

Coffee to Go | Sixth Sunday of Easter

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

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. We are still in the Easter season, if you'll remember listeners, we stay in the season of resurrection longer than we stay in the season of preparation, which we experienced in Lent. And so we continue with that joy that comes with new life. And we're learning more with Jesus as we walk with Jesus this week. So where are we? Well, we're still with John and we're hearing about the ministry and teachings of Jesus from John's perspective, and here, the disciples are listening and are being challenged and transformed as Jesus teaches. What it really is to be a follower of Jesus what it is to be a student, or, as we call it in churchy language, a disciple. So let's hear it, Blake.

Blake Smith 01:32

All right. This passage, of course, comes right on the heels of last week's passage and the 15th chapter of the Gospel according to John, and this is the 9th through the 17th verse. If you didn't happen to catch last week, or even if you did, we are talking about the vine and the branches and producing fruit which glorifies God. And that sets the stage for today's passage...

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. I have said these things to you, so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you, I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name, I am giving you these commands, so that you may love one another.

One of the things about this passage for me is it kind of comes across, reads a little bit like a commencement address at graduation. So you're no longer servants, you can move your castle to the other side. And throw your hat you are now you're now in the category of beloved friends. There's also, even as I was reading it just now, I mean, there seems to be this. I don't know if it's knowledge or faith on Jesus's part toward the disciples. Because, okay, first of all, we have centuries and centuries of

humanity not getting it, you know, and God making covenants throughout time. And now Jesus is here, and Jesus has walked with these disciples, and He knows they don't get it from time to time. And now it's like, I'm gonna call you friends. Because I've shared everything with you, you know it, and I know that one of these days, I guess it's going to settle in, you're gonna get this, and you're going to love one another as I have loved you. And we know that to be true of the disciples after the resurrection. However, for me, I guess I just feel like there's this, 'All right, I still believe in you, Jesus, you know, no matter how many times you don't get it, I still believe in you. You're going to get this thing in there,' which for me is an important message. But the other thing is coming after the passage about the vine and the branches. First of all, we hear this word abiding again. So this indwelling this mutual indwelling and abiding in Christ and in one another is really, really important. But the purpose of it, this fruit that we're growing is a fruit of love. And Jesus kind of breaks it down for us. So we are to abide not only in Christ, but to abide in love for God, for Christ, for each other. We're gonna live with, eat with, breathe, speak, act in love towards one another, and towards all others. That's why it's easy for us, as many of the passages in Scripture say, it's easier for us to love the lovable those who we are family with, those who we agree with. But this deep abiding love calls us to love those who are not as easily lovable. Because Christ loves them. It's a deep and abiding love that we are called to. And this kind of love brings a deep joy. I do this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Karin Peter 06:05

So Blake, sometimes when we read Scripture is just a passage at a time or if you're a regular coffee to go listener, we break it down kind of each Sunday. But we forget that these are connected. John's Gospel is connecting all of these teachings. And a few weeks ago, we talked about sheep and a good shepherd. And Jesus mentioned Jesus had other sheep hanging out that he was going to hang with. And I think today in our really divisive context, it's important to remember that this love towards others includes other sheep, meaning, other faith traditions, other races, other ways of expressing gender, whatever it may be, that your personal 'other' that you seem to think you can separate out as not lovable. Those are other sheep to Jesus. And we need to remember that this love goes to everyone, those with the Christian community, and maybe more importantly, others.

Blake Smith 07:03

Yeah, but doesn't that passage say something about there are sheep of other flocks, and I'll have to go get them? So, isn't that God's job?

Karin Peter 07:12

Yeah, that's really Yeah, but we're abiding. so we promised to live with, eat with, go with. So there you go, people. It's not somebody else's job to love. It's ours.

Blake Smith 07:26

That God sent Christ. Christ sent us. We are the ones. Doggone it.

Karin Peter 07:32

Of course, it probably doesn't help to have two Seventy doing this podcast because we go there, but there you go.

Blake Smith 07:44

No getting off the hook easy here. Yeah, so some questions that we might ask ourselves this week? How do I feel about love being my purpose? Is it a command? Or is it a way of life? Another question, do I live in love as an individual? Do I live in love as part of a community? Do I live in love as both? And finally, do I share about my spiritual journey out of love for others? And if so, which parts of that journey are most important for me to share?

Karin Peter 08:28

Oh, that's a complicated question.

Blake Smith 08:31

Well, we've got to think a little.

Karin Peter 08:35

Yeah, that's true. Maybe that's what makes it complicated. But, but it is, what do I share? And why am I sharing it? And am I sharing it out of love for others? Yeah. Yeah, experiencing that this week. And living in love. I've got a spiritual practice here that we're going to name the counting prayer. So in some spiritual disciplines, you would do this with beads, like praying the rosary, if you're Catholic, or using your prayer beads in a certain way if you're Buddhist, but we're just gonna call it a counting prayer. And you can use beads. You can use paper clips, you can do whatever you need to do to count fingers, toes. But here's a good way to experience it this week. You want to go to First Corinthians, chapter 13. You can Google it. If you don't have a Bible, that's perfectly okay. Just Google 'First Corinthians chapter 13.' And this is called the love chapter. And you hear this all the time in wedding ceremonies all the time. So even those who aren't real Bible reading people, we have probably heard at least parts of this just by going to our friend's weddings. But in it, in chapter 13, it lists the characteristics of love. So love is patient, love is kind, love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way it is not irritable. It keeps no record of wrongs it does not rejoice in wrongdoing rejoices in truth, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Okay, those are all the characteristics of love that is that are listed there in First Corinthians. Um, so pick one. It doesn't matter which one. Just pick one for this week. And then get your counting, implement, get your beads, get your paper clips, get your macaroni noodles, whatever you're going to count with. And make sure there's at least 15 or, or so of them. So memorize your phrase. So for example, Love does not insist on its own way. And repeat that phrase with every bead. As you pick it up, or as you feel it in your hand. Just repeat that phrase. Love does not exist on its own way. second bead Love does not insist on its own way. And you just do that through your whole stack of pile of paperclips or all the way around your beaded bracelet, whatever you're using. And that's a counting prayer. And you can do that. Sitting on the bus on your commute. You can do that on your break. You can do that at home when you're watching TED lasso on your iPad, whatever it may be. You can take a moment and just do that counting prayer this week. Just pick your phrase, and one that speaks to you. And repeat it in that way this week.

The blessing this week comes from Arianne Braithwaite Lehn from her book Ash and Starlight. And I don't know, sometimes I'm just contrary, but this one really spoke to me. Maybe it's because the title spoke to me like it's called, "When I Don't Want to Love Someone." And here it is...

Lord Jesus, my very life grows from you the vine, from which I stem with hope for fruit that will last. Your love force flows through me and yet it also moves into neighboring branches. I don't want to acknowledge my connection with some of them. These people who block my son or suppress my Spirit, I struggle with Jesus to see and love the goodness in another. Even as your life current nourishes me with the same substance. Maybe my first step is to simply name each day our connection through you to remember the seed that brought forth me also birthed them to unfurl my leaves soak in the sun, the rainfall and in doing this opened my heart to you and every single other to keep all veins open for transformative possibilities that come not through my own doing. But by being joined with you the one who can and does bring redemptive relationships I never thought possible. Today I will celebrate being part of the vine and rest in the work you will do. You only asked me to stay connected, abiding in love. Amen.

Blake Smith 13:22

Amen. We might not like to admit it, but I think we're probably all at that some at that point at some point in our life in this divisive world. So really, really great blessing to finish with today.

Well, thank you to all of our listeners here at Coffee to Go we invite you to join us next time for our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.