and you just want to keep your eyes open, so you don't nod off? And contrast that with what? Because that's kind of what Mark is saying about the scribes. Then contrast that with Jesus having authority. At least we know he was a really good teacher. So that's helpful.

**Blake Smith** 03:32

Absolutely. And they were astounded. I mean, not too many times, do we hear somebody coming out of a Sunday worship in Community of Christ and being astounded by what was taught that day.

**Karin Peter** 03:45

Well, hopefully somebody does sometimes. And, and the result is this holy moment, right, this sacred moment.

**Blake Smith** 03:47

Right? And then the other thing here, again, is that the people going to the synagogue weren't perfect either. Surprise, surprise., Because we tend to go in and act like we have everything together, but it was a man with an unclean Spirit who recognize Jesus (in the synagogue) in the synagogue (Yeah) But, the bouncers let him in. He got in with an unclean Spirit. Right. And so, you know, actually, probably for us as we enter church, it's good that we don't have bouncers because reality is we all go into church with an unclean Spirit from time to time. If, you know, we all bring our stuff with us, even though we can put on a good face, so. You know, so it's just kind of a neat passage, because Jesus healed the man, this is the third piece, is that Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. So he's breaking the code, he's breaking the law. And so not only is a great teacher, not only are there people in the synagogue with unclean spirits that are allowed in, here's Jesus kind of pushing back and doing something that was not really acceptable. Because, at the core of Jesus ministry is compassion and justice making, that's what really matters. (Yeah) You know, it's not about oh, did I check off all the boxes and do everything right, according to the law, but, is compassion at the center of my ministry. And so with this guy here in the synagogue who has an unclean Spirit, again, he's the one who recognizes the presence of the Holy One. It's not the scribes, it's not the Pharisees, it's not the religious ones who sit in the front pew every Sunday and appear to be perfect. It's someone from the outside. And, it's all a part of, for Mark I think, the beginning of the dismantling of oppressive powers, showing that it's, it's the common folks along with Jesus, this rebellious kind of Jesus that is going to do what's right in the moment. And, you know, in Community of Christ, I'm reminded as I read this passage, and this, pointing toward the dismantling of the oppressive powers, our words of counsel from section 163, in the Doctrine and Covenants, number three, verse three, "you are calling to create pathways of peace, in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. Above all else strive to be faithful to Christ vision of the peaceable kingdom of God on earth, courageously challenged cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God." I mean, that courageously challenge, Jesus, courageously challenging the religious authorities, and doing what is right to bring about the reign of God, and that's an important message for us, even here in this passage.

**Karin Peter** 06:54

Well, and it's important to remember, that's what makes the moment holy. (Right) That's when the kingdom of God is manifest when we behave in that manner, when we behave in the manner of Jesus and His teaching.

**Blake Smith** 07:08

Yeah. So Jesus came in, he stood in spiritual authority, and even the spirits obeyed him. And like I said, earlier, the people were astonished, because he was, he was doing just that bringing about the reign of God making it present. Here we are in Epiphany and acknowledging the presence, the revelation of God, and that is exactly what Jesus is doing here, for these people in this passage. So some questions we might ask ourselves ... when do we extend compassion? Even when we might be afraid that others will think negatively of us are, you know, they might wonder why we're doing it? Or question why would we have compassion for that person or that group of people? So when do we kind of go against the grain, if you will, and offer compassion? When are we blind to pain and oppression? We go about our lives, you know, just happy go lucky things are good, we're blessed. And it's easy for us to miss the pain and oppression that's around us. So we might ask ourselves, are there people in our communities, our family, our faith circle, that we simply don't notice? That we put our blinders on and don't notice? And then finally, you know, I'm really captured by this piece that the folks who are in the synagogue were astounded in this moment. And I wonder, when do we allow ourselves to be astounded or amazed by the presence of the holy? Not through these major events, but simply through the small acts of compassion where we recognize the reign of God?

**Karin Peter** 08:55

Yeah. That's a really good question to kind of ponder, like, when have I been astounded or amazed by the unexpected, I guess, reality of the holy in our midst, as the people were in this particular scripture, as they experienced kind of a spiritual epiphany in this season, that for me, very much. So maybe that's what the being astounded really is all about. So when I thought about how do we continue to experience this scripture this week, one way is simply take a Sabbath. Maybe today, maybe Tuesday doesn't have to be Friday night, through Saturday evening, just figure out for you a period of time where you can take a Sabbath because the important part of that is, you're not going to work, you're not going to be obligated to do something. There's no duty that you need to fulfill. And really, in many cultures, it means turning off electronics. So no Facebook, no social media, no distractions and instead look around you and look for acts of compassion that you can offer to others during that Sabbath period, where you are observing, rest and Sabbath and the presence of the holy. So that's what I've got for that this week. And that's a challenging one. I'm gonna look at that for myself. As we record this, Monday is racial justice day, where we honor Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States. And that's a good time to look around and take some Sabbath time and say, What acts of compassion can I offer that work towards racial justice? So, if you're listening today in early 2024, there you go, some ideas to experience this scripture this week.

**Blake Smith** 10:53

That's great. So our blessing today comes from Meta Herrick Carlson, and we get a lot of blessings from her and today's comes, it's called "For Empathy" from *Ordinary Blessings*. The world is not lacking opinions, simplified by hindsight, advice for the weary subscriptions to the standardized, but we are starving for love that resists these defenses, that can stand in the midst of

suffering without getting too awkward, or filling the silence with trite Proverbs, wanting to earn its place by fixing what doesn't need fixing at all. Listen for the Spirit, who guides us into showing up? Who shows us how to feel on behalf of another, who urges our quieted bodies alongside the ones who are not broken but lonely, the ones God loves already and always.

Well, as always, we thank you for joining us here today at coffee to go and we invite you to join us for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. Have a great week.