

Coffee to Go | Easter | Year C

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:28

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, and we welcome you on the journey. So where are we with Jesus this week? Well, this is an interesting week, because we don't start out quite with Jesus. Today, it's Easter Sunday, and this has been from the very beginning of Christian faith and practice. The most important day in the Christian calendar in the early church, it was the day when believers would be baptized. They would go through all of their learning, all their catechism, all that kind of thing, and then they'd be baptized on Easter morning with the idea that they too rise in new life with Christ. So this Easter, we are in the book of John. We were in Mark last Easter, but it's the Gospel of John today, and this is one of my favorite scripture passages, because it tells of women and a woman who was the first to hear the news of the empty tomb. So let's hear the Scripture Blake. It's a long one today.

Blake Smith 01:41

Yeah, it's a little long. It comes from the 20th chapter of the Gospel According to John, and we'll be reading the first through the 18th verse today.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb, so she ran and went to Simon, Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb. First, he bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrapping lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed, For as yet, they did not understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes, but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" And she said to them, "they have taken away, my lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her

"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him, in Hebrew "Rabouni," which means teacher, Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her.

So why does this matter? Well, as usual, there's, with most of our passages, there's a couple of things that really matter. The first is, in just the first words of the passage, while it was still dark. I think that we often get up on Sunday morning, on Easter and you know, we, the flowers are bright and the sun is shining and all is good, he has [there's a chocolate bunny.] Yes, oh yeah. Well, there is the chocolate bunny, yes, and the colored eggs, and we celebrate. But on this morning, it was still dark, and that darkness represents not only the light that wasn't there, and Jesus, who is the Light of the world, was missing, but this darkness of grief. Mary had come to tend to the body of her dear friend, and he was not there. It was something that she had anticipated, to go and spend a little bit more time with Jesus, and then he's not there, and the connections are not being made that, oh, he's resurrected, and he's alive. And now, not only can I spend more time with him, I can have a relationship with Jesus in a different way. So, that darkness is kind of important that we not forget because, I think for all of us to spend time in that grief and realize that none of us, typically, I say, none of us, maybe, maybe there are some, but none of us make that quick jump automatically acknowledging who Jesus is and what happened with Christ. We know that because we're living 1000s of years after the fact, and we've heard the story, not because we, you know, I think it would be different if we were there on that morning, not knowing what happened, we wouldn't see the body gone like Mary did, and just automatically assume, Oh, great. He did what he said he would do. He's gone to the Father, and we'll see him again.

Karin Peter 06:29

They're still living in in the place of he was brutally murdered. He's dead, right? It's dark, it's horrible. This happened. The women come to tend the tomb, you know, to tend the body in the tomb. It's, yeah, it's still this really period of darkness. What really stuck out to me this time, Blake, when I heard you read it was they all had to bend over to look in the tomb. Now, I'm not want to make too much of this. However, in all the depictions that you see in all the story books you've ever read about Easter and all of the worship settings people put up front on Easter Day, we never, we never acknowledge that that the tomb would have been this almost cave-like entrance that you had to bend over and crawl into. You didn't just walk in this big, five and a half foot tall opening.

Blake Smith 07:26

This was, it wasn't an apartment with benches on the inside.

Karin Peter 07:29

Yeah. This is not, this is not what that was. The tombs were these, with these openings, and then areas caved are carved out so that a body could be put in there. And so that changes what Mary does and

what she sees. So, part of the, you know, not recognizing Jesus. Well, no, she was bent over looking in a dark hole, and then a voice behind her speaks to her. It would have been disconcerting in the darkness and in the in the time and place. How could she make those connections? Right? She's, she's in a different place?

Blake Smith 08:07

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think about, you know, we've got the World Conference coming up soon, and you see people that you've seen when you've been out at a reunion or that kind of thing, and you, there's some familiarity, but seeing someone out of context is also difficult in the light, [yeah]. So you add, add to that the darkness, and it makes a whole lot of sense. But speaking, speaking of Mary, and that is, that is the other piece. And you've already mentioned, Karin, this the presence of a woman at the center of this story. You know, the story is about Jesus, and we talk about the disciples coming and going, but here is this faithful disciple, a woman, which reminds us, maybe a little bit about the story of the woman at the well, who is the one who has that intimate relationship with Christ, the conversation, and is the one who ends up being the witness, who tells that Jesus, this is the Messiah, in the case of of the Samaritan woman at the well. And he has risen. Mary is the proclaimer. She is the one who stays, you mentioned, and the men there. They come in. They don't see what they want, and it's like, okay, yeah, he's gone. But the story just says they, they just go home, [yeah] And Mary is staying in that, in this darkness, in her darkness and her grief, she's not done. She's not done. She needs to hear more. She needs to find out. She is asking the angels, where, where has he gone? She's asking this one, who she assumes to be the gardener, where has he gone? Just tell me. I will. I will take care of him. And because she stays, she has this encounter with Christ where, which is very personal, he calls her by name, which is so important. And we hear time and time again that a person's name is the most important word in the English language. I say that for our US listeners and those who speak English, but in whatever language, I think I would extend that to just ... our names are very important and to be acknowledged. So here we have this woman. She sticks around, she stays, she has the encounter, but she doesn't, when she leaves, she doesn't remain silent. She uses her voice to share what she has witnessed, just as Jesus has asked her to do. She goes and proclaims that, which is very hard for us to do in these days and times, to be a witness and to speak out and to use our voice,

Karin Peter 11:00

Yeah, to use our voice to bring wholeness. I mean, that's what this was about, right? Jesus is alive. I saw him. Wholeness of thought, of dream, of vision, of purpose, yeah.

Blake Smith 11:14

yeah. So, some questions that we might ask ourselves as we read these particular pieces in this passage this Easter are, in what ways do my expectations limit me from seeing where the Divine Presence is at work in the world?

Karin Peter 11:32

You mean, what hole in the ground am I peering into instead of looking around and noticing where God's at work? Is that? What is that what this is?

Blake Smith 11:40

Exactly, Exactly. We want the world to be in a particular order. And there are things that make sense. And when someone dies and they're put in a hole, they ought to be there when you come back, right? So whatever that is in your life, that is something you just expect to be a certain way. Think about in what ways that the expectations, and that might be also extended to stereotypes about people, whatever limits your ability to see where the Divine Presence is at work in the world. Think about those things. And the other question we might ask is, Have I ever sensed the spirit calling me by name? That's a very personal and intimate thing to have the experience, and so you might spend some time thinking about that. When have you sensed, or have you sensed the Spirit calling you by name?

Karin Peter 11:40

I think that's the piece we can live with this week, Blake, for our weekly experience or practice. It really stands out in that passage where Jesus calls Mary and by her name. So, this week, let's, let's work on using people's names. So, calling people by name, when you encounter them, brings about a deeper level of relationship, even in those brief, transactional kinds of encounters that we have with people. It's a, it's a statement of honoring someone else to use their name. And so, this week, try honoring others by using their names and you speak to them, so like even service personnel with their name badge, acknowledge people by their name, and when you talk to family and friends, use their name in ways that offers to extend or deepen that relationship that you have with them. So, this week, we will use names. I don't know why, but in my mind, that song came out, "Say my name, say my name." [Right?] It's just playing in the background. But the reality is, let's do that. Let's honor each other by using our names and being willing to be present and deeper in relationship.

Blake Smith 14:07

You know, it really does make a difference. I recently started trying really hard as matter of fact, I take notes when I'm on a phone call for various reasons, but one of the things that I do is, when they introduce to themselves, if I don't hear their name, I will ask again, what is your name? Now, if I'm being honest, I started that again because I want accurate records in case there's an issue and I have to go back and say, Well, I talked to so and so, but what I'm what I've been doing then, is when the call is ended or is ending, to say, thank you so and so I appreciate your help. And it seems to, you can almost hear a little bit of a lightening in the in the voice of the person you're speaking to. So [I agree] do it every time you get a chance. Alright, our blessing today comes from Mary. Oliver, and it's a poem called, "Poem."

Karin Peter 15:03

I kind of envision this poem as Mary's reaction to seeing Jesus after He calls her name.

Blake Smith 15:09

Alright.

The spirit likes to dress up like this, 10 fingers, 10 toes, shoulders and all the rest. At night in the black branches in the morning in the blue branches of the world. It could float, of course, but would rather

plum rough matter, airy and shapeless thing. It needs the metaphor of the body, lime and appetite, the oceanic fluids. It needs the body's world, instinct and imagination and the dark hug of time, sweetness and tangibility to be understood to be more than pure light that burns where no one is so it enters us. In the morning, shines from brute comfort like a stitch of lightning, and at night, lights up the deep and wondrous drownings of the body like a star.

Karin Peter 16:10

Amen.

Blake Smith 16:11

Well, happy Easter to all. Thanks for joining us here today at Coffee to Go. And, 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.