

Coffee to Go | Sixth Sunday After Epiphany | Year C

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:26

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 season following Epiphany for another week or two. This is the time when we learn more about the light and love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. So, our question each week is, where are we with Jesus? And this Sunday, we are in a field, and this story and of Scripture is from Luke. If we read the similar story in Matthew, this takes place on a mountain, and it's called the Sermon on the Mount. But in Luke, it takes place on a plain, on a flat field, and so rather than sermon on a mount, it's sermon on a plain. But many of us, when we're referring to this passage, we just call it the Blesseds, because that's how we hear it read, yeah, as people read this aloud. So, Blake?

Blake Smith 01:33

Alright, well, we find ourselves in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Luke this week, and it is the 17th through the 26th verse that we're going to be hearing today.

He came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases, and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. Then he looked up at his disciples and said, "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you and defame you on the account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets."

Why does this matter? There's so many pieces in this passage, and one that I've considered before, but today, as I read it, it just stuck out. He came down with them and stood on a level place. I mean, it's not just it's not just a flat plain. It is this level place. We are all at the same level. There's none who are

better or worse than any other. We come from all of these places, and we stand on level ground. That just really hit me this morning as I'm reading this. But it is also important for us to note that in this passage, healing is about a communal act. A lot of times in the Scripture, we see Jesus healing one-on-one with individuals. They kind of wait in line, you know, in some of those passages, and get their healing. But here he looks out over his disciples, and the power goes out from him, and they are healed. They're healed in community with one another, again, on level ground from all over. It doesn't have to do with any, and we don't get the descriptions of what people have done or who they're related to, this is just all of his disciples who are gathered which, just real quickly, in the Gospel of Luke disciples, referring to all of those who follow Jesus. Luke makes the distinction between apostles and disciples. So, this is really about everybody. And then after Jesus healed what was brought to him, he addressed the crowd and he. Uses the direct, you, uh, he's speaking in the second person. He's not talking about those who do this or they this, it. He's looking at these people. He sees them. Uh, he's looking at, he sees the urgency of their situations. He knows their poverty, their oppression, their marginalization, their abuse. I mean, these are people who are living under the Roman Empire. So, he's not talking about, you know, some poor soul who doesn't go to church or that kind of thing. Again, he is looking at his disciples in this place, seeing into their hearts and into their lives. It's not just the spiritual meditation of, 'Blessed are they and woe to those.' It's really a naming of life circumstances and saying to these people, looking them in the eye, if you will, and saying, I see you. God sees you. You are not alone. Naming and caring is part of the whole community healing process, and this, using the second tense, tells us that this healing is for the here and now. It's not for some time in the past or some time yet to come, that healing is for them as they are gathered in that place, and it is for us as we too, gather in community. Of course, we can't look at the passage without considering the fact that there are also some woes that are coming for some others, those who have abundance and don't share, those who ignore the plight of the poor and desire status and social acclaim. And I just want to say a piece of that again, because, you know, we sometimes we look at these scriptures and passages and we use them as judgment. Well, Woe to the rich. This is those who have abundance and don't share, those who are just concerned about their own selves and not the community, those who are marginalized and oppressed. So that's an important piece for us to pick up here. Things aren't looking so good for these folks, this list of woes, but there is a way out of that. Jesus' perspective is upside down, of course, compared to the social and religious constructs of that day and of this day, and so, but again, God does offer a way of grace and a way to turn around and to be a part of that kingdom building process. So what could that mean for those gathered, those who are living under oppression, those who are marginalized, those who are hungry, hopefully and no pun intended, hopefully, it will bring them a sense of hope and an acknowledgement that God is with them. God sees them.

Karin Peter 08:05

Blake that level field that you mentioned at the beginning. There is this leveling you know, in human context, the human community, those who have much tend to look down their nose at people who don't. And here on this level field with his blessings and his woes, he pointed out even more, so, yeah, that we're in this together. And if you have a lot you're not sharing with these other people here, things don't look good for you. That's just, that's just how it is, and that's the way out that you mentioned. That's the where I'm supposed to go, oh crap, I better get myself together and start participating in community in a more appropriate way. So yeah, it's that level field. That's the key.

Blake Smith 08:53

Yeah. So some questions that I might ask myself, when have I experienced healing or wholeness in community with others. And I might add, what is it about that community that helps bring about the healing? What are, what is the character of that community? What is it about it? Another question is, Who am I in this passage? Am I on the blessing side or on the woe side, and what, what does that mean for me going forward?

Karin Peter 09:30

That's a really interesting place to live this week, isn't it? Where, where am I on that list? Um, if Jesus sees me. So, as we live in this particular passage, this week, a way that we can experience it is, is to go with those blessings. Now, Blake, I'm very I'm very aware that we have blessings and woes, but this week, we're going to live in the blessings. We're not going to go around giving woes to people, but instead, bless every person you encounter this week. To yourself silently, quietly, and maybe just try for one day, 'Today, I'm going to bless everybody I encounter silently in my head.' And it can be brief, and just try it for the day, and then, if that, if that's doable, try it the next day, and add another day, and pay attention to how blessing others allows you to see others with a different perspective.

Blake Smith 10:26

Well, you will be happy to know Karin that I actually have been practicing this in my driving skills, [Karin: which we've talked about many times] in my driving time around Chicago, I have for the last several weeks, actually been attempting to bless and pray for that person, whatever their need is, whatever their hurry is, whatever it is that they will be blessed. So

10:50

I'm proud of you, Blake, that's marvelous.

Blake Smith 10:54

This won't be quite as hard this week, because I've been practicing.

Well, our blessing today comes from one of, I say, one of my favorite writers. I think it's because I have the secret wish that I had the courage to say what she says. It's healing for me sometimes to just be able to live vicariously through Nadia Boltz Weber. And this blessing is called, "A Benediction," and it's a few more blessings.

Blessed are the agnostics.

Blessed are they who doubt, those who aren't sure, who can still be surprised.

Blessed are they who are spiritually impoverished and therefore not so certain about everything that they no longer take in new information.

Blessed are those who have nothing to offer.

Blessed are the preschoolers who cut in line at communion.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. You are of heaven and Jesus blesses you.

Blessed are they for whom death is not an abstraction.

Blessed are they who have buried their loved ones for whom tears could fill an ocean.

Blessed are they who have loved enough to know what loss feels like.

Blessed are the mothers of the miscarried
Blessed are they who don't have the luxury of taking things for granted anymore.
Blessed are they who can't fall apart because they have to keep it together for everyone else.
Blessed are those who still aren't over it yet.
Blessed are those who mourn. You are of heaven and Jesus blesses you.
Blessed are those who no one else notices, the kids who sit alone at middle school lunch tables, the laundry guys at the hospital, the sex workers and the night shift street sweepers.
Blessed are the forgotten.
Blessed are the closeted.
Blessed are the unemployed, the unimpressive, the underrepresented.
Blessed are the teens who have to figure out ways to hide the new cuts on their arms.
Blessed are the meek you are of heaven and God blesses you.
Blessed are the wrongly accused, the ones who never catch a break, the ones for whom life is hard.
For Jesus chose to surround himself with people like them.
Blessed are those without documentation.
Blessed are the ones without lobbyists.
Blessed are foster kids and special ed kids and every other kid who just wants to feel safe and loved.
Blessed are those who make terrible business decisions for the sake of people.
Blessed are the burned-out social workers and the overworked teachers and the pro-bono caseworkers.
Blessed are the kind hearted football players and the fundraising trophy wives.
Blessed are the kids who step between the bullies and the weak.
Blessed are they who hear that they are forgiven.
Blessed is everyone who has ever forgiven me when I didn't deserve it.
Blessed are the merciful for they totally get it.
God Bless you. Amen.

Well, thanks for joining us here today at Coffee to Go. As always, 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.