

Coffee to Go | Third 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 Karin Peter, here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So in this third week of Lent, we are jumping from Mark's gospel to the Gospel of John. So as we hear the Scripture today, we want to keep that in mind. And our question, as always, is where are we this week with Jesus? And, we are engaged with Jesus as we watch kind of the final actions of ministry that unfold right before Holy Week, right before the entrance into Jerusalem that we acknowledge on Palm Sunday. So there are some things happening that are kind of culminating the ministry of Jesus but also bringing some other events kind of building to the climax of the story. And onto our holy week ending. So today, we have gone with Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. And Jesus is not happy. [Blake: No, he is not.] Let's hear it Blake.

Blake Smith 01:47

Alright, as you said, our passage comes from the Gospel According to John and is the second chapter, the 13th through the 22nd verse.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple, he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables, making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, with the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, Take these things out of here, stop making my father's house, a marketplace. His disciples, remember that it was written, "zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "this temple has been under construction for 46 years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the Temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this. And they believed the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

So why does this passage matter in our journey with Jesus? Well, first, we have to ask the question, who are the moneylenders and the sellers of livestock? What is going on here. And so this is the time of Passover. And at Passover, people would come from all over some fairly long distances to the temple. And that was for the purpose of worshiping celebrating the Passover. And it was a worship that required ritual practices. So if you imagine some of these people, especially the ones coming from long

distances, they didn't bring with them, the livestock or what they needed for the ritual sacrifices. So they needed to purchase it when they arrived or obtain it in some way. And here were these people selling the livestock and not just selling it for a fair price. They were using it as an opportunity we might think of when we're on a long trip, and we stop in the middle of nowhere to get gas. And when there's not a lot of competition around that person might be able to cost gouge, price gouge us and we might pay a higher price. And here were these people. And the sellers in the marketplace knew that they needed these items. And so they were charging premium prices for them. And really

Karin Peter 04:37

Blake, wasn't it really the poor who were be taking advantage of the worst? I mean ...

Blake Smith 04:44

Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. And so they might have very little, they just want to make a sacrifice. And the people in the temple a first of all, they're inside the temple which is a problem because they have turned this place of worship into a marketplace. But probably more importantly, yes, they are taking advantage of the poor, especially in in charging higher prices, and taking more in exchange fees for the for the changing of money. So they're making it really difficult for the folks to be able to accomplish what they come there for. One writer asks, though, "is it misplaced anger?" So who should we be angry at? Is Jesus angry at the moneylenders and the market stall vendors? Or is he actually angry at the religious leaders? They have all people should have the welfare of the poorest at heart. And they are the ones that are allowing the swindling and extortion of the poor to take place. So it's probably a combination of both. He's frustrated that these people are taking it, these lenders and vendors are taking advantage of the poor. But ultimately, it's the religious leaders who have allowed this to happen. And we don't know. But there's certainly a possibility they might have even been getting a cut from that as well. So either way, Jesus is angry. And he acts decisively with authority. And he's going to overturn this travesty, travesty, and right this injustice. So right there, in the middle of everyone, he calls them out. And this is not just anywhere, again, it is the center of the seat of religious power. And he's calling them out. And there are a bunch of folks watching and asking, in this case, On whose authority is he doing this, just who does he think he is they challenge Jesus. And he responds to their challenge by raising the stakes. And he says to them destroy this temple. And in three days, I will raise it up, of course, we see that their immediate thought was to the physical building of the temple and going that's just not possible. But what he's doing here is setting the stage for the arrest and the execution that is to come. And the resurrection, then that comes in three days.

Karin Peter 07:19

So Blake, as you were reading the Scripture, I had these images that I've never had before in the Scripture. And we talked about that in preaching classes and that kind of thing, when we teach about how you could be preaching this scripture, 100 years, and you'll still find something new each time. Okay, so here's what happened. So he gathered the chords to make a whip. Right. And so all of a sudden, I have this image of Jesus walking around and just picking up anything he can find to like braid into a long cord. And he's muttering as he's doing this, about how they are destroying this holy atmosphere, right, this Sacred Place, they are destroying the reason to gather in worship, they are destroying the idea even of sacrifice and ritual in and so then when, when you said and he says destroy this temple, and I'm thinking you could just see him kind of muttering and going, Wow, so destroy this

temple, like pointing to himself. Temple and I'll raise it up in three days. And all of a sudden, the whole tone of that episode changed for me just in this reading today.

Blake Smith 08:40

And I think even as you say that I because that's the way I see this passage. I, I probably read a little of that into it into the into the expression because it's like, Look, you want to play this game, Destroy this temple. I'll help you. Yeah, yeah.

Karin Peter 08:56

Yeah, just a different way to look at it on this third week. Yeah.

Blake Smith 09:04

So this whole process of the money lenders and the vendors was really in a way an exclusive practice, because it was creating this atmosphere of exclusion, again, making it difficult for some to be able to fully participate. And so some questions that we might ask ourselves is, what aspects of the current Christian culture and I'm going to say it, or nationalism, and exclusion of others things that are happening daily in our current world? What aspects of those things would Jesus challenge today? What might he be going around the room muttering while he gathered chords? You know, I love that image. Karin. Thanks. Another question is, When have I challenged authority or power on behalf of others. And when have I taken action to write an injustice being done to someone else, Jesus is taking action. So when have I taken action to write an injustice that's being done, and what am I willing to sacrifice to right an injustice? Because sometimes, if we speak up against something, it's something that we benefit from in the beginning, so.

Karin Peter 10:28

Yeah, I think that's the key to how we can experience this particular scripture. This week, there's so much in there that brings so many images that we could kind of lean on for our Lenten experience, but I'm thinking that maybe it is simply speak up this week. So when someone is disparaging someone else unfairly, or, for that matter, fairly disparaging someone in public, speak up in the face of prejudice? Speak up, if in the face of racial injustice, speak up in the face of patriarchy, which for many women in Western nations today comes in the form of what we call mansplaining. Or men treating women as if they aren't as thoughtful or articulate or intellectual, or knowledgeable as males. So speak up, that's a form of patriarchy, speak words of support to those who are treated unfairly. So that's our practice. Our Lenten practice for this week is to speak up on behalf of others.

Blake Smith 11:41

Well, our blessing today comes from for organizers and activists by Terry J. Stokes.

Oh, God of Rosa, Fanny and Coretta, we commend to thee all organizers and activists, Champion those who envision and pursue a just society, anoint them with a double portion of the Spirit of the prophets whose mantle they were sustained the clarity of their vision, the power of their communities, their resources, and the longevity of their political and structural accomplishments. Give them courage to speak truth to power, endurance for the struggle and space for rest and self-care and make their

work a foretaste of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns with our mother and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end, amen.

As always, thanks to our listeners for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.