

Coffee to Go | Fifth Sunday of Easter

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:25

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. We are still in the Easter season. And Blake, I don't know, I think sometimes when we say that people are like, What are you talking about? That was over a month ago. Yes, Easter was March 31. This year, however, the Easter season, last 50 days. And so this year, it lasts from March 31, which was Easter until the Sunday of Pentecost, which is May 19. So we have a little bit to go yet. And I just wanted to let people know, a lot of times, it's really difficult because we don't know when Easter is going to fall each year. And we don't understand why the heck it's different. And why that messes up all of our dates all the time. So, you can Google this listeners, which is what I did. So here you go with why that is. So Easter falls on the first Sunday, after the full moon of spring. So the full moon of spring and it has multiple names, but the full moon of spring is the full moon that falls on or after March 21. So those of you who follow Sun and Moon and kind of that kind of astrological and even our, our fun-loving friends who are pagans out there, you know that the spring equinox happens between the 19th and the 22nd of March. And so that's kind of the spring transition time. And so the first full moon that happens on the 21st of March or after is Easter. So sounds a little complicated. And it gets even more fun if you start going through time zones and, and other mitotic cycles and other kinds of information that you'll find on Google. But that's the basic thing. It's the first Sunday after the first full moon that falls on or after March 21.

Blake Smith 02:37

So thanks for Google, because not only can you find out when it's supposed to happen, you can just say, when is Easter this year?

Karin Peter 02:43

Exactly. Yes, exactly. But that's a brief explanation of why we're still in the Easter season, we're going to celebrate for longer than we prepared, which was our Lenten season. So this week, we are still hanging out with Jesus. And we're still doing that from John's perspective. And last week, we learned a lot about kind of the characteristics for discipleship. And Jesus used the image of a good shepherd or an honorable shepherd. And Jesus does that a lot. He uses images that are around that people are familiar with in his teaching, and he's going to do it again today. So let's hear John's scripture.

Blake Smith 03:28

All right, and it comes from the 15th chapter of the Gospel According to John and it's also the first through the eighth verse.

I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. every branch that bears fruit, he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in Me and I in them bear much fruit. Because apart from me, you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers. such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

But why does this matter? I have never, I've never grown grapes. I've been to vineyards before and seen it but I've never grown grapes. I kind of think about this in terms of rose bushes because that's something that I am very familiar with, having at least attempted to grow roses everywhere that I've been, and some places more successful than others,

Karin Peter 05:07

Let's hear your variation on the rose. Yeah.

Blake Smith 05:10

So so. So in this case, I would still say God is is the the rose grower, and Jesus is the rose bush. When I think about this pruning and cutting out, we can look at the passage and look at it as kind of a disciplinary, God's going to get rid of the bad stuff. But the reality is, even throughout the season, the growing season, for roses in order to make the rosebush fuller, we do what we call deadheading. So we, once the bloom has grown and lived out its purpose, we trim that off, we trim it off to a certain point on the stem. And then that allows for new growth. As we get rid of some of those old ideas and thoughts that weigh us down and keep us from growing in our understanding of God is how I would make that connection. So you know, in this case, of course, God is the vine grower, Jesus is divine, and we are the branches. And there's a piece in there we hear it said many times abide, abide, abide. And there's something more than just kind of being present with. This is a mutual indwelling, where the branches aren't necessarily connected. But as I understand vines growing and other things actually in nature grow to support one another. So this, as we talk about this intertwined vines and branches, we hold one another up, because the fruit can sometimes be heavy. And so. So it's important for us to live together and to stay connected. Of course, Jesus is saying you need to stay connected to me...Abide in me...let my word be in you. Again, indwelling not just be words on a page, but indwelling. So there's, there's something really rich about this analogy that is a deep connection. And that that union of connectivity from being intertwined is just really, really important for us to pick up here. The purpose of the vine is to bear good fruit. And we are the disciple as disciples are the branches that in turn grow the fruit. And whether you're a vine grower, or whether you do gardening in the spring, whether you raise a vegetable garden or a flower garden, you are aware that it needs tending and weeding and sometimes pruning even in a vegetable garden, we need to prune away, I think of tomato plants and we prune away the sucker branches at the bottom that draw away the energy and nutrients that are needed to grow the fruit. It's even suggested that sometimes you prune clusters of fruit so that some will grow

stronger. So it's a necessary process, but it's about producing more fruit. The thing that I'd say about fruit is the fruit doesn't feed the vine or the branches, the vine and the branches feed the fruit. And the fruit is actually for someone else.

Karin Peter 08:33

I love that that the the vine feeds the fruit and then the fruit actually feeds someone else. So when you read through the Scripture, I noticed something that I've never noticed before or maybe it made me think of something I'd never thought of before which happens a lot. And that is the the verse six whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers, such branches are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned. So that's a negative for most people, right? We look at that we go You gotta believe in Jesus, otherwise you're gonna burn in the fire. And today when you read it, I it came at me a little bit differently. It was like, a lot of times people who don't have that intertwined community for support, do get thrown away, right? They do wither if you will. But the vine grower can gather them up and throw them on the fire and that too has purpose. It provides heat, food can be cooked over a fire. Fields can be regenerated by Bernie there's all kinds of ways that being thrown on the fire can have positive outcome. And for some reason, when you were reading it today that came to mind more. Yeah, if you don't have that kind of supportive, intertwined community life can be rough. Sometimes [Right.] Yeah. Okay.

Blake Smith 10:02

Yeah, the one last thing that I would pick up from this base, and because it is something that we, I hear, I guess I'll just speak for myself something that I hear people pick up on. And that is this last verse. If my words abide in you ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. I mean, I hear preachers pick up on that piece, "Just ask! God wants you to have." But, we miss the first part of the phrase, when we just go straight to the ask and God will give it to you. That's, that's what God wants to do is "when my words abide in you, ask." And the the thing for me here that I think we often miss or is often missed in this passage in reading it without that first phrase is, when we, when we allow Christ to abide in us and us to abide in Christ, we are changed. So the things we ask for are things that are in alignment with God's abiding word, and love. It's not about what we want, or what we need. It's about being aligned and abiding indwelling in Christ and in this community, that we begin, our wants, and our needs begin to change. So I just think that's really important. So some questions that we might ask ourselves this week are, How am I connected to this intertwined, mutually indwelling community? How healthy are my relationships with God, others, my own self, and the earth? And so you talk about that intertwined community, that scripture really comes to mind that Doctrine and Covenants passage, that whole idea about those relationships? I never, when I read that scripture, I never think of it in that intertwined way. But I will now. No, yeah. And finally, I would ask what needs to be pruned? And, we don't, you know, we don't think about this. But even with, even with roses, again, we prune parts of branches that have already produced, we cut them back so that they can grow fuller, and continue to produce. And so we need to think about what it is in our lives that needs to be pruned, what aspects of our life are keeping us from following or fulfilling our sense of call?

Karin Peter 12:46

Good questions for, for this particular scripture. So thinking about a way to kind of live out this scripture, when I think about interconnectivity, I think about circuits and how in your house, the circuit box it mines

in the garage, and if something flips off, it can mess up everything that's happening. And so I was thinking, in that frame of mind that maybe we need like a circuit check each morning, like when I'm drinking my orange juice at breakfast, or putting a piece of fruit in my lunchbox. To use that as kind of a visual reminder, to do a circuit check, am I connected to the vine and to that love giving vine and let that image of that tangled, intertwined community kind of be in you and imagine God's love flowing toward you into you and also out from you to others as part of that expression of good fruit? And just kind of rest in that image and breathe for a minute or two? With the circuit check maybe we'll make that a new spiritual practice Blake.

Blake Smith 14:02

I really liked that image and way of reflecting you know, we hear scripturally probably everybody has heard, being brought up you know, when you get up in the morning, put on your armor of God and start going through that and that's I understand that's a helpful image for some but for me, it's it kind of brings to mind more military getting prepared for for battle or war. And again, I understand some people see life as a battle but instead of looking at the how do we prepare for the bad this image that you're talking about of connectivity, being connected to the community is a positive look at the way we "indwell" with one another and provide that support, and love and encouragement that is so needed. So I really liked that. [All righty.] Well, our blessing today comes from Meta Heriick Carlson, it's "A Blessing of Empathy."

The world is not lacking opinions simplified by hindsight, advice for the weary, subscriptions to the standardized. But we are starving for love that resist 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. If only the instinct was to abide, before we explain and decide. Listen for the Spirit, who guides us into showing up, who shows us how to feel on behalf of another who urges our quiet bodies alongside the ones who are not broken, but lonely. The ones God loves already and always. I like that if only the instinct was to abide before to explain and decide thought to leave us with.

So thank you to all of our listeners for joining us here at coffee to go we invite you as always to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.