

Coffee to Go | Fifth Sunday of Lent

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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 carrying Peter here with Blake Smith, we are your hosts, and we welcome you on the journey. So Blake, we're in our fifth and final week of Lent. And at the end of this period of time, we'll move into what's called Holy Week, Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday. So the question of where we are with Jesus this week is kind of the last time we ask this before Holy Week begins what is happening in this final week? Well, in the passage that we're going to talk about, it's almost at least it caught my attention that when I went to type in the passage, some Bibles use subtitles, and the subtitle for this passage was "Some Greeks Want to See Jesus." And the first thing that popped in my head is that line that old you know, vaudeville jokes, "Some Greeks walk into a bar," it was kind of that kind of feeling of the subtitle. It's like, oh, and then what happened. So that's what this passage is. It's where all this comes to a head here in Jerusalem. The religious authorities are really starting to worry that too many people are listening to this radical Jesus. And now we learn even Greeks, Gentiles are hearing about Jesus and coming to see. So certainly something has to be done about this problem. So that's where we are. Some Greeks came to see Jesus.

Blake Smith 02:04

I love that. I'll never be able to see this passage again the same way. So the passage comes from the Gospel according to John, the 12th chapter, and it is the 20th through the 33rd verse.

Now, among those who went up to worship at the festival, were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus, Jesus answered them, "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very, Truly I tell you, unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also, whoever serves me, the father will honor. Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say, Father, save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name," then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder, others said, an angel has spoken to him. Jesus answered, "The voice has come for your sake, not for mine."

So why does this matter this week? Well, it's interesting, because in this passage, you mentioned that this is this is the Greeks stepping in. Somebody new. But they are really a small part, or would appear to be a small part of this passage. But one of the things that's important for us to remember is that seeing and hearing, represent understanding and belief. And so they want to see. They want to believe. The Greeks want to see Jesus. Now, the passage doesn't tell us whether or not the Greeks got to see Jesus, at least at that moment. Because Jesus begins talking about his death. Jesus knows that what's about to happen, is going to get ugly, and he's trying to prepare his followers for his eventual death. And it's through that, obviously, that many of them will actually see Jesus for the first time, for who He really is. As is true in all of life, things have to come to their natural conclusion. And so we've seen through the ministry of Jesus that when you poke the enemy, the enemy retaliates. [yes], that in our own lives as well. When you challenge power, power, often crushes Now, I'm gonna say this and maybe it will be offensive to some, but the reality is that Jesus was offensive to many ... to those in power especially. And he offended the powers and leaders of the world. And, that offense was about to come to its natural conclusion, which was Jesus' death. One of the things that I want to lift up about the passage is verse 26. And I think this is important to our understanding of God's inclusive nature. So we've got the introduction of the Greeks who are there wanting to see Jesus. And I think, as we've mentioned before, anytime something like that comes into a passage, we ought to ask the question, why is the writer so specific, and so let's look at that verse 26. And that verse 26, is this, "whoever serves me, must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also, whoever serves me, the father will honor." As believers, we might read this, and I would suggest that we probably often read this with the emphasis on the word me. So whoever follows me, whoever they're following us this way, whoever claims my name, whoever does this in a particular way, whoever serves me, my father will honor. We do this to emphasize our Christian belief that Jesus is the one way to God or at least a common belief in Christianity. But in the context of these Greek visitors, what if we read it a different way? What if we put the emphasis on the first word, "whoever" rather than "me," and this is what it might sound like, whoever serves me, my father will honor. When we put the emphasis on the whoever it changes the tone of the passage, God's honor becomes more inclusive. So whether you're Christian, or Jew, or Muslim, or Taoist ... whoever bears the light, whoever redeems the loss, whoever comforts the forlorn, whoever feeds the hungry, whoever works for justice, that's who God honors. It really kind of changes the tone, and becomes more inclusive, which I think is important. When we begin a passage, acknowledging that someone from the outside is there wanting to see, wanting to be a part of this thing that is happening and taking place, they may not claim the name of Jesus. And we're going to have to ask ourselves how we feel about that. Because we've kind of been taught growing up that you've got to say just the right things, to fall into that honor of God. And yet there are many in our world, who are what we would call "building the kingdom" and living in that reign of God, but might use different language.

So some questions that we might ask ourselves. We know that Greeks were outsiders, and they had to go through several layers of folks just to get to Jesus. I mean, it's interesting that the passage says he went to Philip, and Philip went to Andrew, and then Philip and Andrew went to Jesus. So we might ask ourselves, do we make it hard for others, to get to Jesus? Or to get to our religious beliefs and practices? Are they kind of you got to be a part of the inner group, an insider? Also, who is an outsider that I might have tried to keep away? Am I okay with non-Christians accessing divine presence being equal in God's purposes to Christians? Can other people participate in that and get equal honor from

God? And finally, do I think religious descriptors and titles sometimes just get in the way of God's purposes?

Karin Peter 09:14

Thanks, Blake. Sometimes I think, oh, no, I'm totally okay with, you know, whoever God honors and then other times I find just how petty and small minded I can be. So these are good questions to reflect on and this fifth week of Lent. So as we think about how we might experience this passage, this week, there's kind of two ways that came to mind. The first would be, I'd say the Greeks were unexpected members of the party at this particular moment. So who's unexpected in your life that you might want to talk to you about your own spiritual journey, or your own understanding of the Divine or your own set of beliefs, maybe someone you would not have anticipated seeing yourself share with. Or, on the reverse side of that shared spiritual understanding or encounter spiritual encounter that you had. Share that with someone. I think about one time I live in the Pacific Northwest where the trees grow like grass that is too huge and everywhere, it's always green. And so you don't get a lot of undergrowth. Sometimes, because of all the trees, it's very shady. But I remember walking outside one day, there were some red tulips blooming at the base of a very tall fir tree. And all of a sudden, the sunlight came through the branches of the tree and just lit those tulips on fire. It was just absolutely gorgeous was like a burning bush moment. And that moment is just seared in my brain as a visual image of God's presence. So that kind of thing. How can you share an encounter with someone else this week?

Blake Smith 11:03

I love that. And you know, I think important thing here is to not be afraid to share it ... those types of experiences. You don't know how someone else might take it or and you don't have to explain what you believe about it or think about it. But share those those "aha" moments. That's really neat. So I think you have our blessing today, Karin.

Karin Peter 11:27

I do. It's a little bit longer than some of our blessings. So bear with us here. This is called a Thanksgiving prayer after a deeply religious experience. So I would classify my red tulip moment as a deeply religious experience just for context. As the disciples of your son were set afire by your Divine Spirit on Pentecost, this sacred time has encouraged me to greatness within the scope of my simple life. I may soon forget the words that were spoken and the names of those who were involved. But what has happened has truly shaped my heart. May the activities of my heart bear witness to the great grace of what has happened to me in the day to day world to which I return, made this time of spiritual renewal become part of the fabric of my life. May it be part of a lifelong enrollment in the School of prayer. May I build upon it with daily prayer and with the discipline of my spiritual life, nourished by prayer, reading, thought, and action, made the seeds of this renewal time, take root and flower forth in a life song of glory to You, my Lord and God. Amen. And that comes from "Prayers for the Domestic Church" by Edward Hayes.

Blake Smith 13:12

That's great. Well, to our listeners, whatever your journey is, especially this week with Jesus, we hope that you will be able to find times and ways whether it be through prayer or spiritual practice or whatever to find that significant religious experience because God does want that for all of us, not just for some, and you might be surprised where you'll find it. So thanks for joining us here this week at coffee to go and, as always, we invite you to join us for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.